

# MODERN CHINESE WARFARE, 1795–1989

*Bruce A. Elleman*



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# MODERN CHINESE WARFARE, 1795–1989

Why did the Chinese Empire collapse and why did it take so long for a new government to reunite China? *Modern Chinese Warfare, 1795–1989* seeks to answer these questions by exploring the most important domestic and international conflicts over the past 200 years, from the last half of the Qing Empire through to modern-day China. This book reveals how most of China's wars during this period were fought to preserve Chinese unity, and examines the cyclical pattern of imperial decline, fall, domestic chaos and, finally, the creation of a new unifying dynasty.

Exposing China as an imperialist country, and one which has often manipulated western powers in its favor, Bruce A. Elleman seeks to redress the view of China as a victimized nation. *Modern Chinese Warfare, 1795–1989* is a concise survey of the military history of China, and makes a valuable contribution to the debate over whether China poses a military threat to the West today.

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TO ANNA AND STEVEN,  
AND TO THE MANY WONDERFUL TEACHERS AND PARENTS  
AT THE ICU YOCHIEN  
WHO MADE THIS BOOK POSSIBLE



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## PREFACE

While still a graduate student, I had the opportunity to live at Beijing University (Beida) during 1990 to 1991, six months after the Tiananmen Massacre. The mood was somber, students were careful to avoid contact with “foreign devils” like myself, and every night—like clockwork—the armed guards at the main gate of Beida would close and lock the door. Although this act did not particularly surprise me, since I was a graduate student at Columbia University in New York City, what did strike me one day as being odd was that the guards seemed more interested in checking who was *exiting*, rather than *entering*, Beida’s campus (at Columbia I was accustomed to the reverse). One day it occurred to me that the guards’ main duty was not to protect the campus from Beijing’s vandals and thieves, but to guard the city of Beijing from the intellectual rabble-rousers inhabiting Beida’s dormitories. From the guards’ point of view, the students had one goal and one goal only: the disruption of Chinese unity. This observation sparked my initial interest in the true nature and purpose of the Chinese military, which is the subject of this book.

Chinese history is replete with wars, and most of these wars have served one purpose: to create and/or preserve the unity of China. When seen in this light, characteristics that all Chinese wars share can be more easily identified. In the period discussed in this book (1795–1989), I will focus on the twenty-five most well-known domestic and international conflicts. Each of these wars had Chinese unity as its underlying goal and they can be roughly divided into five general groups: (1) quelling domestic uprisings; (2) quelling ethnic uprisings; (3) opposing foreign trade imperialism; (4) opposing foreign territorial imperialism; and (5) supporting Chinese imperialism.

Each of these five groups has distinctive geographical characteristics. Imagine for a moment that China is a wheel, with numerous spokes linking the rim to the core. The core is central China, the spokes around the center are contiguous Chinese colonies—Tibet, Xinjiang, Mongolia, Manchuria, and Taiwan—and the outermost regions beyond the spokes are tributaries—Korea, Annam (Vietnam), Burma, etc. Almost without exception, China’s domestic conflicts—White Lotus, Taipings, Nian, Warlords, and the Nationalist–Communist civil war—have taken place in the center, while non-Han ethnic uprisings—the

Miao, Muslim, and Tungan—typically take place in the colonial regions between the center and the rim. Meanwhile, trade—Opium and Arrow Wars—and territorial imperialism—Xinjiang, Annam, Taiwan, Korea, and Manchuria—begin along the edges, invade inward, and have as their ultimate goal extending influence into the center. Finally, Chinese imperialism is directed from the center outward, and has as its goal the unification of the center with the spokes—Tibet, Sino-Soviet border regions, etc.—and, only after that has been accomplished, the extension of political and military influence beyond the rim over the tributaries—Korea, Vietnam, etc.

The twenty-five conflicts discussed in the following eighteen chapters also follow a chronological pattern, which is cyclical in nature, and which largely follows in line with China's view of the "dynastic cycle"—i.e. the view that a ruling government will one day weaken and collapse, to be replaced by a new, dynamic government that will, in turn, eventually fall. In the late eighteenth century, the Qing Dynasty was at its peak, and clearly held the "Mandate of Heaven," but the Qing Dynasty then began a gradual slide downward, precipitating a dynastic crisis that can be divided into four periods: (1) decline; (2) fall; (3) interregnum; and (4) resurgence of a new dynasty.

*Imperial decline:* Beginning in 1795, the Qing Dynasty was beset by a number of domestic and ethnic uprisings (Chapter 1). Weakened, foreign trade imperialism during the 1839–42 Opium War (Chapter 2) allowed foreigners—initially the British, but later other western powers and Japan—to increase their power, thus undermining the ruling dynasty. This in turn led to further domestic uprisings, such as the Taipings, and greater foreign trade imperialism, like the Arrow War (Chapter 3). After weathering these conflicts, the Qing Dynasty was hard put to reassert its authority, but successfully destroyed the remaining domestic—the Nian (Muslim) and ethnic (Tungan) uprisings (Chapter 4).

*Imperial fall:* The Qing's dynastic collapse was temporarily halted, but its continued losses to trade imperialism opened the door to foreign territorial imperialism. Beginning in the 1850s and 1860s, Russia took vast territories in Siberia and along the Pacific, while in the 1870s China succeeded in repelling Russian imperialism into its central Asia colony of Xinjiang (Chapter 5). However, in the 1880s China lost the Annam tributary to France (Chapter 6), and in the 1890s China lost the Korean tributary to Japan (Chapter 7). In 1900, a domestic uprising—the Boxers—was cleverly directed by the failing dynasty against the foreign imperialists, in the vain hope that the two movements would mutually self-destruct (Chapter 8). As a result of the westernizing reforms that followed China's defeat, the Manchu Dynasty was overthrown in an ethnic—Han Chinese—uprising (Chapter 9).

*Imperial interregnum:* In the aftermath of the Qing collapse, China entered the warlord era as the Chinese people waited for a new dynasty to be formed. The Nationalist Party—first with Sun Zhongshan (Sun Yat-sen), and later Jiang Jieshi (Chiang Kai-shek) as its leader—tried to be that new dynasty, but

reunified China only on paper in 1928 (Chapter 10). Territorial imperialism continued to threaten China, and in 1929 the Nationalists lost a war in Manchuria with the Soviet Union (Chapter 11). The USSR's victory sparked further Japanese territorial imperialism, which led to the 1937–45 Sino–Japanese conflict (Chapter 12). In the aftermath of Japan's defeat, the Nationalists faced a new domestic opponent in the Chinese Communist Party, and in 1949 Mao Zedong came from the north to push Jiang Jieshi out of central China and onto Taiwan, taking control of China proper and creating the People's Republic of China (PRC) (Chapter 13).

*Imperial resurgence:* With the installation of a new dynasty, reuniting central China, the colonies, and the tributaries became Beijing's primary goal. At enormous cost, the PRC reasserted authority over northern Korea during the early 1950s (Chapter 14), in Tibet and along the Sino–Indian border by the early 1960s (Chapter 15), in Xinjiang and along its northern borders with the Soviet Union in 1969 (Chapter 16), and finally along its southern borders with Vietnam in 1979 (Chapter 17). Once again the Chinese Empire was unified—with the most notable exceptions being Mongolia and Taiwan—thus drawing to a close the era of cyclical decline and resurgence that had taken the better part of two centuries to run its course. By 1979, therefore, the decline, fall, interregnum, and resurgence of the Chinese Dynasty appeared to be complete.

*The dynastic question:* However, domestic unrest still posed a threat to the new dynasty, and in 1989 at Tiananmen Square the ruling Communist Party's "Mandate of Heaven" was called into question (Chapter 18). A new cycle in the never-ending dynastic cycle may have already begun.

Karl von Clausewitz stated that war was a continuation of state policy by other means. The Chinese have considered this to be a truism for thousands of years. During the third century BC Sunzi's *Art of War* opined that the best war is the one that never has to be fought. For this reason, the following chapters devote a great deal of space to diplomacy, since to the Chinese war is not just a continuation of diplomacy, war *is* diplomacy. Since chapters can be read together or individually, some repetition was unavoidable.

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## Part 1

# IMPERIAL DECLINE

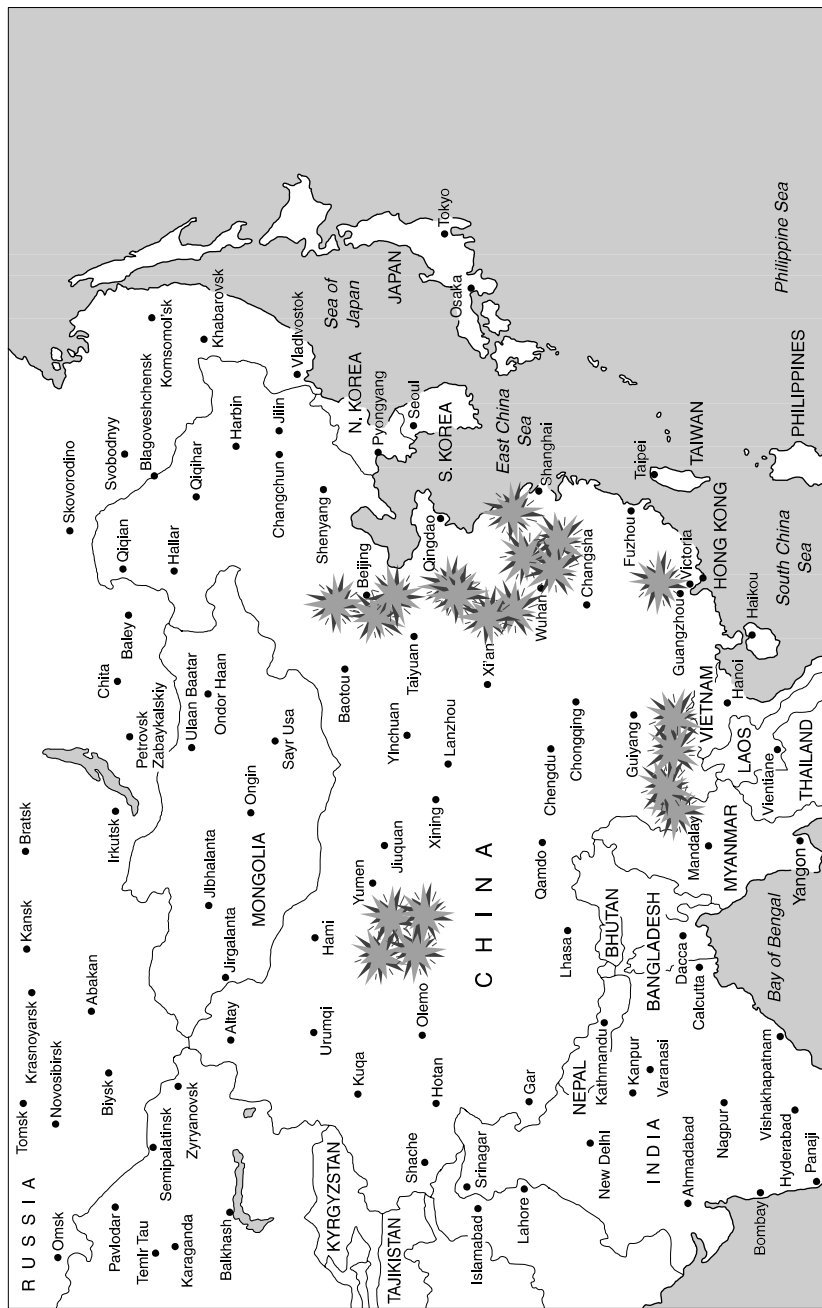


Figure 1 Imperial decline: ethnic/civil unrest and foreign trade imperialism in the center and in China's contiguous colonies.

## THE SECRET SOCIETIES AND QING DYNASTIC DECLINE

On 15 September 1813, a Manchu prince named Mianning used his musket within the walls of the Forbidden City to fire at invading rebels from the Eight Trigram Uprising, thus breaking the age-old imperial dictate that guns should never be fired in the Forbidden City.<sup>1</sup> This action is an entirely appropriate place to begin a discussion of modern Chinese warfare, since the most essential element of modern warfare is the gun and, by extension, artillery. With guns and bayonets, foot soldiers could not only compete with cavalry, they could dominate them:

The customary explanation for this new importance of infantry is that it resulted from the improvement in firearms; and it is true that the invention of the musket, its evolution into the flintlock, and the invention of the bayonet, all led to a pronounced increase in infantry fire power, and hence to an extension of foot soldiery.<sup>2</sup>

Although gunpowder may have been invented by the Chinese, and its explosive force was often utilized in battle, it was not until the sixteenth century that European muskets found their way back to China through the auspices of Japanese pirates; according to one Ming Dynasty account from 1571, the new guns from Japan were lauded for being superior to bows and arrows. The Chinese quickly adopted western-style artillery as well, and by the seventeenth century had iron guns mounted on carriages. In 1607, a Chinese author, Lü Kun, stated that “firearms are the most important of all weapons.”<sup>3</sup>

During the seventeenth century, European and Asian weaponry continued to advance on a par, but this situation changed rapidly by the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century with rifled guns and the bayonet, which allowed for the more efficient use of each soldier and promoted new tactics.<sup>4</sup> With rifles, the effective field of fire for infantry increased from 100–200 yards to 600–800 yards, which gave troops added protection from cavalry charges. With an attached bayonet, often called the “queen of arms,” there was also a “revolution in warfare” in infantry combat, since a foot soldier could be equipped to both shoot and fight hand-to-hand. The bayonet was soon the



“sole weapon fit for desperate close combat.”<sup>5</sup> Finally, in line with rapid advances in military technology, tactics and strategy were also forced to change dramatically. Geoffrey Parker has identified three elements that resulted from this change: “a new use of firepower, a new type of fortifications, and an increase in army size.”<sup>6</sup> Napoleon Bonaparte was perhaps the most famous of the new strategists, and soon pioneered the principles of “concentration of forces,” “maneuver,” and “combined action.”<sup>7</sup>

It was in these quickly evolving areas of modern weapons, tactics, and strategy that China lagged behind. According to William McNeill, this was no accident but was government policy: “Only the Far East remained apart, owing to Chinese and Japanese governmental policy which deliberately restricted European trade.”<sup>8</sup> These modernizing changes took place just as China’s Manchu-led Qing Dynasty was reaching its highest peak under the Qianglong Emperor (1736–95). During his sixty years on the throne, Qianglong oversaw the destruction of the Central Asian Öld Khan and the subjugation of the Zunghars.<sup>9</sup> As a result of his military victories, the Chinese Empire permanently absorbed Xinjiang in 1768. Other military endeavors included the suppression of rebellions within China and on Taiwan, and large-scale campaigns to attempt to subjugate Burma and Vietnam. Although not always successful, during Qianglong’s reign the Chinese Empire increased to its largest extent.

Immediately after the Qianglong Emperor retired in 1795, however, the Empire faced a series of domestic rebellions by ethnic minorities, secret societies, and sects under the Jiaqing Emperor (1796–1820) and his successor Daoguang (1820–50). This was not atypical, and David Ralston stated that “the system of rule which the Manchus had instituted had begun to deteriorate by the early nineteenth century . . . a process experienced by every preceding dynasty.”<sup>10</sup> The first of these was the Miao Revolt (1795–1806), the second was the White Lotus Rebellion (1796–1805), and the third was by the Eight Trigram Sect (1813). Although the Qing succeeded in putting down all three uprisings, in addition to quelling Muslim uprisings in Xinjiang during the 1820s,<sup>11</sup> this era of rebellion led to incredible destruction and to massive economic dislocation. They also called the dynasty’s “Mandate of Heaven” into question.

To reassure the primarily Han Chinese populace of the validity of the Manchu rule and to re-establish order within China, the Qing Court became even more traditional in its governing and thinking. Unfortunately for China, this era of Qing conservatism occurred just as military reform in Europe was speeding up; the Industrial Revolution in England, in particular, was to usher in dramatic changes. It was in the immediate aftermath of these rebellions that China was to experience its first military defeat in its encounters with the West, as the British traversed half the globe to subdue China in the Opium War.

### The Qing military

Before the Opium War (1839–42) and the Arrow War (1856–60), the Qing based their military structure on the traditional Banner system. Although the Qing frequently used their armies for foreign conquest among China's tributaries and to quell border uprisings, the day-to-day responsibility of the military was to oppose domestic and ethnic uprisings. This fact remained constant during the almost 200-year period from 1795 to 1989, from the Miao Revolt to the Tiananmen Incident.<sup>12</sup> Domestic and ethnic rebellions in China were so frequent that it is almost impossible to count them; for example, according to Robert Jenks, during the Ming Dynasty there were at least seventy-seven Miao rebellions in Guizhou Province alone, or as he estimates "about one every 3.5 years."<sup>13</sup> Under the Qing, and later under the Nationalists and Communists, keeping China unified arguably became the army's almost full-time occupation.

During the Miao, White Lotus, and Eight Trigram rebellions the Qing Army used the Banner system, created by the founder of the Qing Dynasty, Nurhaci. Originally he divided his troops into four Banners—yellow, white, red, and blue—and then later into eight. With the conquest of China, however, Nurhaci created a total of twenty-four Banners, eight each for Manchu, Han, and Mongol troops. The Manchu and Mongol cavalry, in particular, were highly regarded and widely feared. Instead of being concentrated in one place, the Qing spread the various Banners throughout China, with especially large garrisons located in frontier regions in the north and in major cities along the Yangzi. The main function of the Banners "was not defense against external aggression but the preservation of the Qing Empire from internal revolt."<sup>14</sup>

The Bannermen remained separate from the infantry, made up mainly of Han Chinese. The infantry was called the Army of the Green Standard. Its units were located primarily in the northwest, along the coast, and then in southern China. Overall, the command structure of the army was weak, since officers were rotated constantly from post to post to ensure against mutiny. In addition, many military officials obtained their posts because of their academic success in the Imperial Exams rather than for any firsthand knowledge of military affairs.

Estimates of the number of Manchu Bannermen total only 250,000 men. Meanwhile, by 1764 the Green Standard troops had grown to 630,000. Although this number dropped to 590,000 in 1785, it once again rose dramatically to approximately 660,000 in 1812. According to Ralph Powell, the main reason for this sharp increase was that it was the Green Standard that "had pacification duties among the border tribes and internal aborigines." Accordingly, the "decline noted by 1785 came after the end of the major campaigns of the Qianglong Emperor and the increase by 1812 is attributable to the revolts of the Miao tribes and the White Lotus Society."<sup>15</sup>

The most common weapons of a Qing soldier included swords, shields, and pikes. The Chinese infantry also used a large range of non-standardized weapons. Foreign observers commented on these “military anachronisms” during the Opium War:

bows and arrows; gunpowder so coarse and inferior that, when the English used it to blow up captured works, hundreds of pounds of the stuff sometimes did nothing but shake down bricks and dust; dart rockets with barbed tips . . . spears, halberds, and a curious thing like a hedge chopper fastened to the end of a pole; gongs for signaling, helmets of iron or brass, even chain mail.<sup>16</sup>

By the eighteenth century, Chinese-made muskets were commonplace, but they were clearly inferior to their European counterparts:

The Chinese musket, however, was a wretched thing, crudely made, of small caliber, with a touchhole large enough to admit a ten-penny nail. If the charge did not blow out the back, it escaped forward—for . . . the ball went in without wad or ramming. Worst of all, the thing was a matchlock, which is to say it was fired by holding a slow-burning cord over a hole instead of by pulling a trigger. English line regiments had not been issued such a weapon since the reign of Queen Anne.<sup>17</sup>

Chinese cannons were numerous, but Chinese infantry did not have field artillery, although the “gingal” resembled a large elephant gun and could fire a ball weighing up to a pound.

Since ancient times, Chinese rulers have proclaimed that “unity” of the Empire was the ultimate goal of the state, because unity meant “domestic peace, the prerequisite for prosperity and civilized life.” To a large degree, the army’s role was to sustain the unity of the Empire and, when necessary, to fight to reinstate it. However, in the Confucian world, the military was subservient to the Mandarin bureaucrat, which considered military means as just one element of state control. This was particularly the case whenever so-called barbarian dynasties ruled China—such as under the Manchus’ Qing Dynasty—when the “Confucian scholars” kept the “conquering barbarian military in their properly subordinate place . . . by helping the barbarian rulers hold power through all the civilian, more-than-military means that the task required.”<sup>18</sup>

Frank Kierman and John Fairbank’s *Chinese Ways in Warfare* was one of the first western books to study Chinese military philosophy. They identified three important characteristics of Chinese warfare: (1) the close interconnection between the military and bureaucracy; (2) a desire to avoid violence

whenever possible, and (3) a tendency to rely on defensive, rather than offensive, warfare. Although extermination of an enemy is acceptable, and is on occasion preferable, it is usually “less costly” simply to exhaust and pacify the enemy. Therefore, in the tradition of Sunzi, author of *Art of War*, the best war is the one that never has to be fought.<sup>19</sup>

When war was unavoidable, however, the Chinese military generals would draw no quarter.<sup>20</sup> Unlike Europe, where warfare gradually became intertwined with questions of morality, ethics, and international law,<sup>21</sup> in the Chinese way of thinking there was no universal law governing war, since the highest possible military and political goal was to achieve unity. As a result, the slaughter of innocent civilians and non-combatants was commonplace, and the estimates for the numbers of people killed while quelling China’s internal rebellions during the nineteenth century are in the tens of millions. One estimate of the number of Chinese killed during her twentieth-century wars and political mass movements has topped 115 million.<sup>22</sup>

### The Miao Revolt (1795–1806)

Throughout much of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, the Qing had to cope with Miao rebellions. The Miao were aboriginal tribes scattered throughout central and western China. They were especially concentrated in Guizhou Province, where about 40–60 percent of the population was composed of minority groups. The main points of friction between the Miao and the Manchus were Qing attempts to bring the Miao leaders within the regular government bureaucracy. Not only did this process interfere with the autonomy of the Miao tribes, but Han settlers and merchants usually followed close behind, which merely created greater ethnic friction. As a result, in 1795 an enormous Miao revolt broke out along the Hunan–Guizhou border. After eleven years, the Qing military finally subdued this revolt in 1806.

Qing’s policy *vis-à-vis* its minority peoples has traditionally been aimed primarily at “control” rather than absorption. By allowing native chieftains to retain their rule, the minority peoples were “pacified with as little effort and expense as possible.”<sup>23</sup> According to June Dreyer:

Abstention from aggression and a vague commitment of loyalty to the emperor and the Confucian values that he embodied were sufficient to attain this level of integration. Traditional customs, languages, and governing systems were not interfered with so long as they did not pose a threat to the Chinese state. The imperial bureaucracy extended its influence no further down than the *xian* (county) level, if that far. Barring the rise of a major threat to the peace of the territory under their jurisdiction, most officials had little further interest in the events of these areas.<sup>24</sup>

As Han settlers moved in ever greater numbers into the mountainous areas inhabited by the Miao, however, the Qing sought to extend bureaucratic control throughout the area. This policy gradually drew local Miao tribal chiefs into the Qing bureaucracy.<sup>25</sup>

The revolt in 1795 in Hunan and Guizhou was in response to the huge Han immigration into traditionally Miao areas. There was also a great deal of simmering hatred from the previous rebellion in 1735–36. According to Robert Jenks:

The brutal and sanguinary government military operations left a vast reservoir of ill-will and resentment among the Miao. During most of the remainder of the eighteenth century, unrest in Guizhou was relatively small in scale. Incidents were annoyingly frequent from the government point of view, but none of them constituted a serious challenge to governmental authority. Notable features of the period were the growing role played by Han in the unrest and the increase in sectarian influence upon the revolts of both Chinese and ethnic minorities.<sup>26</sup>

Under the leadership of Shi Sanbao and Shi Liudeng, the Miao rose up against the Han in 1795.

The Qing immediately sent troops into the Miao regions not only to put down the rebels, but to further increase state power: “Lands of rebellious Miao were confiscated by the state, and a chain of military garrisons was built to buttress government power in the Miao areas.” But, this policy of land confiscation exacerbated tensions, especially since rents charged to Miao tenants on government land were “ruinous.”<sup>27</sup>

The Qing army used traditional military methods to defeat the Miao Revolt.<sup>28</sup> Most of the fighting took place in western Hunan, although Miao groups in eastern Guizhou also participated sporadically. Accordingly, the measures taken by the Qing troops were “Draconian,” and included “forced assimilation, larger garrisons of both regular troops and military-agricultural colonists, and the construction of a long wall with manned watchtowers to insure that Miao and Han remained segregated.”<sup>29</sup>

Following the Banners’ victory, the Qing delegated an official named Fu Nai responsibility for quelling further unrest and stabilizing the Miao areas. He first ordered the establishment of agricultural colonies to keep the Miao under strict military control. In a strong program of sinification, he also ordered an end to all traditional Miao religious practice and the introduction of Chinese education into Miao schools. Finally, although Fu Nai tried to keep the Miao villages separate from Han areas, the pressures caused by new Han immigration increased tensions further. These policies ensured that further Miao uprisings would take place during the 1850s, when the Qing authorities were preoccupied with the Taipings.

### The White Lotus Rebellion (1796–1805)

The members of the White Lotus Society (*Bailian jiao*) were not ethnically different from Han Chinese, but belonged to a popular religious organization that was based on a mixture of Taoism, Buddhism, and Manicheism. One of its core beliefs was that the dual deities—Buddha and the Manichean “Prince of Light”—would come to earth to establish an earthly paradise. Although there had been White Lotus outbreaks before (for example, in 1622 in Shandong Province) the 1796 rebellion was centered in Hubei, Sichuan, and Shaanxi Provinces.<sup>30</sup> It was indirectly sparked by the Miao Revolt, since White Lotus congregations formed their own protective militias, which then rose in open revolt against the Qing Dynasty during February 1796.<sup>31</sup>

The area bordering on Hubei, Sichuan, and Shaanxi was mountainous and inhospitable. In addition to the economic hardship, most settlers were recent immigrants, and so there were social and cultural problems with the neighboring minorities as well. The White Lotus membership included not only poor farmers, but also lower-level officials and yamen clerks. Basing its revolutionary philosophy on a mixture of religion and anti-Manchu Han nationalism, the White Lotus leaders quickly increased their base of support.<sup>32</sup>

The military wing of the White Lotus was composed largely of bandits who practiced martial arts, including various boxing techniques. These bandits often allied themselves with salt smugglers and counterfeiterers, who used the social instability and chaos engendered by the rebellions to their economic advantage. As a result of these alliances between the White Lotus and various other social outcasts, it was estimated in 1800 that only 10 percent of the troops in the White Lotus armies were devoted followers of their religion.<sup>33</sup>

The Qing commanders sent to repress the rebellion had a difficult time putting down the White Lotus. The White Lotus bands mainly used guerrilla tactics, and once they disbanded were virtually indistinguishable from the local population. As one Qing official complained:

The rebels are all our own subjects. They are not like some external tribe . . . that can be demarcated by a territorial boundary and identified by its distinctive clothing and language. . . . When they congregate and oppose the government, they are rebels; when they disperse and depart, they are civilians once more.<sup>34</sup>

Without any clear enemy to fight, brutality against civilians became more common. Because of the brutality of the Qing troops, however, the troops were soon nicknamed the “Red Lotus” Society, and the White Lotus Rebellion got worse, not better.

The Qing forces were under the command of Fukangan, a Manchu related by marriage to the Qianglong Emperor, and Helin, the brother of the most powerful and corrupt eunuch in Beijing, Heshen. After both died in battle in

1796, Beijing sent new officials, but none were successful. Only after 1800 did Beijing adopt new tactics. Most importantly, the government began to organize village militias (*tuan*) to help surround and destroy the White Lotus, but “despite their contribution, after the campaigns ended the militia units were ordered disbanded,” perhaps for fear that they might become the Manchu’s next opponent.<sup>35</sup>

The White Lotus were finally put down in 1805 by a combination of military and social policies. Approximately 7,000 Banner troops brought in from Manchuria, in league with dependable Green Standard battalions brought in from Guizhou and Yunnan, and buttressed by tens of thousands of local mercenaries (*xiangyong*), drove the White Lotus from their strongholds. Meanwhile, the local militias made sure that new uprisings would not occur. After almost ten years of fighting, the Qing troops finally succeeded in rounding up and destroying over 100,000 followers of the White Lotus. To achieve this victory, Beijing spent an estimated 120 million taels, which not only eliminated the budget surplus gathered under the Qianglong Emperor, but also drained the Imperial treasury in the process. The White Lotus rebels continued to be active, however, and perhaps influenced the next major domestic rebellion in 1813, the Eight Trigram Sect.

### Revolt of the Eight Trigram Sect (1813)

Domestic rebellion broke out anew in 1813, only this time in Zhili, Shandong, and Henan provinces under the Eight Trigram Sect (*Bagua jiao*). In 1812, the Eight Trigram’s leaders, Lin Qing and Li Wencheng, announced that Li was a “true lord of the Ming,” and declared 1813 as the year for rebellion. After winning support from several powerful eunuchs who worked in the Forbidden City, they attacked the palace on 15 September 1813. The Eight Trigram rebels made it all the way into the Forbidden City. They might have been successful in overthrowing the Qing, except that Prince Mianning—the future Daoguang Emperor—used his forbidden musket to oppose the invaders.<sup>36</sup>

The reign of the Jiaqing Emperor was not particularly auspicious. In addition to having to suppress the Miao and the White Lotus rebellions: “A mutiny disturbed the army, for some years pirates infested the south coasts, [and] an attempt to assassinate the Emperor barely failed of success.”<sup>37</sup> The 1813 outbreak of Eight Trigram has been portrayed as being similar to the White Lotus. Unlike the religious followers of the White Lotus, however, the leaders of the Eight Trigram seemed more interested in taking personal power by invading the Forbidden City and overthrowing the Manchu Dynasty.

Lin Qing and Li Wencheng seemed to have been inspired to overthrow the Qing by the appearance in 1811 of a bright comet. Although Beijing claimed that this comet showed great glory for the Dynasty, Lin and Li apparently saw this as an “auspicious blessing for their enterprise” to overthrow the Dynasty. They divided their followers into eight groups, or trigrams, and gathered



contributions by promising future benefits after the rebellion was successful: "It was promised that when Li Wencheng had risen up, everyone who had given money or grain would be given land or official rank."<sup>38</sup>

During July 1813, the main leaders of the Eight Trigram met to set a date for the rebellion. They were prompted by droughts and floods, as well as by sharp increases in the price of wheat, and set 15 September as an appropriate time for the rebellion to begin. In addition to being right after the harvest, the Jiaqing Emperor was scheduled to be out of Beijing, so the Forbidden City would be lightly guarded. The plan was that when Jiaqing returned to Beijing, they would attack him outside the city and assassinate him.

As the day for the attack approached, the Eight Trigram's members obtained small white flags to display on their doors, so they would not be attacked by mistake. Meanwhile, Beijing officials had heard rumors of a planned rebellion and arrested Li Wencheng on 2 September. Officials tortured Li, but before they hurt him too seriously, Li's followers broke in and released him. This event pushed forward the date of the rebellion, and by 6 September the members were busy collecting weapons. Followers of the Eight Trigram quickly took control of the towns of Hua, Cao, and Dingtao in southern Zhili and Shandong provinces.

The biggest battle, however, was for the Forbidden City. Lin Qing was in charge of this effort, although he himself stayed at home and did not participate in the attack. Lin enlisted several palace eunuchs to lead his approximately 250 followers through the gates. To distinguish themselves, the rebels tied white cloth around their heads and waists. Armed with knives and iron bars, they planned to enter the Forbidden City at noon, when the guards would be eating their meals. In addition, the Jiaqing Emperor was less than fifty miles from the city walls. This plan met with mixed success and about eighty rebels made it through the gates before they were closed. Fighting soon erupted as the Manchus realized that the rebels were inside the gates. It was at this time that Prince Mianning joined the battle and used his musket to wound one rebel and to kill another.

With the advantage of surprise lost, the rebels turned and fled. Under the leadership of the Yi Prince, Princes Cheng, Mianzhi, Mianning, officers of the Imperial household, and the loyal eunuchs, the surviving rebels were hunted down. The Eight Trigram rebellion was defeated. A total of thirty-one rebels were killed and forty-four captured alive, but before it was over the rebels had either murdered or injured over a hundred people in the palace. By the time the government suppressed the revolt, more than 20,000 Eight Trigram members had been killed.

## Conclusions

While the Manchus succeeded in putting down the Miao, White Lotus, and Eight Trigram uprisings, the combined effect of the rebellions weakened the



Qing Dynasty. According to Hu Sheng, the “White Lotus rebellion had dealt a heavy blow” by showing “the inherent weakness of a seemingly powerful Qing autocracy.”<sup>39</sup> Although Philip Kuhn has argued persuasively that the rebellion never seriously threatened the “dynasty’s existence,” he does admit that it “so damaged the government’s prestige and depleted its treasury, however, that it can fairly be inscribed in that long roll of popular uprisings that, over the course of a century, brought the dynasty to ruin.”<sup>40</sup>

The generally ineffective response of the Qing government and military to these rebellions highlights how China had begun to lag behind Europe—which was even then embroiled in the Napoleonic Wars—both in terms of modern weaponry and political organization. Just a few years before, during the reign of the Qianglong Emperor, the Manchus increased the Chinese Empire to its largest extent. However, after almost twenty years of constant domestic turmoil and warfare, China suffered from widespread destruction and economic dislocation. What is more important, these rebellions called the Qing Dynasty’s right to rule—the “Mandate of Heaven”—into question. Therefore, according to Immanuel Hsü, China “was plagued with serious administrative, military, and moral problems which were unmistakable indices of the falling dynastic fortune.”<sup>41</sup>

It was just at this time that trade friction and political tensions with the western nations began to grow. To reassure the Han majority of the validity of the Manchu rule, the Qing Court adopted a conservative foreign policy. By chance, this era came just as the Industrial Revolution in England ushered in dramatic changes in science, technology, and military weaponry. Not surprisingly, the Manchu Court found itself unable to cope with these rapidly changing circumstances and was soon face-to-face with a new foe—Great Britain—that had traveled half-way around the world in order to trade with China. As a result, a Chinese dynasty would soon receive its first “modern” military defeat—Qing armies had earlier suffered traditional defeats in their campaigns against Burma and Vietnam—at the hands of the West.

## THE OPIUM WAR AND THE ORIGIN OF CHINA'S MODERN WARFARE

The Opium War is best characterized as a trade war, during which the Chinese tried and failed to use traditional military methods to counter Britain's modern weaponry, strategy, and tactics. Near the end of the conflict, on 21 July 1842, a British naval squadron under the supreme command of Sir Henry Pottinger took the river city of Zhenjiang, strategically located near the junction of the Yangzi River and the Grand Canal, and moved into position to attack Nanjing (Nanking). The Manchu Emperor in Beijing, fearful that the Qing's control over southern China might be cut, reluctantly agreed to negotiate for peace. The resulting thirteen-article Treaty of Nanjing was signed on 29 August 1842.

The Sino-British "Opium War" was significant for three reasons. One, it was arguably the first direct military conflict between a western European nation and China. Two, it was one of the first military conflicts in history to take advantage of the rapid technological changes that had gone hand-in-hand with British industrialization—such as compartmentalized metal ships and percussion rifles—thus setting a new standard for military conflicts. Three, the war ended when China agreed to sign an international treaty.<sup>42</sup> This treaty was arguably the first that China ever signed in which the Chinese government accorded equal treatment to foreign participants—traditionally thought of as mere "barbarians."<sup>43</sup>

Historians have long argued whether or not the Opium War initiated the period known as China's "modern history."<sup>44</sup> If so, this new era was the result of China's ignominious defeat at the hands of a naval power located half a world away. It was perhaps fitting that China's modern history began as a direct result of war, and that this war was fought with the most modern of the European powers. The Opium War led to over a century of profound changes in China, as the Chinese government and people turned to the West to learn new ways of living, learning, and—most importantly—fighting.

The origins of the Opium War are varied, and are certainly more complicated than one standard Chinese argument that "Britain and U.S. traffickers had by a despicable combination of bribery with smuggling broken through

the dike, so that poisonous black torrents of opium began to gush into China.”<sup>45</sup> This view largely ignores that the Chinese opium trade preceded the British, dating back at least a century to Dutch traders who imported opium from the Indies. It also de-emphasizes the fact that China had an extensive internal market for opium, most of which was grown in Sichuan Province, and which was traded freely throughout China. Finally, the ethnic division between those who sought to profit from the trade in opium—the Han Chinese in the southern city of Guangzhou (Canton)—and their Qing overlords—the Manchus in Beijing—is also overlooked.

The Opium War can better be understood as a trade war.<sup>46</sup> This is perhaps best shown by the fact that many foreign merchants championed opium’s legalization and regulation by the Chinese government, even though increased tariff rates would have initially resulted in decreased profits. In addition, one of the first shots of the war, fired by the British Navy at the “Battle of Chuanbi” on 3 November 1839, was against a British ship—the *Royal Saxon*—that was attempting to run the British blockade of Guangzhou; in this incident, Chinese war junks fought in support of the *Royal Saxon* against the British Navy. Finally, one of the major articles of the Treaty of Nanjing gave British merchants the right to trade at five ports along China’s coast, instead of only at Guangzhou. Clearly, increasing trade was the major British motivation; granted, Empire-building probably came a close second.

For the British, the central conflict in the Opium War was over free trade, rather than over the main product of this trade—opium. Within China, however, one of the most important domestic questions was whether the Manchu emperors in northern China should have the power to dictate to Han merchants in southern China what they could and could not trade.<sup>47</sup> By means of their victory in the Opium War, the British clearly supported the rights of the Han merchants against the Manchus; this ethnic Han–Manchu struggle continued and intensified over the next seventy years, eventually resulting in the 1911 Revolution, when the Han finally succeeded in overthrowing the Manchu Dynasty.

Placed in this perspective, and with the advantage of hindsight, the British victory in the Opium War represented a significant advance for the Han Chinese majority, and further weakened the Manchu’s political power in preparation for an eventual Han victory. The underlying Han–Manchu tensions may even help to explain the one-sided nature of the conflict, since the Opium War was little more than a series of sporadic British confrontations against—by western standards—poorly equipped and trained Manchu-led Han Chinese forces using traditional strategy and tactics. Han troops seemed particularly reluctant to die for their Manchu Emperor.

During the course of the Opium War (1839–42) there were only three notable confrontations—the September 1839 “Battle of Kowloon,” the November 1839 “Battle of Chuanbi,” and the August 1840 “Battle of the Barrier”—that even earned the title of battle. Most of the other noteworthy Sino–British

engagements—with the so-called Sanyuanli Incident being a notable exception—were British-sponsored actions designed to take strategically placed cities and level China's defensive fortresses. On the whole, the Han troops fought poorly, and the British interspersed their military victories with lengthy diplomatic negotiations with Beijing officials. As we shall see, only at Zhapu and Zhenjiang, two of the final encounters of the war, did British troops face Manchu Bannermen, who provided the most determined resistance of the entire war.

### **The “Battle of Kowloon”**

According to most accounts, the first battle of the Opium War took place on 4 September 1839 near the Kowloon Peninsula, immediately across the bay from the Chinese island of Hong Kong. During the conflict, a number of Chinese ships were damaged and an unknown number of Han Chinese sailors were killed and injured; according to one source, two Chinese were killed, two were seriously wounded, and four were slightly wounded.<sup>48</sup> The British ships and crews escaped virtually unscathed. However, since traditional warfare in China involved repelling barbarian invasion, the British retreat led Chinese officials to proclaim this battle a Chinese victory, the first of what would later be referred to in Chinese histories as the “Six Smashing Blows” against the British Navy. This official misreporting of events set the pattern for the entire war, a war the Qing Court declared won soon after they backed down and agreed to Britain's peace conditions in August 1842. As a result, the Chinese penchant for rewriting history in their favor all but guaranteed that the military lessons of the Opium War would be lost or overlooked by the Chinese populace as a whole.

Before turning to the battle itself, it is important to review some of the political events that led to conflict. It was during September 1836 when the Qing Emperor, Daoguang, ordered the governor-general in Guangzhou to eliminate all opium imports. Although China initially prohibited the smoking of opium in 1729, and further outlawed its growth and importation in 1796, these laws were never really enforced. As a result, there was a lively opium trade in China, including both domestic and imported varieties.

While the Qing Court overlooked the opium trade as long as China retained a foreign trade surplus, it became increasingly concerned during the mid-1830s when the opium trade led to a serious trade imbalance. Millions of dollars in silver began to be shipped out of China every year, primarily by British traders. Changes in the international silver market exacerbated this problem. This silver depletion led to inflation, and threatened to injure China's domestic trade. Recent research has suggested, however, that the real underlying cause of the silver depletion was not just foreign trade, but also the vast sums being spent by the Manchus to put down Muslim rebellions in Xinjiang.<sup>49</sup>

Therefore, the leading cause of the Opium War was not opium *per se*, but the supposedly injurious effects of foreign trade. In 1852, the former governor and commander-in-chief of the colony of Hong Kong, Sir John Francis Davis, even wrote that “at no time was the [opium] traffic deserving of the full load of infamy with which many were disposed to heap it, for at the most it only supplied the poison which the Chinese were not obliged to take.” In fact, Davis wrote, the “worst effect” of the opium trade was the “piracy it engendered” and: “Of the war it [the piracy] certainly was mainly the cause.”<sup>50</sup>

Disruption of domestic trade was highly dangerous to any foreign usurper of the Chinese throne, and the Manchus were particularly concerned that change of any kind might lead to claims that the Qing Dynasty had lost its “Mandate of Heaven.” A public realization that the Manchus had lost this mandate would certainly result in new domestic rebellions attempting to return a Han Dynasty to the throne. Therefore, although the Qing government toyed with the proposal to legalize opium imports and impose a tariff similar to other foreign medicines, in the end, fear of change—no doubt coupled with concern of an ever-strengthening Han merchant class in South China—persuaded the Daoguang Emperor to insist instead on harsher opium controls.

In late 1838, the Daoguang Emperor made Lin Zexu, a loyal Han Chinese official, the high commissioner of Guangzhou.<sup>51</sup> The Emperor gave Lin full command over the Guangdong Navy so as to stamp out the opium trade at Guangzhou, although this order was disguised in the official edict under the phrase “to investigate port affairs.”<sup>52</sup> Lin apparently realized the superiority of the foreign ships, and so avoided any direct naval conflict. Instead, Lin sought to manage the foreign traders through timely suspension and restoration of trade privileges.

Tensions increased dramatically following the 26 February 1839 execution, carried out in front of the foreign-run factories in Guangzhou, of a Chinese opium smuggler. In mid-March, Lin ordered the foreign merchants to hand over all of their opium stocks as well as sign a pledge never to trade in opium again. When the merchants delayed, Lin ordered the blockade of the foreign factories on 24 March. Lin also ordered the Chinese workers to stay away, and barricaded all entrances to the foreign area.

On 27 March 1839, Charles Elliot, the British chief superintendent, ordered that all foreign-owned opium chests be handed over to him, after which he would turn them over to Lin. His rationale for this unusual move was that the merchants were not to blame for the heightening tensions, but that Commissioner Lin had directly threatened the British government, since for “the first time, in our intercourse with this Empire, its government has taken the unprovoked initiative in aggressive measures against British life, liberty, and property, and against the dignity of the Crown.”<sup>53</sup>

By resorting to the stratagem of handing over all the opium himself, Elliot rendered the chests British property. This in turn made the Chinese government directly liable to the British Crown for all losses. Authors like Maurice

Collis have argued that the British merchants were happy to unload their unsold opium, and expected its destruction merely to "send up the price for the new crop."<sup>54</sup> Although this argument may be partially true, as soon as the opium became British property it also became the responsibility of the British government to obtain proper compensation for its loss from China. On 18 October 1839, Lord Palmerston wrote to Elliot that he would send an expeditionary force to deal with China.

Woefully uninformed about European diplomatic practices, the Manchu officials mistakenly interpreted Elliot's decision to hand over the opium as proof that Britain had surrendered, and so proclaimed victory. Under Lin's supervision, the Chinese confiscated and destroyed over 20,000 cases of opium. Blockaded, the British merchants had little choice but to retreat from Guangzhou. By July 1839, there were approximately fifty British ships anchored in a protected bay near the island of Hong Kong.

The situation remained tense through early July, when British sailors on shore leave killed Lin Weixi, a local islander. Following the murder on 7 July, Commissioner Lin demanded that the guilty culprits be turned over immediately to the Chinese authorities for punishment. Elliot refused, citing the common practice in China of torturing prisoners to force a confession. Until the guilty party was handed over, Lin ordered that Chinese merchants should no longer sell supplies to the British. He further ordered that all local springs near Hong Kong be poisoned so as to deprive the British of potable water.

On 25 August 1839, Elliot protested to Lin the Chinese decision to deny the British provisions. On 4 September he led a small fleet of ships to Kowloon to demand supplies. Elliot's three ships—the cutters *Louisa* and *Pearl*, supported by the pinnace from the *Volage*—faced three Chinese war junks. When the Chinese ignored Elliot's ultimatum that supplies be provided within half an hour, he gave the order to fire.

This Sino-British military encounter was called the "Battle of Kowloon." The next day, a British eyewitness to the battle provided the following written account of the first naval conflict between European and Asian powers:

the Junks then triced up their Boarding nettings, and came into action with us at half pistol shot; our guns were well served with Grape and round shot; the first shot we gave them they opened a tremendous and well directed fire upon us, from all their Guns (each Junk had 10 Guns, and they brought all these over on the side which we engaged them on.) . . . The Junks' fire, Thank God! was not enough depressed, or if otherwise, none would have lived to tell the Story.— 19 of their Guns we received in the mainsail.<sup>55</sup>

At 3:45 P.M. the Chinese shore batteries opened fire in support of the Junks, and by 4:30 P.M. the *Louisa* had fired 104 rounds.

Running low on ammunition, the British retreated. When the Junks pursued them, however, the *Louisa* and the *Pearl* turned and resumed battle. According to an eyewitness report:

The junks immediately made sail after the *Louisa* and at 4:45 they came up with the English vessels. We hove the vessel in stays on their starboard Beam, and the “Pearl” on the larboard Bow of the van Junk, and gave them three such Broad-sides that it made every Rope in the vessel grin again.—We loaded with Grape the fourth time, and gave them Gun for Gun.—The shrieking on board was dreadful.<sup>56</sup>

After resorting to grape-shot, the *Louisa* and the *Pearl* were joined by several smaller British boats, including a barge from the *Cambridge* commanded by an American, Captain J. A. Douglas. This late-arriving ship soon absorbed the bulk of the casualties, as Douglas received a flesh wound in his arm and two of his sailors received more serious injuries.

The Chinese naval commander, however, quickly reported victory to Commissioner Lin, even though damage to the British ships was slight. According to Arthur Waley, this report claimed that the Chinese sank a two-masted English ship and inflicted “at least forty or fifty” casualties.<sup>57</sup> In his official memorial to Beijing, dated 18 September 1839, Lin repeated the claim that the Chinese forces had sunk one British ship, and he furthermore stated that at least seventeen British had been killed.<sup>58</sup> Most importantly, Lin reported to his Manchu overlords how the Chinese had “obtained a victory over superior forces.”<sup>59</sup>

Lin’s report, and other later memorials that reported Chinese defeats as victories, helped lull China’s Manchu leaders into a sense of complacency, as they falsely assumed that the Han officials were successfully repelling the British. The resulting “myth of victory,” as James Polachek has called it, helped insure that China did not take much-needed military precautions to insure against defeat at the hands of the British.<sup>60</sup> To a large degree, it was this Chinese-sponsored myth of invincibility that helped make the later battles of the Opium War appear so one-sided to many western eyes.

### The “Battle of Chuanbi”

Tensions remained high throughout September and October, as Commissioner Lin continued to demand that the murderer of Lin Weixi be turned over to the Chinese authorities. Elliot refused, and also ordered all British ships to refrain from signing a bond agreeing not to trade in opium. Chinese authorities required this bond before allowing foreign ships to dock at Guangzhou to trade. For this reason, Hu Sheng has asserted that “Charles Elliot, not Lin Zexu, was responsible for the stoppage of trade after the confiscated opium had been publicly destroyed.”<sup>61</sup>

Elliot interpreted the Chinese demands differently, however, since the bond stated that should opium subsequently be discovered on board that ship, all cargo would be confiscated and the perpetrators executed. Not only did this bond interfere with free trade by placing full control over trade in Chinese hands, but Elliot argued that if a British captain signed such a bond, then it meant they consented to Chinese penal legislation “involving capital punishment by Chinese forms of trial.” This punishment, Elliot argued, he could neither sanction, nor “fail to prevent by all lawful means in my power.”<sup>62</sup>

In late October, one British ship—the *Thomas Coutts* under Captain Warner—successfully defied Elliot and after signing the bond entered Guangzhou. Interpreting this as a direct threat to his authority, Elliot ordered his ships to a point about one mile south of the Chuanbi battery on 27 October. When a second British ship—the *Royal Saxon*—tried to defy the blockade on 3 November 1839, the *Volage* fired a shot across her bow. In response, Chinese war junks moved out to protect the *Royal Saxon*. The junks eventually anchored close to the Chuanbi shoreline in a position that threatened future action against the British merchantmen, thus precipitating further conflict. In addition, according to a reputable Chinese account, the British may have misunderstood the meaning of the Imperial flags on the Chinese ships: “the English mistook our red flags for a declaration of war, and opened fire;—for in Europe a red flag means war, and a white one peace.”<sup>63</sup>

The “Battle of Chuanbi” that followed these events was certainly one of the strangest of the war. It involved Chinese junks staffed by Han sailors fighting to protect a British ship that had signed the Manchu’s anti-opium bond from other British ships trying to stop her entering port. Arguably, therefore, the origin of this battle was not even between the British and the Chinese, but was really as a result of the British Navy fighting to stop one of Elliot’s own British ships that had refused to uphold his free-trade principles. The “Battle of Chuanbi,” perhaps more than any other conflict during the Opium War, vividly revealed the underlying free-trade tensions.

The battle itself was comparatively short and one-sided, however, as the two men-of-war, the *Volage* and the recently arrived *Hyacinth*, faced sixteen war junks and thirteen fireboats under the command of Admiral Guan Tianpei. To protect the British merchant fleet anchored just outside the Bogue, the *Volage* and the *Hyacinth* could either retreat or they could try to force back the Chinese. Perhaps fearful that a British retreat would be misconstrued as yet another Chinese victory, Elliot gave the order to attack.

Around noon on 3 November, Captain Henry Smith, commander of the British naval forces, ordered the first barrage against the twenty-nine Chinese ships. Taking advantage of the wind, the more maneuverable British ships ran along the Chinese line and fired starboard broadsides against the slower Chinese ships. This tactic immediately resulted in the sinking of a Chinese fire-boat. Soon afterward, a Chinese war junk was also struck in its ammunition



magazine and blew up; the *Volage* was slightly damaged by burning debris, but continued the battle unchecked.

Completing their run, the *Volage* and the *Hyacinth* turned and repeated the maneuver using their port broadsides. The Chinese ships fell into confusion, and the *Hyacinth* took advantage and moved in for short-range firing. Faced with superior fire power, one junk was blown up, three were sunk, and several others were damaged. During the conflict, the Han Chinese crews of several ships deserted, while the majority tried to retreat. Only Admiral Guan's flagship, which carried twelve cannon, remained in place and was holed repeatedly before Captain Smith gave the signal to halt.

Based on the list of damaged ships and estimated casualties, this encounter was clearly another British victory. The *Volage* sustained relatively light damage to its sails and rigging, while the *Hyacinth's* mizen-mast was hit by a 12-pound ball. Only one British sailor was wounded. Meanwhile, Chinese reports admitted that fifteen of their own soldiers were killed and many more wounded. The Chinese reports greatly exaggerated the British losses, however, and so furthered the generally accepted myth that China was winning the Opium War.

### The "Battle of the Barrier"

Tensions between Britain and China continued unabated during early 1840, although neither party had issued a formal declaration of war. Commissioner Lin, having failed in his efforts to force the foreign ships to stop transporting opium from India, instead initiated a campaign against the Chinese smugglers, traders, and smokers. In April, British warships began to embargo Guangzhou, Xiamen (Amoy), Ningbo, and the mouths of the Yangzi and Yellow rivers. Although the goal was to prevent foreign ships from entering Chinese ports, large Chinese ships—such as salt junks—were also stopped; by early July, seven or eight of these ships had been impounded near Guangzhou.

By early summer 1840, a British expeditionary fleet was ready to move northward toward central China. Brigadier-General George Burrell commanded the British force, which included twenty-two warships, twenty-seven transports, and 3,600 Scottish, Irish, and Indian "sepoy" infantry.<sup>64</sup> Led by the *Wellesley*, *Conway*, *Alligator*, the troopship *Rattlesnake* and then two troop transports, this expedition arrived at the mouth of the Yangzi River on 4 July and the next day occupied Dinghai, which had a commanding view over the Yangzi and Shanghai.

A smaller British force then moved further north. On 9 August 1840, Admiral George Elliot, supreme commander of the naval forces, and Captain Charles Elliot arrived at the mouth of the Bei He. The Dagou fortress guarded the river approach to Tianjin and Beijing. From this vantage point, the British could launch an attack against Beijing. A British letter from Lord Palmerston was presented to Chinese officials on 15 August and the Manchu Emperor reportedly received it himself on 20 August. The letter detailed the British

complaints about the tensions in Guangzhou, and most of the blame was directed against Commissioner Lin.

Although the Manchu Emperor had formerly supported Lin, on 21 August he turned on him and accused him of supporting failed policies:

Externally you wanted to stop the [opium] trade, but it has not been stopped; internally you wanted to wipe out the outlaws [opium smugglers and smokers], but they are not cleared away. You are just making excuses with empty words. Nothing has been accomplished but many troubles have been created. Thinking of these things, I cannot contain my rage. What do you have to say now?<sup>65</sup>

A tentative agreement for talks was reached, although the Manchus insisted that all negotiations be held in southern China, thus keeping the British at arm's length. On 17 September 1840, Qishan became the new imperial commissioner to Guangzhou, and on 25 September, the British left Tianjin. However, the Emperor simultaneously ordered that reinforcements be summoned and "water forces" be trained to repel the British on both the land and the sea.<sup>66</sup>

Meanwhile, in Guangzhou, Lin had already issued an edict offering rewards for captured or killed British sailors and soldiers. The amounts varied greatly, but the equivalent of \$100 was offered for a common sailor (or \$20 for his head), while as much as \$5,000 would be paid for a man-of-war's captain.<sup>67</sup> Spurred on by these substantial rewards, Chinese mobs attacked several foreigners. On 5 August 1840, one British citizen—by the name of Stanton—was captured and imprisoned by Chinese troops while he was bathing at Cacilhas Bay, southeast of the barrier that separated Macao from Chinese territory. Stanton was soon brought to Guangzhou, where Commissioner Lin participated in his interrogation.

Lin might have been planning to release his prisoner anyway, but Captain Smith, who was in charge of British interests in Macao and Guangzhou while Elliot was away, pressured the Portuguese officials to demand Stanton's release. Lin, who regarded the Portuguese as occupying Macao only with China's permission, would not consent to show weakness by acceding to this demand. He therefore dispatched several thousand Chinese troops to Macao, nominally to protect the Portuguese from British interference. This Chinese action appeared designed to cut off foreign access to China from Macao.

Confirmation of this appeared on 16 August, when Lin reported his intention of inspecting his regular troops and the newly recruited militia units. If all was in order, he would soon "select a day, marshal them and send them all out to sea, to engage in a final battle of annihilation." As for reports that the British had occupied and controlled the city of Dinghai, Lin proposed that Chinese militia secretly enter the city and then turn on the foreigners, butchering them as easily as "chickens or dogs."<sup>68</sup>

In preparation for carrying out this planned attack, Lin traveled to Lion Reach, twenty-eight miles downstream from Guangzhou, where the Chinese forces were being trained. His inspection was cut short, however, by the British decision to strike first. On 19 August 1840, Captain Smith ordered an attack on the so-called “Barrier,” the boundary between Macao and China, which was guarded by nine war junks and about 1,500 Chinese troops.

About 200 British marines were loaded on to the *Enterprise* steamer, with two longboats in tow. Backed up by the firepower from several corvettes, including the *Hyacinth* and the *Louisa*, this small force worked its way along the coastline toward Cacilhas Bay. When they arrived within about one-third of a mile from the barrier, the corvettes’ 32-pound cannon began to fire. The Chinese battery was designed to guard the wall and gate, not the sea, and so proved almost useless; the Chinese gun crew eventually deserted their cannon to escape from the British fire.

After about an hour, Captain Smith ordered his men to land, take the Chinese battery, and spike its twenty-seven guns. A light artillery piece was brought ashore and was turned against the barrier. Meanwhile, Chinese war junks joined the battle, but two were sunk and the rest were soon forced by the superior British firepower to withdraw. Never intending to hold the barrier, the British troops instead burned down the Chinese stores and magazines.

British casualties were exceedingly light during the “Battle of the Barrier,” numbering only four wounded. Meanwhile, the British guns fired over 600 rounds during this encounter, causing substantial Chinese casualties. Once again, Lin reported this engagement as another victory to the Emperor; he claimed that the Chinese forces drove off the British with heavy losses to both their troops and ships. Still, as later events would show, the local military leaders must have realized that they lost the engagement, since no further attempts to assert control over Macao were ever made.

### **The “Sanyuanli Incident”**

Ineffective in his efforts to quell the foreigners, on 13 October 1840, Lin learned that he was no longer governor-general of Guangdong. A week later he heard that he was to proceed to Beijing for trial. This order was temporarily delayed so that Lin could assist his replacement, Qishan, but by the summer of 1841, Lin had been exiled to Ili, in the far western region of Xinjiang.

Qishan initially took a more conciliatory position to the British than Lin. Once the two forts guarding Guangzhou’s harbor were taken by the British on 7 January 1841, he negotiated and signed the Convention of Chuanbi on 20 January 1841. By this convention, Britain received Hong Kong, \$6 million, and the right to communicate directly with Chinese officials in Guangzhou. However, both Beijing and London later refuted these terms.

Conflict was renewed on 26 February 1841, when the British took the Chinese forts along the Middle Bogue and then occupied the foreign factories

in Guangzhou on 18 March. On 21 May, Chinese fireboats tried to sink the British fleet anchored just off the city. This plan failed miserably, and during the next few days the British sank seventy-one junks, destroyed Guangzhou's shore batteries, and burned the waterfront.

Major General Sir Hugh Gough's troops surrounded Guangzhou from the north when the *Nemesis*, the British Navy's newest shallow-draft steamer, moved upstream to the northwest of Guangzhou and disembarked troops behind the city's defenses. On 25 May, General Gough's Indian and British soldiers captured the five Chinese forts on the hills overlooking the northern gate of Guangzhou, thus cutting off Guangzhou's main road to the north. To save Guangzhou from an imminent British attack, the Chinese officials agreed on 27 May to back down and to pay the \$6-million indemnity.

The British appeared to have secured a complete victory against Guangzhou. Only two days later, however, a relatively small incident at Sanyuanli, a village near Guangzhou, convinced many Chinese that they could still win a war against the British. This incident eventually entered Chinese lore as a great anti-foreign victory and was later glorified as an anti-Imperialist victory by the Chinese Communists.

Described by one scholar as the "final episode in the tragi-comic battle for Guangzhou," Sanyuanli village was located just a few miles north of the Guangzhou city walls, to the rear of the British land troops.<sup>69</sup> On 29 May, a British patrol forced its way into a Chinese home, reportedly attacking the women of the household, and in response, the villagers at Sanyuanli armed themselves into a citizens' militia. Carrying mainly swords and spears, 5,000 of these militia assembled in front of the British camp on 30 May.

General Gough forced this group into retreat when he pushed forward with the 26th Cameronian Regiment, the 37th Madras Native Infantry, and the Bengal Volunteers. Chinese reinforcements arrived soon afterward, however, and increased the Chinese force to 7,500. To insure against an attack on the British camp, Gough ordered approximately seven hundred of his men to compose a general attack that succeeded in pushing back the Chinese.

As part of this attack, Lieutenant Hadfield took charge of the Third Company, composed of sixty sepoys and three British officers, to open communications with the Twenty-sixth Cameronians, which had attacked to the left. Caught unexpectedly by a rainstorm, Hadfield's company was separated from the other British forces. The Chinese militia, under the command of Yan Haochang, soon intercepted Hadfield's forces. Frederic Wakeman has described the encounter as follows:

When Hadfield's company had strung itself out along the narrow path that ran through the hamlet, Yan attacked. In the turmoil, a sepoy was snatched from the ranks by a pike, and a young ensign named Berkeley left the protection of the line to try to save him.

Yan himself led the men that surrounded Berkeley, hacking at him with knives and swords. Another brave picked up the ensign's fallen musket, and in spite of the dense rain, managed to apply his own match and to lodge a ball in Berkeley's arm before the ensign was rescued and the troops reformed beyond the river on a small ridge.<sup>70</sup>

Forming a defensive square, Hadfield's company managed to fire a few volleys at the Chinese militiamen before they were rescued. Attracted by the torches of the Chinese militia, two companies of marines soon reached Hadfield and escorted them back to camp.

For the British, the Sanyuanli Incident resulted in the death of one private, while one officer and fourteen men were wounded. So insignificant was this skirmish that Gough never even mentioned it in his official reports. To the Chinese it represented a significant victory, however, since it was the local militia that had spearheaded the attack. As Peter Ward Fay has concluded:

The peasants . . . thought they had struck a mighty and successful blow—had not the *fan gui* fled in confusion through the rain and the thunder?—and as the news of victory spread from village to village, thousands of fresh volunteers flocked to join the black flag of Sanyuanli.<sup>71</sup>

Faced by approximately 10,000 to 12,000 Chinese militia the following day, Gough avoided further conflict by appealing to the Guangzhou prefect, She Baoshun. Gough warned that he would once again attack Guangzhou if the militia were not disbanded. The prefect and two local Chinese officials met with the gentry leaders of the militia to persuade them to withdraw, informing them that any further conflict would be their sole responsibility. Tensions eased as the militia dispersed. On 1 June 1841, the British troops evacuated to their ships and departed.

Described by Wakeman as “a Bunker Hill and an Alamo rolled into one,”<sup>72</sup> the Sanyuanli Incident seemed to prove that Chinese militia could face and defeat a foreign foe; the Chinese view holds that only the intervention of the Chinese officials had stopped a more general slaughter of the foreigners. Instead of giving proper credit to the advanced weaponry and training of the foreign forces that allowed it to successfully repel a force ten times its size, the Chinese heard exaggerated reports of this “victory” and wrongly believed that it confirmed the validity of their own methods. Over the following month news of this incident spread and officials in neighboring provinces, such as the governor-general of Fujian and Zhejiang, implored the Emperor to organize similar militia organizations throughout China.

## **Ships, armaments, and artillery in the Opium War**

One of the most noteworthy aspects of the Opium War was that it allowed the British to introduce and field-test in China new improvements in shipbuilding, weapons, and organization. These changes may appear insignificant when viewed singly, but together they had an enormous effect on the outcome of the war. By contrast, the Chinese war junks, muskets, and military organization, which were not too far from “state of the art” at the beginning of the Opium War, looked woefully outdated by the end of the conflict. China’s inability either to develop its own new weaponry, or to adopt quickly those improvements devised by the West, proved to be a major cause for her failure.

At the beginning of the Opium War, the British sailing-ships—such as the *Volage* and the *Hyacinth*—were at the mercy of the wind and the waves. With the arrival of modern steamships—such as the *Queen* and the *Nemesis*—the situation changed dramatically, and the versatility of the British forces increased. In fact, as early as 1835, a mail ship named the *Jardine* had steamed into the mouth of the Pearl River, but it was refused permission to continue to Guangzhou. Still, as Jack Beeching correctly observed, this demonstration foreshadowed the “age of gunboat diplomacy.”<sup>73</sup>

One of the best early examples of gunboat diplomacy was the iron ship *Nemesis*, the first foreign ship to reach Guangzhou by the “Macao Passage.”<sup>74</sup> Built by Birkenhead Iron Works in 1839, the 700-ton *Nemesis* was 184 feet long, 29 wide, 11 deep, and its engines could generate 120 horsepower. She was experimentally designed, with iron bulkheads dividing the hull into seven watertight compartments—an improvement that saved her from sinking on several occasions when she was holed by rocks.

Because she was flat-bottomed, the normal draft of the *Nemesis* was 6 feet. When not heavily laden, she could operate in 5 feet of water or even less, which made her perfectly designed for use in transporting troops and supplies along China’s rivers and streams. Nevertheless, she was also equipped with two 32-pound guns—one fore and one aft—and upon arriving in China five additional 6-pound guns were added. A platform at the center of the ship was designed to fire Congreve rockets, which had a devastating effect on the wooden Chinese junks.

On 7 January 1841, the *Nemesis* participated in the action to take the Chinese forts guarding Guangzhou’s harbor. During the three-and-a-half-hour engagement, the *Nemesis* proved her versatility by being used not only to transport troops and tow landing boats, but her guns fired both shells and grape-shot against the Chuanbi fortresses. In addition, she was equipped with rockets. According to Daniel Headrick:

The Chinese fleet was equally vulnerable. The war junks were half the size of the *Nemesis*, or one tenth that of a first-rate British battleship. They were armed with small cannons that were hard to aim,

and with boarding nets, pots of burning pitch, and handguns. Without much difficulty the *Nemesis* sank or captured several junks; the rest were frightened off with Congreve rockets.<sup>75</sup>

Finally, her shallow draft allowed for shore operations in water only 4½ feet deep, and at one point she moved up a small creek to grapple with and tow away two other Chinese junks.

As Gerald Graham has described, one of the most daring operations in the Guangzhou campaign was when the *Nemesis* succeeded in navigating the “inner passage” from Macao to Guangzhou during 13–15 March 1841, and in so doing proved that the Chinese forts and large chains guarding the entrance to the Bogue could be outflanked. During this expedition, the river became so shallow that at one point the *Nemesis* “practically slithered along the muddy river bed,” while at another point “the stream narrowed to little more than the vessel’s length, making it necessary at sharp bends to force her bow into the bank and bushes on one side, in order to clear her heel of the dry ground on the opposite bank.”<sup>76</sup>

A second noteworthy improvement was the technological advance in armaments, including ship-mounted shell guns, mobile artillery, and small arms. These advancements came into play most noticeably in an engagement on 7 January 1841, when the British forces easily subdued the Bogue fortresses, which the Chinese thought were impregnable. In only an hour-and-a-half, the combined naval guns of a handful of British ships breached the walls and destroyed the batteries and magazines of the two Chinese forts.

Mobile artillery also proved its worth as guns placed on nearby islands successfully shelled the heavily fortified forts. Likewise, at the “Battle of the Barrier,” a light artillery piece from the *Druid* was carried ashore and used to bombard the wall and gate. Finally, small-arm improvements included new Brunswick muskets, which used percussion locks that were resistant to moisture and so could be used in the rain; the marines who intervened to save Hadfield’s company at Sanyuanli were carrying these newer muskets.

Contrary to popular belief, China’s war junks, cannon, and military organization were not all equally backward. In fact, at the beginning of the conflict, Captain Elliot was extraordinarily concerned that the vast size of the Chinese fleet might simply overwhelm his own forces. However, the British rapidly pulled ahead of the Chinese during the course of the war. Later, when the Chinese tried to adapt western techniques—Fay describes a pivot mount for cannon and gunboats driven by hand-propelled paddle wheels—it was a classic case of “too little too late.”

### **Military organization and tactics**

In addition to having outdated weapons, the Chinese resorted to outdated military methods to fight off the British. Described as “hidden techniques



and mysterious skills,” they included “schemes to employ ocean divers who could spend hours under water, *ninjitsu*-type bandits, trained monkeys, secret-society assassins—in short, anything to defeat the barbarians.”<sup>77</sup> Commissioner Lin was included in this group of believers, and tried to recruit “water-devils” from the fishermen of the Guangzhou area. These water-braves were reportedly able to “walk about at the bottom of the sea and remain hidden there all night,” but they failed to stay underwater for any length of time during Lin’s tests.<sup>78</sup> The Manchu Bannermen were crack troops when compared to the Han Chinese, but the British forces did not encounter Manchu Bannermen until the war had almost ended.

In sharp contrast to the Chinese troops, the British sailors and troops proved their worth time and time again by successfully countering and defeating Chinese opponents many times their size; this was often done with minimal—or even zero—casualties on the British side. During operations, discipline was good and the officers competent. While onshore, the troops’ off-duty behavior was commendable. Although there were complaints about the British from local Chinese, many of the reported cases of rape and looting were attributed to Chinese camp followers, and not to the British troops themselves.

Perhaps the single most damaging element to China was her misunderstanding of Britain’s financial and political motives. Completely disregarding their own pre-eminent military philosopher, Sunzi, Commissioner Lin and other prominent Qing officials never thoroughly studied their enemy’s motives. In particular, Lin refused to consider that Great Britain’s main goal—free trade—was real, but evidently saw the British as being similar to Japanese marauders (the *wokou* or midget pirates) of the mid-sixteenth century, or to the Taiwan-based Cokinga of the late seventeenth century, who raided China’s coastline for gold or supplies until Manchu resistance made it unprofitable.

Once Chinese officials made the crucial mistake of labeling the British as pirates, all incentive to organize large-scale resistance disappeared. Since an organized resistance would require enormous sums of money from Beijing, it was assumed that it would be better—and cheaper—simply to wait out the British by adopting a defensive strategy. Therefore, China adopted the age-old tactic of trying to prolong the struggle so as to wear down and exhaust their enemy.

In addition, Commissioner Lin apparently did not realize until the last minute that the British would be willing and able to take the war to Beijing. China’s naval defenses, which were considered quite modern for the time, were confined to the Guangdong coast. They included chains being stretched across the Pearl River, fireboats being gathered and prepared, new cannon—some of them foreign designed bronze cannon—being placed in the Guangzhou fortifications, and the purchase of a western ship—the *Cambridge*—as a training ship and a model for Chinese shipbuilders. When Admiral George Elliot’s fleet arrived almost literally at the “gates” of Beijing during the summer of



1840, the Manchu Emperor was understandably both shocked and concerned that so little had been done to counter this—now all too obvious—military threat.

Initially, local civilian resistance to the British was also quite weak. The most important reason for this was Han Chinese dissatisfaction with their Manchu overlords; few Han troops were willing to risk their lives on behalf of a leadership they despised. This meant that in the first battles of the Opium War—such as the Battle of Chuanbi—it was the natural reaction of the Han Chinese to retreat or to desert ship. In fact, the bulk of the Chinese war junks tried to run, all except Admiral Guan's ship, which, even though repeatedly holed, continued to oppose the British.

Later, once the battles were over, Chinese military leaders and officials vied with each other to exaggerate their supposed victories, knowing full well that riches and honors would be given only to those who claimed great success. The Manchu leaders unwittingly supported misreporting and exaggeration by granting honors based on numbers of enemy killed and ships sunk. According to Waley, although Lin only listed the Battle of Chuanbi and two other skirmishes as victories, in a communication on 13 December 1839 from the Emperor this number was inexplicably doubled to six and soon became known as the "Six Smashing Blows" against the British.

The government-sponsored myth that the war against Britain was being won was an essential prop for the Manchus, since their "Mandate of Heaven" was already suspect. However, it had the unintended effect of lulling most Chinese into a misdirected sense of complacency that the foreigners would eventually be fought off. This, in turn, meant that the Chinese government waited too long to adopt appropriate corrective measures.

### **The Yangzi Campaign**

Although the Chinese self-confidently thought that they had struck a telling blow at the British forces in Sanyuanli, the real fighting of the Opium War had yet to begin. From 21 August 1841 to 29 August 1842, the second British expeditionary force sailed northward to deal with the Manchu Emperor.

Since the previous expedition's attempts to threaten Beijing directly had failed, the goal of the second expedition was to take control of the Yangzi River and cut China in two. By taking Nanjing and closing trade along the Grand Canal, the British could cut off crucial supplies of rice, grain, and salt to Beijing and virtually "starve" the Chinese rulers into submission. Although this strategy succeeded, it was at a higher cost than any previous period of the war; for example, in their final battle to take Zhenjiang—and thereby threaten Nanjing—British troops sustained 1,681 casualties out of a total force of 9,000.

Before the final confrontation of the Opium War was waged, the British land forces were strengthened as the four European regiments in China were

brought up to strength and the 98th regiment left England early in 1842. As Fay has noted:

Additional horse and foot artillery were sent, sappers and miners from Madras, gun lascars by the hundreds, a fresh regiment of Bengal volunteers—and, to take place of the 37th Madras Native Infantry, *five* other regiments of that corps. At the beginning of the winter [of 1841] Gough had commanded not many more than three thousand men. By early summer he commanded ten thousand.<sup>79</sup>

In addition, the British fleet in China had to be reinforced. Although the Chinese had failed to sink any of the British ships, the *Madagascar* burned at sea and another steamer struck a rock and foundered. Other older ships were ordered to return home. To replace these ships, two seventy-fours—including the *Cornwallis*—half a dozen frigates, several corvettes, and eight steamers were sent to China.

In preparation for the Yangzi Campaign, British forces took Dinghai for a second time on 1 October 1841; it had fallen previously on 5 July 1840, but was returned to the Chinese on 25 February 1841 as part of the failed Chuanbi Convention. The British fleet then proceeded north along the coast, taking Zhenhai on 10 October and Ningbo on 13 October. On 10 March 1842, the Chinese attempted to recapture Ningbo and failed, but the British evacuated it on 7 May to regroup. Although many of the reinforcements from India had not yet arrived, the naval commander—Vice-Admiral Sir William Parker—ordered twenty-five ships to continue to Hangzhou Bay to attack the city of Zhapu on its northern shore.

To avoid a frontal assault, Gough conducted a flanking maneuver through low hills to the east of town. Chinese resistance was more intense because for the first time their forces were composed largely of Manchus. At a strategically located stone temple on the way to the city gates, some three hundred Manchu Bannermen bravely held off a company of Royal Irish troops, killing Colonel Tomlinson, a captain with the 55th, and a dozen of his troops. Rockets and a 6-pound artillery piece proved ineffective, and only after the house was partially demolished and burned could the British take it. The rest of the assault went as planned, however, as Zhapu's gates were forced and the city's defenders forced to flee.

The British were surprised at the determined resistance they met while taking Zhapu. Not only was this the first time they had fought Manchu—as versus Han Chinese—troops, but also the defending and attacking forces were of almost equal size—approximately 8,000 Chinese and Manchus defended Zhapu against 9,000 British troops. It soon turned out that this encounter was unnecessary, since the riverways leading to Hangzhou were too small for the British ships. Therefore, Gough re-embarked his troops and the fleet set off to regroup off the mouth of the Yangzi.

By mid-June all preparations were complete, and steamers towed the *Cornwallis*, the *Blonde*, and three corvettes to within firing range of the Chinese forts defending the Yangzi River mouth. Three British sailors were killed, and many others wounded, before the five warships were in position and the Chinese guns were silenced. After three hours of bombardment, marines landed and took the forts. In addition to large numbers of hand weapons and ammunition, the British located and spiked 175 cannon of various shapes and sizes. Three days later, on 19 June 1842, Shanghai fell without resistance.

By this time British reinforcements had arrived from India, bringing the fleet up to seventy-five vessels: eleven warships, four troopships, ten steamers, two survey schooners, and forty-eight transport ships of various sizes. As the fleet moved slowly up the Yangzi, there were frequent delays when the larger ships ran aground on mud shoals. On 21 July, the final major battle of the war was fought at Zhenjiang, a walled city that overlooked the southern entrance of the Grand Canal to Xuzhou.

At Zhenjiang, about 2,000 Manchu Bannermen fought valiantly against two British brigades composed of over 5,000 men. The Han Chinese inhabitants of Zhenjiang were far less willing to fight on behalf of the Manchus. Perhaps they saw the foreign invasion as one “barbarian” fighting another; as Waley has commented about an account of this battle written by one Chinese observer—a poet named Zhu Shiyun—“the author’s animus, all through the account, is against the Manchus and in particular against their leader, Hailin, rather than against the English.”<sup>80</sup>

Although the Chinese troops camped outside Zhenjiang were easily dispersed, the Manchu Bannermen defended the city walls. Using special scaling-ladders that they brought with them, the British finally took control of the city walls and proceeded to blast the northern gate to the city. The Manchus refused to surrender, however, and first killed their “wives and children, and then themselves.”<sup>81</sup> Fighting continued in the streets until:

Afterwards, with bodies still lying about the streets, the city was looted, wrecked, and partially burned by Chinese, Englishmen, sepoys, and lascars, so that when Gough finally went away, leaving a garrison outside but blowing an enormous breach in the walls so that it could reenter instantly if need be, the desolation and the stench of death far exceeded anything experienced at Ningbo or at any other place.<sup>82</sup>

Before the city was subdued, total British casualties had grown to over 1,500, a sum that far outnumbered any previous single encounter.

With the British victory in Zhenjiang, the north–south trade on the Grand Canal was disrupted, as was the east–west trade along the Yangzi. The British fleet had a stranglehold on virtually all of China’s major riverine traffic. It was this commercial disruption, rather than any specific territorial claim, that brought

the Chinese to the negotiating table. As at the beginning, trade proved essential in ending the conflict.

### The Treaty of Nanjing

Faced with the immediate loss of grain and other necessary foodstuffs and commodities, and the gradual erosion of Manchu power throughout China south of the Yangzi River, the Qing Emperor agreed that his officials would open negotiations with Sir Henry Pottinger in Nanjing. To the Emperor's way of thinking, this diplomatic concession was not a total loss of face since the foreigners were kept well away from China's real center of power in Beijing. Once talks got underway, Qiying, the Imperial Commissioner assigned to negotiate with the British, warned Beijing that if the Manchus did not grant the British free trade, all of China south of the Yangzi might be lost. Confronted with this unsavory possibility, the Manchus quickly decided to back down and accept most of the British demands.

The resulting agreement ending the Opium War—the thirteen-article Treaty of Nanjing—was signed on 29 August 1842. Its most important points were to abolish the Cohong trading system in Guangzhou, establish “fair and regular” tariffs, and to oppose the smuggling of opium; although opium was not legalized, it could still be traded. Furthermore, it opened the port cities of Guangzhou, Xiamen, Fuzhou, Ningbo, and Shanghai for trade, and the island of Hong Kong was ceded to Britain in perpetuity. In return, Britain promised to make Hong Kong a free and open port for ships of all countries.<sup>83</sup> Finally, in Article VIII the British demanded that any future privileges and immunities that China granted to foreign powers should also be granted to Britain. By means of this so-called “most-favored-nation” clause, the British sought to ensure that other nations could not gain through their diplomacy with China greater privileges than Britain had won through resorting to military means.

Although many Chinese and foreign commentators have referred to the Treaty of Nanjing as “unfair” or “unequal,” it is important to place it within the context of the Manchu domination of Han China. As Wakeman has conceded, “There was no question that the citizens of Guangzhou and the English did indeed share certain interests,” and Commissioner Lin even accused the Guangzhou merchants—whom he called *jianshang* or “treacherous merchants”—of being a worse enemy than the British.<sup>84</sup>

Therefore, the Manchus thought of the southern Chinese as being as much, or more, of an enemy than they did the British. Strange as it may appear, many of these “unequal” points in the Treaty of Nanjing—such as forcing open five port cities in South China for trade—actually benefitted Han Chinese, especially those engaged in foreign trade and commerce. In addition, the elimination of smuggling and the orderly collection of tariffs meant that taxes

from this trade suddenly became available directly to the provincial governments, instead of to corrupt Manchu officials who had formerly accumulated great wealth by allowing the smuggling to continue unopposed.

By means of the Sino-British treaty, Han Chinese—especially in southern China—regained rights that they had lost following the Qing conquest of China. When seen in this light, the British military victory was also an economic victory for the Han Chinese. Increased Han Chinese nationalism was a natural result. This, in turn, caused pre-existing north-south tensions to worsen. Not surprisingly, it would be these southern regions that soon erupted in the failed Taiping Rebellion and that were destined to lead the successful revolution seventy years later that finally overthrew the Manchus.

### Conclusions

When compared to the tens of thousands of Chinese who perished in the Miao, White Lotus, and Eight Trigram uprisings, the Opium War proved to be a comparatively gentle introduction to the art of European warfare. As a result of the small number of actual battles during the Opium War, Chinese troops were affected more by pestilence and poor weather than by the British. British wartime casualties were also comparatively slight, and many more British soldiers died of disease and shipwreck than from war. The relatively small numbers of casualties during the course of the Opium War would prove to be a far cry from Chinese military engagements during the twentieth century, when casualty lists numbered in the hundreds of thousands, or even in the millions. China's nineteenth-century experience with western military practices was considerably more benign, therefore, than it would have been if these events had taken place a century later.

Perhaps because of the limited nature of this war, the Manchus did not appear to learn from their mistakes. There are three possible reasons for this. First, the prevailing myth that they had defeated the British on numerous occasions undermined any serious Manchu attempt to adopt western military equipment or techniques. Certainly, whenever Manchu troops fought the British—such as at Zhapu and Zhenjiang—the Manchu Bannermen proved to be stubborn adversaries, especially since the British troops outnumbered them.

Second, as Chinese history has shown, dynasties in decline usually try to counter the weakening of their power by turning not to radical new ideas but back to traditional Confucian values. All too often, enforcing these values was the special preserve of the primarily Han Chinese Mandarin officials, who dominated the Manchus' central government apparatus. Adopting western military equipment and techniques not only did not conform to their goal of re-creating China's "golden age," but the foreign philosophy that would have inevitably slipped in with the western weapons and training would have been anathema to Confucian thinkers. Since the Manchu rulers needed the support

of the Han officials to rule China, they could not afford openly to oppose China's traditional value system.

Third, the desire to secure the Empire and fear of a possible Han Chinese rebellion meant that any dramatic improvement in China's military structure might easily be turned against the central government. As discussed above, the trend in western military technology was to make troops more mobile, more independent of their central supply lines, and to dramatically increase an individual's firepower. If adopted by the Chinese military, each of these technological reforms could potentially work to the detriment of the Manchus, whose only real means of ruling the Empire and controlling the Han Chinese was to keep the populace weak and divided. According to David Ralston:

Having themselves won power through the sword, the Manchus were aware that the armed forces represented a potential threat to the throne. As a consequence, command and administrative functions were so organized that several centers of authority shared control over the forces in a given province. This system of checks and balances may have worked to thwart the danger of rebellion against the throne on the part of some ambitious military subordinate, but it also prevented the armed forces from being mobilized with any speed in the event of an emergency.<sup>85</sup>

This technique of "divide and conquer" had worked very well in the past, and had allowed for relatively small numbers of Manchu Bannermen to retain rigid control over the vastly larger Han majority.

The nature of the Opium War necessarily raises the question of western imperialism and the opening of China to western influence. Certainly, the Opium War was the earliest military clash between the West and the Far East, but China, which lost this conflict militarily, could have been the ultimate winner if she had turned more quickly to the West and carried out a concerted policy—as Japan did later during the Meiji Restoration—to adopt western learning, technology, and political philosophy. According to Lucien Pye, China refused to make this choice:

The key problem that has plagued a hundred years of efforts to respond to the challenge of a dynamic outside world has been the inability of the Chinese to reconcile the manifest accomplishments of their traditional civilization with the requirement that their society would have to be radically made over.<sup>86</sup>

Instead, the Manchu leadership sponsored the myth that it had secured a great victory in the war and turned back toward Confucianism. China's stubborn disregard for western technology applied in particular to military technology. In the decades following the Opium War, the Chinese government

only grudgingly agreed to modernize its military forces. It is not surprising, when a thoroughly modern Han Chinese army was finally organized, following on the heels of China's defeat by another Asian power in the 1894–95 Sino–Japanese War, that one of the new army's first opponents proved to be their Manchu overlords. Military mutinies in late 1911 helped lead to the end of the Dynasty.

It was highly regrettable for China, therefore, that the sole positive lesson of the Opium War—a wakeup call to China and its leaders to modernize—was generally ignored or overlooked. Had China heeded this warning and taken concerted action to ensure that it could not be defeated so easily in the future, the entire process of Chinese modernization might have started sooner.<sup>87</sup> It is perhaps for this reason that the history of the Opium War has been, and continues to be, so important for understanding China's nineteenth- and twentieth-century history.

The Manchu government in Beijing refused to profit from its defeat in the Opium War; but as Chapter 3 will show, a Han-dominated domestic uprising known as the Taiping Rebellion, and the so-called “second” Opium War—also known as the “Arrow War”—finally pushed the Manchus into creating a western-style military army. This was a limited reform, however, and one that the Qing government was forced to adopt only under the most severe domestic and foreign pressure. As history would all too soon show, it would take China more than a half a century before it was able to create a truly effective modern military.

## THE TAIPING REBELLION AND THE ARROW WAR

The Taiping “Rebellion” (1851–64), or “Revolution,” was a religious-based domestic uprising with ethnic—Han versus Manchu—overtones. Fought mainly with traditional Chinese weapons and tactics, it corresponded and overlapped with the Arrow War (1856–60), or second Opium War, which was China’s second anti-foreign trade war. The Manchus lost the Arrow War, but in the interim created China’s first modernized armies—the “Ever-Victorious Army” and the Xiang Army—in order to defeat the Taipings.

Although the military aspects of the Taiping and Arrow conflicts differ greatly, they will be treated together in this chapter for several reasons. First, both conflicts owed their origins to the first Opium War. Second, both involved the use of military forces to oppose the Manchus’ Qing Dynasty in Beijing. Third, the Manchu Dynasty succeeded in using trade—in this case, the opium trade—to convince the foreign powers to oppose the Taipings, and in so doing retained their political domination over China.

The origins of the Taiping Rebellion can be traced to Britain’s victory over the Manchus in the Opium War, which revealed the Qing Dynasty’s internal weakness. The British victory gave Han Chinese hope that the Manchus had finally lost the “Mandate of Heaven” and that a new Han Dynasty might soon take its place. The effect of the Opium War on the Han Chinese leader of the Taipings, Hong Xiuquan, was especially profound: while Hong appears to have blamed himself for failing the Imperial Examinations three times during the 1820s and 1830s, after failing for the fourth time, in 1843, he angrily vowed to overthrow the Manchu government. Hong’s subsequent conversion to Christianity and the Taipings’ adoption of a unique mixture of Christianity and Confucianism also suggests the important impact of the Opium War on the Han Chinese people’s perception of westernization—in this case Christianity as the symbol of European culture—as a means of obtaining their political and cultural liberty from the Manchus.

The Arrow War similarly owed its origins to the Opium War. Unlike the Taiping conflict, the underlying issue in the Arrow War was the defense of foreign trade in China by insuring the safety of foreign ships from Taiping pirates. To guarantee free trade required treaty revision, prompting Great



Britain and France to launch a military campaign, their main goal being to obtain greater trade privileges from the Manchus. In a marked departure from the Opium War, the Manchu Dynasty proved willing for the first time to adopt western military methods. During the Arrow War, the major military engagement—and one of the few in which the Chinese were victorious—was called the “Dagu Repulse.” However, in the long run the foreign forces outmaneuvered and defeated the Manchu military, even sacking and burning the Summer Palace during the fall of 1860.

Faced with international and domestic foes, the Manchus adopted a policy of playing the western nations against the Taipings by making major trade concessions—including legalizing opium in 1858. This was in marked contrast to the Han Chinese leaders of the Taipings, who, for religious reasons, adamantly opposed the importation and sale of opium. In return for trade concessions, therefore, the foreign powers sided with the Manchus and used their superior military might to oppose the Taipings.

By pitting the two sides against each other, the Manchus were able to defeat the Taipings while granting to the western nations only nominally greater trade advantages than they had held before. From a purely military viewpoint, the Manchu Dynasty in China was far too weak to oppose effectively any alliance between the Taipings and the western nations; but by exploiting the opium trade as its key negotiating point, Beijing not only kept the two groups apart, it eventually pitted them against each other. This policy ultimately led to the total defeat of the Taipings and to the formation of a new *modus vivendi* based on free trade with the western nations. The trading system that was put in force following the Arrow War would continue unchallenged for the next half-century. China’s diplomatic victory also gave new life to an Imperial dynasty that had seemed to be on the verge of collapse.

### **The origins of the Taiping Rebellion**

The founder of the Taiping movement was Hong Xiuquan, a Hakka Chinese born and raised in Guangdong Province.<sup>88</sup> Growing up just thirty miles north of Guangzhou, Hong aspired to become a government official. Like all other candidates for this position, Hong read and memorized the Chinese classics to prepare for the government examination. He took the Imperial Examination for the first time at age 16 and failed. Later, when he was 24 he tried again, and then once more at age 25, failing both times.<sup>89</sup>

Hong appears to have blamed himself for failing to pass the Imperial Examinations in 1828 and 1836, but in 1837, after his third failure, he fell ill. Later, Hong’s Taiping followers claimed: “He died and came to life again after seven days.”<sup>90</sup> Other versions say that, for forty days, Hong was in a trance and had visions of God coming to him and appointing him supreme ruler of the world.<sup>91</sup> During the next six years, Hong worked dutifully as a teacher. He continued his studies, but failed the Imperial Examinations for the fourth and

final time in 1843, soon after Qing's defeat in the Opium War called their "mandate" into question by proving the Manchus' "military and political decadence."<sup>92</sup>

After failing for the fourth time, Hong angrily vowed to devote his life to destroying evil. Coincidentally, this included overthrowing the Manchus. Hong converted to Christianity in June 1843, and was self-baptized. Since Hong was unable to read English, his main source of information on Christianity seems to have been a series of nine Chinese-language pamphlets by Minister Liang Fa. Although these pamphlets presented a somewhat simplified view of Christianity, Hong was convinced that they had been sent to him from heaven to reaffirm his earlier religious visions.

Following his conversion, Hong immediately began to preach his views, and quickly converted two of his cousins—Feng Yunshan and Hong Ren'gan—both of whom had also failed the Imperial Examinations and, like Hong, sought a new path to social mobility by overthrowing the Manchus. Feng Yunshan actually founded the religious organization that would develop into the Taipings, and he became their military leader.<sup>93</sup> Hong Ren'gan stayed in Guangdong until the late 1850s, but when he arrived in Nanjing in 1859 he quickly became prominent as the political leader of the Taipings.

Hong Xiuquan's understanding of the Christian doctrine and organization was rudimentary. During 1847, he spent several months in a Baptist church in Guangzhou studying Christianity with the American missionary, I. J. Roberts. At this time Hong was able to observe the workings of a Christian church firsthand. Hong and Roberts soon quarreled and parted company before Hong could be baptized. Meanwhile, in 1846, Feng Yunshan had undertaken to organize a group known as the Society of God-Worshippers (*Bai Shangdi Hui*). In August 1847, Hong took charge of this society.<sup>94</sup> Basing their movement at Mt. Thistle, in Guangxi Province, during the summer of 1849, the Society of God-Worshippers evolved into a militant revolutionary movement. By 1851, this group had grown considerably. On 11 January 1851, Hong Xiuquan became Heavenly King, and he proclaimed the beginning of an anti-Manchu revolution.

Although Hong and the Taipings worshipped the Christian God, claimed to recognize Christ as the Savior, followed the Ten Commandments, and performed Baptism, they rejected the Trinity. Instead, the Taipings placed God at the top of a Confucian hierarchical system, with Jesus Christ second, and Hong third, since Hong proclaimed himself to be the younger brother of Jesus Christ. Later, after Hong's son was born, in traditional Chinese fashion he was made the adopted son of the childless Jesus, and he referred to Jesus as his "Heavenly Father" and to Hong simply as "Father."

The Taipings often cited the Bible, but Hong believed that he alone had the authority to direct religious affairs on Earth.<sup>95</sup> His Christian ethics also incorporated many Confucian traits, such as supporting correct relations "between ruler and official, ruler and subject, father and son, brother and brother, husband and wife, etc." Because of their many unorthodox beliefs,

the Taiping were early on described by one Catholic observer as a “militant Protestant offshoot burdened with unorthodox elements.”<sup>96</sup>

Beginning in 1853, the Taipings instituted their own system of government examinations at the district, provincial, and capital levels; separate military examinations were also given. Perhaps because so many of the Taiping leaders were from the ranks of disaffected scholars, the Taiping Examinations were open to everyone. The material to be tested came almost exclusively from Taiping publications. Unlike the Imperial Examinations, candidates for the Taiping Examinations were well treated and well fed. According to one report, candidates for the capital examinations received a six-course meal. The Taipings’ respect for education was especially appealing to scholars and artisans, who were well treated and given positions of authority based on their training. Many peasants were also attracted to the Taipings, mainly to obtain “rent reduction” or to escape the “tight control of local landlords.”<sup>97</sup>

One of the more unique aspects of the Taiping ideology was their equal treatment of women. In part, this was due to the Hakka influence in the Taiping movement, since Hakka women had traditionally spurned prevalent Han customs, such as foot-binding. This attitude meant that Taiping women could be educated and could participate more fully in civil society, even obtaining noble ranks for the first time in Chinese history. As a result, Taiping women could also be soldiers, and in the early days of the movement women made up a significant portion of the armed forces. Soon after the movement began, the Taipings adopted laws outlawing adultery, slavery, and prostitution. Although concubinage and bride payments were also eliminated, the Taipings somewhat surprisingly adopted the biblical practice of polygamy for their top leaders. Additional wives were granted full social status and were considered to be religious sisters of the primary wife. Meanwhile, strict segregation of the sexes for ordinary Taipings cost them many followers; this policy was later modified.

As for the social organization of Taiping society, it was very similar to traditional Chinese military organizations. Within each district, for example, officials were responsible for the actions of families, grouped into units of five, twenty-six, 105, 526, 2,631, and finally 13,156. Communal granaries were linked to the churches, and a feature unique to the Taipings was the planned organization of a church for every unit of twenty-six families. Although this reform was never fully carried out, these churches were designed for public worship on Sunday and then could be used as schools during the rest of the week.

Once the Taipings established their capital in Nanjing, they opened trade with Shanghai. In return for tea and silk, foreign merchants provided basic necessities, luxury goods, and then black market goods such as weapons and ammunition. The Taipings coined their own money, and set up custom houses along the Yangzi River to collect duty from boats transporting goods. Foreign

ships were initially assessed for this duty, but after the 1858 signing of the Treaty of Tianjin the British claimed immunity from Taiping customs. Although customs disputes caused friction between the Taipings and the British, the volume of international trade grew gradually every year during the Taiping reign.

In other ways, the Taipings and the western merchants were not compatible. For example, although the Taipings professed to be pro-trade, their laws forbade the drinking of alcohol, gambling, and the smoking of opium. The Taipings would even execute opium smokers if they were discovered. Since opium was still the major western trade commodity in China during the 1850s, the Taipings proved to be at a serious disadvantage when the Manchu government allowed increased trade—including opium—throughout central China as a result of the Arrow War. Soon after trade privileges were expanded, the foreigners began to support the Manchu suppression of the Taiping movement.

### **Major military engagements of the Taiping Rebellion**

One of the primary goals of the Taipings was to create a Christian kingdom in China. Clearly, this was an ideology that originated from the West. Therefore, like the British, the Taipings had first to face and defeat the Manchu Dynasty. Unlike the British, the Taipings' goal was not treaty revision but was political in nature—taking control of China. The military overthrow of the Manchus, and the establishment of a new Han Chinese Dynasty to take its place, soon became the single most important ideology uniting the Taipings.

To carry out this goal, Hong Xiuquan and his cousin Feng Yushan soon realized the need for a strong military. In 1844, the two men traveled to Guangxi Province to look for a suitable base for the future Taiping Army. Feng is also given credit for devising a military system, supposedly based on the military administration of China's founding Qin Dynasty, in which fixed armies of 13,155 men were subdivided into divisions, brigades, companies, platoons, and squads. In addition to the military command, which had administrative and training responsibilities, there was a separate strategic "army inspector" who could issue orders to the army commander. When several armies were gathered, a commander-in-chief gave the orders and reported to his superiors, who in turn went up the chain of command to the Heavenly King, Hong Xiuquan. Discipline was strictly enforced by corporal punishment, public shaming, beating, or loss of rank, and the Taiping troops were regulated by a strict code composed of sixty-two rules, most of which emphasized loyalty to the movement and its leaders.<sup>98</sup>

Even the Taipings' enemies, such as the Imperial commander Zeng Guofan, came to admire the Taipings' military structure and determination. According to Jen Yu-wen, the secret of the Taipings' military success was their common religious beliefs:

The whole army kept up the religious practices of their early days as God-Worshippers, assembling to worship God in the morning and evening, saying prayers before meals, gathering to listen to sermons on Sundays, kneeling in prayer before going to battle, etc. This was the real secret of their strength—a secret known to the Imperialists but dismissed as a kind of witchcraft.<sup>99</sup>

In the beginning, the very weakness of the Taipings also forced them to be innovative, such as allowing Hakka women to fight with the men. They appealed to patriotic Han Chinese to join them in overthrowing the Manchus, and the Taiping army quickly grew to 50,000. In battle, the Taipings also made use of a wide variety of military technology. For example, when they attacked Guilin, the Taipings used towering siege equipment, ladders, and rockets. When besieging Chuanzhou, they tunneled beneath the city wall and blew it up with gunpowder.

The Taipings employed diverse offensive strategies. For example, in taking the small town of Yung'an Zhou on 25 September 1851—the first walled town to be controlled by the Taipings—the Taiping commander, Lo Dagang, ordered his troops to light firecrackers and throw them over the city wall as if they were explosives. In the midst of the ensuing panic, the Taipings scaled the city wall and occupied the town virtually unopposed. Eighteen months later, while advancing down the Yangzi River on Nanjing, the Taipings filled empty ships with mud and rocks and sent them downstream past the Imperial garrisons. Only after the Imperial troops exhausted their ammunition on the decoys did the real Taiping ships appear. In traditional Chinese fashion, based on Sunzi's *Art of War*, the Taipings also took care to use the terrain to their advantage. Once they were forced to evacuate, the Taipings ambushed the Imperial forces along narrow mountain paths, where their superior weapons and horses did them little good.

Although the Taipings did not carry out their original strategic goal of moving quickly against Changsha, the capital of Hunan, they did settle temporarily in southern Hunan in the smaller city of Daozhou, from where they reorganized and strengthened their army to include about 70,000 troops. After failing to take Changsha, they marched south and west, eventually taking the city of Hankou by the end of December 1852. Linking boats to form a bridge across the Yangzi River, the Taipings laid siege to Wuchang for twenty days, finally conquering it on 12 January 1853. From this position, the Taipings virtually controlled the upper Yangzi River and its trade, thus cutting off China's interior from the coastal regions.

Although they considered heading straight for Beijing, reports of a large Imperial force blocking the way persuaded the Taipings to turn to the east. Since Wuchang was a good strategic base from which to attack down river, the Taipings decided to attack and consolidate their control in Nanjing, the heart of the Yangzi River valley. This decision has been criticized by one

military historian as “one of the greatest strategic errors in the history of the movement,” since the Taipings threw away their first, and best, chance of marching on Beijing and overthrowing the Manchus.<sup>100</sup> It is important to note that seventy years later, during the Nationalists’ (Guomindang or GMD) Northern Expedition to oust the Beijing warlords, the GMD leaders copied this strategy almost step for step, and also based their new capital in Nanjing. As will be discussed in greater detail in Chapter 10, some of the significant differences between the Taipings and the Nationalists included the GMD’s adoption of a nationalist ideology, as versus religious ideology, its willingness to make and break political alliances with western powers—especially the USSR—and, most importantly, its more highly modernized military structure.

On 8 February 1853, the Taipings’ estimated 500,000-strong force left Wuchang, crossed the Yangzi River, and burned their floating bridges after them. This action was not merely symbolic, but delayed an advancing Imperial army under the commander-in-chief of Hubei Province, Xiang Rong. Splitting into two groups, a small land-based force on the northern shore forged ahead to clear the river of obstacles, while the majority of the Taiping Army floated down river in the 20,000 boats they had requisitioned and provisioned in Wuchang. Virtually unopposed, the Taipings easily took Jiujiang, in western Jiangxi Province, and Anqing, the capital of Anhui. After re provisioning from the abandoned Imperial storehouses, the Taipings moved on to Nanjing, the capital of Jiangsu Province.

By the time the Taiping Army reached Nanjing on 6 March 1853, their numbers had swelled to three-quarters of a million. Although poorly defended, the enormous city wall kept the Taipings at bay for thirteen days, during which time tunnels were dug. By 19 March, with explosives prepared in three tunnels under the wall, hundreds of Taiping paper effigies carrying torches appeared riding by the western end of the city. Not until it was too late did the defending troops realize that this was merely another Taiping ruse to draw as many opponents on to the wall as possible. Two massive explosions soon breached the city gates, while a third tunnel exploded late, killing many advancing Taipings.

Although there were sufficient defenders to stop the Taipings’ attack, the chance death of the Imperial commander, Lu Jianying, demoralized his troops and they fled in panic. After taking the outer walls of the city, the Taipings advanced on the inner Imperial City—also known as the Manchu City—on 20 March. Refusing to surrender, the 40,000 Manchu Bannermen and regular troops inside the Imperial City fought desperately, but quickly fell before the human waves that the Taipings were able to send against the inner city’s walls. This offensive ended in massacre, with about 30,000 Manchu deaths.

The battle for Nanjing was over quickly, and resulted in a major Taiping victory after a relatively short siege. One possible reason for this rapid victory may have been the Taipings’ use of spies, since about 3,000 Taiping troops

successfully entered Nanjing disguised as Buddhist monks. This tactic closely followed Sunzi's advice to use spies and unorthodox methods: during the city's siege, these Taiping supporters set fires and signaled to the outside forces where the weak points were along the city walls.

Soon after the Taipings took Nanjing, the cities of Zhenjiang and Yangzhou fell without opposition. This gave the Taipings control over the Grand Canal, "the great medium of communication between the southern provinces and the capital, and the route by which all of the grain supplies were conveyed to the north."<sup>101</sup> Although the Taipings quickly organized and dispatched expeditions to the north and west, Nanjing itself was soon surrounded and besieged by Imperial troops. However, by incorporating elaborate defenses, and a military communication system based on flags and drums, the Taipings survived three Imperial sieges and held Nanjing for the next eleven years.

### **The Northern Expedition against Beijing**

The long-range military strategy of the Taipings was to consolidate control over the Yangzi River valley, send an expedition northward to take Beijing, and then simultaneously send an expedition westward to extend their command as far as Sichuan Province. The Northern Expedition lasted from 1853 to 1855. It was under the command of Li Kaifang who, like many other Taiping generals, assumed an honorary title meaning "subjugate the Manchu barbarians."<sup>102</sup>

With a force of between 70,000 and 80,000 men, Li crossed the Yangzi on 8 May 1853, and set a course to the northwest through Henan Province. Cooperating from time to time with members of the "Nian," who were smugglers and bandits in Anhui Province (see Chapter 4), the Taipings reached the Yellow River in June. There, they discovered the Manchus had ordered all boats to be removed from the southern shore. Li's original plan was to move downstream toward Shandong before turning north to assault Beijing. He was forced instead to turn west and search for boats to ferry his forces across the Yellow River.

In late June, boats were discovered near Fanxian. Only 30,000 or 40,000 Taipings managed to cross before Imperial troops moved in from the south. With his forces divided, Li Kaifang's fifty-seven-day assault and siege of Qinyang failed. In retreat, the Taiping forces initially moved west into Shanxi Province, but later turned north again and entered Zhili Province. One account describes the early military movements of the Taiping expedition as "one of the most remarkable of which history gives record."<sup>103</sup>

It now appeared certain that the Taipings would reach the capital, which caused a temporary panic in Beijing. The Manchu Court was so sure it would lose Beijing that it instructed that all future provincial tax revenues be delivered directly to its ethnic homeland in Manchuria.<sup>104</sup> In a last-ditch effort, the Manchus called in troops and cavalry from Manchuria and Mongolia to fortify



the capital. By 30 October, the Taiping force had turned eastward and had moved to within three miles of Tianjin, only seventy miles from Beijing.

Surrounded to the north and south, Li Kaifang requested reinforcements from Nanjing. Although Li was assured that the reinforcements would arrive by February 1854, his southern troops were ill-equipped to survive the northern winter. On 5 February, the Northern Expedition began its retreat to the south. During the following year, Li's forces tried desperately to join up with a relief force from Nanjing, but ultimately failed to do so. Hounded and pursued by Imperialist troops, Li and his top officers were finally captured on 31 May 1855. After being led to Beijing in defeat, they were tortured and executed.

### **The Western Expedition against Sichuan Province**

The Taipings' Western Expedition, under the command of Shi Dakai, lasted much longer, but fared little better than the Northern Expedition. Composed of 50,000 troops, divided into three army corps, this force initially worked its way up the Yangzi River by boat and quickly retook control of Anqing. The well-defended city of Nanchang did not fall so easily, however. The siege, under the direction of Lai Hanying, commander of the second army corps, began on 24 June 1853 and lasted for ninety days. Although the Taipings' engineers succeeded in tunneling under the city wall and blowing open an entry point into Nanchang, the defenders reacted quickly and closed the breach. Deciding that Nanchang's defenses would not collapse in the foreseeable future, the siege was called off on 24 September 1853.

Still moving upstream, the Taipings captured Jiujiang on 29 September 1853. They then set a course directly for Hankou and Hanyang, on the northern and southern shores of the Yangzi, which fell on 20 October. Before turning their attention to neighboring Wuchang, the Taipings besieged Luzhou, the capital of Anhui Province. The Taipings began their attack on 12 December 1853 and entered the city in victory on 15 January 1854.

Perhaps learning from their failure at Nanchang, the fourth attempt at blowing up Luzhou's walls included a new twist: two layers of gunpowder were prepared instead of one. Following the first explosion, the city defenders quickly moved in to fill the gap, at which time the second explosion was ignited and the breach was reopened. The Taipings were also reportedly aided by the prefectural administrator, Hu Yuanwei, who was generously rewarded for organizing a pro-Taiping force within the city walls.

Following their success at Luzhou, the Taipings undertook the siege of Wuchang on 16 February 1854, and the city finally fell on 26 June 1854. The Taipings were now forced to defend their new conquests, and throughout 1854 and much of 1855, they successfully opposed separate Imperialist advances from the north, west, and south. In mid-November 1855, the Taiping city of Luzhou once more fell to the Imperial forces. In an almost exact replay of the



Taiping's victory over Luzhou, disaffected gentry members set fires on 11 November, and helped the Imperialist force to scale the walls.

Wuchang was the next Taiping city to be attacked. The Imperial forces were led by Zeng Guofan, a progressive Han Chinese official who helped organize the Xiang or Hunan Army and who was later destined to play a major role in overthrowing the Nian Rebellion.<sup>105</sup> The Xiang was a militia army, and since the "regular forces sent out by the government of the Empire were defeated again and again . . . the [Qing] authorities were compelled to look to the militia as a last resort."<sup>106</sup>

Although the Xiang Army comprised only 20,000 troops, it was amply funded by the government of Hunan Province and so had new ships, new cannons, and modern armaments at their disposal. With these advantages, the Xiang Army succeeded in taking control of all the territory west of Wuchang, as well as the upper Yangzi River. By early October 1854, the Taipings were cut off by land. Their fleet was soon surrounded, and they were forced to abandon the city on 14 October.

In a strategy described by the Chinese idiom "turning a jar [of water] over a high roof," Zeng Guofan made full use of his superiority in weapons and location to pursue the Taipings downstream.<sup>107</sup> The Taipings organized a strong defense at Banbishan by blockading the Yangzi River with six iron chains, but they were finally driven away in early December 1854. Following a resolute Taiping defense of Jiujiang in February 1855, however, they retook Wuchang and even mounted a second siege of Nanchang, which ultimately failed.

The Taiping strategy of sponsoring expeditions to the north and west incorporated three fatal flaws. First, it ignored the Imperial forces gathering to the immediate north and south of Nanjing, which soon besieged the city. Second, it divided the Taiping Army into two separate campaigns, neither of which could assist the other in times of crisis. Third, it ignored the geographic and commercial importance of Shanghai and so doomed the Taipings to remain landlocked:

These strategic errors in the military plan point up a fatal weakness of the Taiping leaders, who were hopelessly uninformed in the areas of economic and political geography, military science, and foreign affairs. Their ingenuity and resourcefulness, their devotion to their cause, or the great numbers or superb bravery of the Taiping Army could never overcome the handicap of their inability to devise a successful military strategy.<sup>108</sup>

By 1856, the Taipings' northward and westward advances had been stopped, but they still held the heart of the Yangzi River valley. This geographic advantage gave the Taipings ultimate control over China's central trade routes, thus making foreign trade with inland China more tenuous. The British, in

particular, were adversely affected by the continuing turmoil. Increasing Taiping-related tensions between the British and the Manchus eventually resulted in war.

### The Arrow War

In the midst of the domestic turmoil that accompanied the Taiping Rebellion, piracy increased dramatically; often, whether true or not, these pirates claimed political allegiance with the Taipings. In January 1856, the British instituted a scheduled north-south convoy system, sending a well-armed man-of-war with the British merchant ships. Chinese-owned ships registered in Hong Kong were also allowed to join the convoy and fly the British flag. By doing so, these Chinese-owned ships tacitly gained the same extraterritorial rights and protections from Manchu intervention as other British ships along the China coast. This decision soon led to conflict with Manchu authorities, who insisted that all Chinese-owned ships remain under the administrative authority of China.

On 8 October 1856, Guangzhou police boarded a Chinese-owned, but Hong Kong-registered, ship called the *Arrow*. This ship had a British captain but a Chinese crew. Hauling down the British flag, the police arrested twelve crew members. Immediately, Harry Parkes, the British Consul, demanded that Ye Mingchen, the Imperial Commissioner in Guangzhou, apologize for this “insult” to the flag. Commissioner Ye offered to release nine of the arrested sailors but refused to apologize, thereby disputing the British practice of registering Chinese ships and allowing them to fly British flags.

This incident gave Governor of Hong Kong, John Bowring a long-sought-for opportunity to demand treaty revisions from China.<sup>109</sup> After consulting with Admiral Michael Seymour, commander of the British fleet, it was decided to send Commodore George Elliot to Guangzhou with the *Sybil*, the *Barracouta*, and the *Coromandel*, and later the steam frigates *Encounter* and *Sampson* were added to this number. Under the threat of naval shelling, Commissioner Ye proved willing to return all twelve arrested sailors, but would not apologize for violating the British flag. The resulting British action has been described in detail by Gerald Graham:

Admiral Seymour proceeded to assault the four barrier forts, some five miles below the city. Carrying Royal Marines and the boats’ crews of the *Calcutta*, *Winchester*, and *Bittern*, the *Sampson* and the *Barracouta*, accompanied by the boats of the *Sybil* under Commodore Elliot, set out from Whampoa. Arriving at Blenheim Reach on 23 October, the two steam sloops, *Sampson* and *Barracouta*, ascended the Macao Passage in order to block the alternative backwater channel. Blenheim Fort capitulated quickly, as did Macao Fort, a well-sited

bastion on an island in mid-river, mounting 86 guns. This later stronghold, Seymour prepared to hold and garrison.<sup>110</sup>

By 25 October 1856, more than 150 Chinese cannon had been taken and spiked, while marines took control of the foreign factories and defended them successfully against a Chinese attack. Casualties during this three-day engagement were extremely light, with the British avoiding even a single death and the Chinese reportedly suffering only five troops injured.

With a strong military advantage on his side, Governor Bowring unexpectedly “upped the ante” by bringing in a new issue for discussion. Even though the 1842 Treaty of Nanjing gave British officials the right to enter Guangzhou’s city walls, this stipulation had never come into effect. Now, Bowring insisted that Commissioner Ye agree to allow British representatives free access both to the authorities and the city of Guangzhou. When Ye refused, the British breached the city wall on 28 October. On the following day, they entered and looted the Commissioner’s *yamen*. Although the British continued to solidify their position in the following days—sustaining one dead and a dozen injured—the Chinese Commissioner refused to back down.

China could not realistically hope to challenge the British fleet, but Commissioner Ye’s forces inside Guangzhou were estimated at 20,000 while the British had fewer than 1,000 marines and seamen. With this superiority of numbers, Ye felt confident that he could repel any attempt to take Guangzhou by force. The British retained their hold over the foreign factories along the Whampoa—at one point stationing about 300 troops in entrenchments dug in the factory gardens—but, by the end of January 1857, were forced to withdraw everywhere except for Macao Fort on Honam Island. The Chinese interpreted this retreat as a victory, and triumphal arches were raised throughout Guangzhou in Ye’s honor.

The war was far from over. During May and June 1857, the British succeeded in wiping out the majority of the Chinese Navy protecting Guangzhou; seventy to eighty Chinese war junks were captured and burned. This task was not an easy one, since the Chinese sailors had learned from their earlier mistakes and made great progress in maneuvering their fleet and concentrating their fire, and the British casualties numbered eighty-four killed or badly wounded. According to Admiral Seymour, the British victory was precarious, and during an engagement on 1 June 1857 the Chinese fleet “opened a new era in Chinese naval warfare” by showing greater judgment in disposing their fleet, as well as defending their ships with “skill, courage and effect.”<sup>111</sup>

During spring 1857, the Palmerston government appointed James Bruce, the eighth Earl of Elgin, to be H.M.’s High Commissioner and Plenipotentiary to China. His task was to lead a naval and military expedition to the mouth of the Bei He River near Beijing to demand reparations for past injuries, diplomatic representation in Beijing, and treaty revisions that would grant Britain greater access to China’s river trade. Action was delayed by mutiny in

India, but the arrival of the *Sans Pareil*, the newest screw-operated battleship, allowed Admiral Seymour to blockade Guangzhou on 3 August 1857.

The French joined the advance on Guangzhou, and by early December 1857 thirty ships and more than 5,000 troops had been assembled. Elgin issued a final ultimatum on 12 December to Ye, who refused it. Beginning on 15 December 1857, British troops took Honam Point while the British ships *Nimrod*, *Hornet*, *Bittern*, *Actaeon*, and *Acorn* moved within shelling range of Guangzhou. Shelling commenced on 28 December, and on the following day the combined British and French forces scaled Guangzhou's southeastern walls. The British casualties numbered ninety-six and the French thirty-four.

Finally in full control of Guangzhou, the next goal was to find and capture Commissioner Ye. Although the best thing would have been to move into the "hinterland to carry on the campaign," Qing law stated that "any official who lost his city should lose his head."<sup>112</sup> Unable to flee, Commissioner Ye was captured on 5 January 1858. With Ye's subsequent removal on the *Inflexible* for a life of imprisonment in a British-owned villa outside Calcutta, the remaining Chinese troops in Guangzhou were soon disarmed.

With Guangzhou safely in British and French hands, the next goal became Beijing. This Franco-British "Northern Expedition" was delayed until mid-April 1858, when Elgin sailed aboard the *Furious* northward to the Bei He. During the next eleven weeks the expedition remained inactive while negotiations with Beijing were attempted; during this delay, the size of the British forces increased gradually as they were joined by stragglers. By 20 May 1858, all was in order, and at 10:00 A.M.—following Beijing's decision to ignore an order to surrender—the siege of the forts at Dagou began. Opposition was light, and after an hour-and-a-half the fighting was over. British casualties were five killed, seventeen wounded, while the unexpected explosion of a Chinese magazine killed six and wounded sixty-one Frenchmen. With the taking of the Dagou forts, the riverine path to Beijing was now open; foreign ships docked for the first time at Tianjin on 26 May 1858.

Rather than fighting this foreign force, the Manchu Emperor quickly relented and sent Imperial Commissioners to Tianjin. On 26 June 1858, the fifty-six-article Treaty of Tianjin was signed with Great Britain. At almost the same time a separate treaty was signed with France, and several non-belligerents—Russia and the United States—gained similar advantages in their own bilateral treaties.<sup>113</sup> By means of the Treaty of Tianjin, Britain received a more than £1 million indemnity for its losses in Guangzhou, tariff revisions, and the opening of five new treaty ports, including along the Yangzi River as far inland as Hankou. Most importantly, Beijing was now open to a British representative who would be treated as an equal by the Chinese officials. However, Elgin later agreed to modify this clause by stationing the British residence outside Beijing proper. This change gave "face" to Beijing and helped prop up the Qing Dynasty's embattled "Mandate of Heaven" in its domestic quarrel with the Taipings.

In addition to making this important political concession to China, Elgin did not push for the immediate legalization of opium, which, although at the heart of the 1839 to 1842 Opium War, was never actually discussed in the Treaty of Nanjing. While this upset many British traders, Elgin explained:

I did so not because I questioned the advantages which would accrue from the legalization of the traffic, but because I could not reconcile it to my sense of right to urge the Imperial [Chinese] Government to abandon its traditional policy in this respect.<sup>114</sup>

### **Sino-British conflict and the “Dagu Repulse”**

Following what appeared to be an almost complete diplomatic victory, the British fleet withdrew to the south. Characteristically, now that the immediate threat to Beijing was past, the Manchus did their best to ignore the provisions of this treaty. Most importantly, the agreed-on indemnity was never paid to the British, so their military rule over Guangzhou continued unchanged. During June 1859, the final month when ratifications of the Treaty of Tianjin were to be exchanged—the treaty had stipulated within a year of signing—the Manchus once again attempted to treat the British and French representatives as if they were inferiors of China, not equal states. This belated Manchu attempt to return to the former status quo and “save face” quickly led to a resumption of conflict.

To ensure that the Treaty of Tianjin would be put into effect, the British sent a sizable naval expedition. The nineteen ships in the British force were commanded by Rear-Admiral Hope, and included a fifty-one gun frigate, four sloops, eleven gunboats, two troopships, and a steam tender. Blocking the entrance to the Bei He were two sets of cable and wood barriers and a third barrier composed of timber rafts that had been built during the intervening year. In addition, new defenses had been built on the Chinese forts to the north and the south of the river’s mouth.

Ignoring the tactical and strategic importance of these newly constructed Chinese defenses, the fleet tried to enter the river beginning on the morning of 25 June 1859. Unexpectedly, an estimated thirty to forty guns, ranging in size from 8 inches to 32 inches, directed their concentrated fire from the two Chinese forts south of the river and the one fort north of the Bei He. Although the British ships returned fire, they proved largely ineffectual against the Chinese earthworks. By nightfall five ships were either sunk or disabled. Rear-Admiral Hope had been wounded twice, and he only reluctantly handed over command to C. F. A. Shadwell, the Captain of the *Cormorant*.

A final desperate attempt to take the southernmost fort by force also ended in failure. Late in the day some 600 British marines, sappers, and seamen, plus a detachment of French seamen, landed on the bank close to the fort. Decimated by the Chinese fire, only fifty made it all the way to the fortress walls,

at which point they were forced to retreat. Of the original 600 a total of sixty-four were killed and 252 wounded or reported missing, while four of the Frenchmen were killed and ten wounded. During the entire battle, known as the “Dagu Repulse,” a total of 519 British were killed and 456 wounded.<sup>115</sup>

This encounter was the greatest British defeat in China to date. It also did much to undermine the foreign-held view that the Chinese were incapable of adopting western-style military tactics, such as more accurately concentrating their cannon fire against one target at a time. The rebuilt walls of the Dagu forts were also thicker, and the cannon were elevated to provide a wider field of fire. Most importantly, the cannon crews worked efficiently and in a much more coordinated fashion to maximize their new strategic advantages.

### **British victory, Chinese defeat**

Faced with this unexpected failure, Lord Elgin was once again made Britain’s plenipotentiary to China, and he left London for China on 26 April 1860. His goal was to lead an expedition to Beijing to force the Manchus to ratify the Treaty of Tianjin, apologize for the Bei He attack, and provide a larger indemnity. However, Lord Elgin had no intention of overthrowing the Manchu Dynasty, and he warned that since there was no satisfactory alternative to that dynasty, it would be best for British trade to avoid anarchy in China.

In London, Lord Palmerston agreed with Elgin, and he authorized military action to occupy Beijing:

The occupation by a barbarian army of a capital into which even a barbarian diplomatist is not to be admitted, would go further to proclaim our power, and therefore to accomplish our ends, than any other military success, and I must own I have no belief whatever in the supposition that such an occupation would overthrow the Chinese Empire. Depend upon it, that occupation would bring the Emperor to reason.<sup>116</sup>

A British ultimatum was sent to Beijing in March 1860. The Manchus responded by insisting that all negotiations take place away from Beijing. Since this issue was at the heart of the dispute, their reply made future conflict inevitable.

The 13,000 British, commanded by Elgin’s brother-in-law General Sir Hope Grant, were joined by 7,000 French soldiers under General Cousin de Montauban. It took more than 200 transport ships to transport these forces to China. In addition to the larger ships, the Royal Navy sent a new type of iron gunboat to China in pieces. When assembled, it had three watertight compartments and was just big enough to carry one gun. The ships and troops assembled in Hong Kong, and on 9 June 1860 they began to move northward. Delayed by storms, the British fleet assembled in Dalian Bay, immediately to

the north of the Gulf of Pecheli, while the French began to assemble south of the Gulf.

Regrouping off the entrance to the Bei He, joint military operations began on 1 August 1860 with a successful landing. On 12 August, the flanking maneuver aimed at the Dagū forts began with 6,000 troops. They encountered only light resistance, and the new Armstrong guns, which incorporated a rifled bore, allowed for accurate fire at greater distances. On 20 August, Parkes and Major Graham approached the northernmost fort under a flag of truce and offered terms of surrender. The Qing official in charge reportedly became abusive and replied “that if the Allies wanted the forts they had better come and take them.”<sup>117</sup>

Although the Chinese did offer a temporary truce, Elgin determined that this was most likely just a delaying tactic. The British flanking detail drew into position on the morning of 21 August, at which time bombardment of the northernmost of the Dagū forts began. The outcome was predictable, and an early lucky shot destroyed the magazine in this fort:

A tall black pillar, as if by magic, shot up from the midst of the nearest fort upon which almost all our fire was concentrated, and then bursting like a rocket after it had attained a great height, was soon lost in the vast shower of wood and earth into which it resolved itself,—a loud, bursting, booming sound, marking, as it were, the moment of its short existence. A magazine had blown up.<sup>118</sup>

Storming parties were soon organized, and the French took the right flank while the British took the left. Under stiff resistance from the Chinese defenders, who resorted to “musketry, pots filled with lime, round shot, arrows, crossbow bolts, and bunches of slugs fired from gingals,” the advancing infantry broke through the defensive lines made of sharpened bamboo sticks.<sup>119</sup> By nightfall the fort was in British and French hands. Total British casualties numbered 201, while the French had 158. Although difficult to determine, it was estimated that the Chinese sustained 2,000 casualties.<sup>120</sup>

Beginning on 22 August, the British ships began to make their way up the river to Tianjin, and Lord Elgin arrived in the city on 25 August. Elgin was met by three Imperial Commissioners, but he refused to negotiate with them. Instead he demanded that China accede unconditionally to the March ultimatum. Although the Imperial Commissioners agreed to all of Britain’s demands, they questioned and delayed decision on the indemnity payment. These delaying tactics prompted Elgin on 8 September to order a march on Dongzhou, just twelve miles from Beijing.

A Chinese ambush and the capture of thirty-nine members of the advancing party (thirteen French, twenty-six British) led to battles on 18 and 21 September, which the Allied forces won. Splitting into two groups—the British in the north and the French in the west—the Allied forces reached Beijing on



5 October. Although Beijing returned the foreign hostages on 8 October, it was not before thirteen British and seven French were either murdered or died during imprisonment. Beijing's Anding Gate fell to the British on 13 October. Then, on 18 October, Lord Elgin ordered that the Summer Palace be burned, citing the fact that several British prisoners had been tortured there. Instead of punishing individual Qing officials, who would soon be forgotten, Elgin sought to leave a permanent reminder to the Emperor and the Manchu Court of western strength.<sup>121</sup>

On 24 October 1860 the Arrow War ended for the British, and on 25 October it ended for the French, as the two countries and China signed and ratified the Beijing Convention. By 9 November 1860 all the British and French troops had evacuated Beijing, although 5,000 troops remained in Tianjin and smaller garrisons were left to guard the Dagou forts. By means of the recently ratified Treaty of Tianjin, however, the British secured greater trading rights throughout China, and especially along the Yangzi River. Most importantly, a British diplomatic mission could now be located in Beijing, a decision that graphically highlighted the Manchu decision to finally grant equal status to foreign nations. Finally, a supplementary clause to the Treaty of Tianjin stated: "Opium will henceforth pay thirty taels per picul [approximately £130] Import Duty. The importer will sell it only at the port. It will be carried into the interior by Chinese only, and only as Chinese property; the foreign trader will not be allowed to accompany it."<sup>122</sup> The opium trade was now legal, albeit more strictly controlled than before by Chinese customs houses to reduce piracy.<sup>123</sup>

### **The end of the Taiping Rebellion**

The British and French had handily defeated the Manchus, but they did not attempt to overthrow the Qing Dynasty for fear that an even worse government might take its place. One reason for this fear was that the Taiping leaders, who had earlier seemed pro-western in their mindset—at least, their professed Christianity made them seem western to many foreigners—gradually became a greater potential threat to the British and French than the Manchus. For example, with the continuing military success of the Taipings, the danger to Shanghai was increasing daily. Early in 1853, the British Consul in Shanghai, Rutherford Alcock, was so concerned about the Taipings that he even advocated blockading the Yangzi River at Zhenjiang. This proved to be unnecessary, but Britain's neutrality policy, joined later by France and the United States, became ever more difficult to maintain.

The biggest problem between the Taipings and the foreigners continued to be opium. Firmly anti-opium, the Taipings refused to acknowledge the legality of the Sino-British trade treaties signed by the Manchu government, which allowed foreign traders to sell opium in China's port cities. When the Taiping forces converged on Shanghai during the summer of 1860, the foreign traders



were concerned that they would lose their opium stocks. They therefore felt compelled to guard their property, which meant siding with the Imperial forces. With the decision of the foreign community to back the Manchus, the Taiping attack on Shanghai was doomed to fail. This defeat began a series of losses that led to the collapse of the Taiping movement and to the victory of the Manchu government.

Following a period of civil war and fratricidal infighting in 1856, which left tens of thousands of Taipings dead in their Nanjing capital, Shi Dakai took full command of the five Taiping armies and joined them into a single army. Falsely accused by Hong's brothers of plotting to take full power, Shi left Nanjing in May 1857, and led his army of 200,000 men with the ultimate goal of conquering Sichuan Province. Shi continued to profess loyalty to Hong and to the Taipings' cause, but he refused to return to Nanjing for fear of being overthrown or assassinated. Although his six-year expedition reached as far west as Sichuan and then Yunnan Provinces, Shi was finally captured and executed by Manchu supporters on 6 August 1863.

Meanwhile, in the central territories of the Taiping Empire, fighting continued incessantly between 1856 and 1859. In some areas, such as Anhui Province, the Taiping troops succeeded in retaining control, but over time Nanjing lost Hubei Province when Wuchang was finally abandoned for the last time on 19 December 1856. Although Jiangxi Province proved to be much more difficult, the Xiang Army finally took Jiujiang on 19 May 1858, using traditional tunneling techniques extensively employed by the Taipings. The rest of the province was once again in Imperial hands by September 1858.

With the arrival in Nanjing in 1859 of Hong Ren'gan, Hong's western-educated cousin, the military strategy of the Taipings shifted toward the east. Previously, Taiping armies had tried unsuccessfully to conquer the north and the west, so this eastward shift was perhaps inevitable. Still, this decision quickly put the Taipings in contact with the foreign communities in Shanghai. Continued western neutrality would probably have insured that the Taipings could have consolidated control over Shanghai and thereby obtained an economic stranglehold over Beijing. However, with the 1860 signing of the Beijing Convention, the foreigners had compelling reasons to hope for the survival of the Manchu Dynasty.

The Taipings' eastern movement began in February 1860 under the command of Li Xiucheng. Disguising themselves as Imperial troops, the Taipings moved quickly to Zhejiang's provincial capital at Hangzhou. Outnumbered by the Imperial forces, the Taiping force outside Hangzhou returned to the innovative military strategies they had shown earlier in the movement. For example, by placing hundreds of flags on the hills outside of the city, the Taipings gave the false impression of large numbers, even though the entire Taiping force totaled only about 6,000 men. After the city wall was blown up on 19 March 1860, Hangzhou quickly fell to this comparatively small force.

It soon became clear that the attack on Hangzhou was only a feint to lure Imperial troops away from their seven-year siege of Nanjing. Confused by reports that a large Taiping force had attacked Hangzhou, Imperial Commissioner Hechun quickly dispatched 13,000 men to Zhejiang. Meanwhile, Li Xiucheng was leading his elite force back to Nanjing for a combined Taiping attack on the Imperial barracks. For this battle the Taipings called in over 100,000 troops from the western, central, and eastern parts of their realm and divided them into ten columns. With Hechun's force understrength, the Taipings surrounded him and began the attack on 1 May 1860. Six days later, the Southern Imperial Barracks had been destroyed and the Imperial troops dispersed.

Hong Ren'gan's successful plan to relieve Nanjing gave the Taiping movement new life. It also made possible an eastern expedition into Jiangsu to take Changzhou, Suzhou, and Shanghai. The ultimate goal was to purchase and arm twenty foreign-built steamships in Shanghai, and then use this force to consolidate Taiping control over the entire Yangzi River valley. The Taipings moved quickly, taking Changzhou on 26 May and Suzhou on 2 June 1860. Exactly one month after the eastern expedition had been approved, these new Taiping territories around Suzhou were renamed "Sufu Province." Meanwhile, Taiping forces continued to converge eastward, and by early July were stationed to the north, west, and south of Shanghai.

The success of the Taipings' Eastern Expedition largely depended on the westerners' oft-repeated policy of neutrality. During June 1860, the vast bulk of the foreign forces were in northern China forcing Beijing to ratify the Tianjin treaties, but by the time Li Xiucheng reached Shanghai in August 1860, more than 300 French troops and 900 British troops were defending the city wall.<sup>124</sup> Li spent four days trying to take Shanghai in mid-August, but foreign troops used a combination of rifles, artillery, and ship-based guns to keep the Taipings at bay. The Taiping leaders were clearly upset that the westerners had not remained neutral, and expressed their hope that warm relations would be opened soon. If the foreigners continued to aid the Manchus, the Taipings threatened to cut off all international trade through their territory; however, since the opium trade was already banned, this threat carried little weight.

In addition to the regular western troops who fought the Taipings, a mercenary army—known officially as the "Foreign Rifle Company" and unofficially as the "Green-headed Army"—commanded by Frederick Townsend Ward, made a name for itself by using modern weapons and western military training to defeat the Taipings at Sungjiang, immediately south of Shanghai. In early August, Ward led his small force twice against the town of Qingpu and they were defeated both times. Although Ward was badly wounded and forced to retreat, he returned "quickly to Shanghai to enlist more men, buy more artillery, and try to shore up the damage done to his reputation among the Chinese by the defeat at Qingpu."<sup>125</sup>

With the Taipings' Eastern Expedition stymied, the Imperial troops surrounded the Taiping-held territory and searched for weak points. Zeng Guofan's Xiang Army played a major role in this effort, and his forces finally took Anqing on 5 September 1861 after a fourteen-month siege. Once again, foreigners played a role in this outcome, because British ships successfully blockaded foreign merchants from bringing much-needed supplies to the Taiping city. This victory proved to be the real turning point in the war against the Taipings, since from Anqing the Imperial forces could take northern Anhui Province and then attack Nanjing. As Hong Ren'gan later admitted: "After the loss of Anqing all the cities along the way down [the Yangzi River] fell one after another and the Heavenly Capital could be defended no more. So long as Anqing was preserved intact, so long was the Heavenly Capital not in danger."<sup>126</sup>

The fall of Anqing corresponded with the death of the Xianfeng Emperor and the enthronement of the young Tongzhi Emperor under regents Prince Gong and the Empress Dowager Cixi. Zeng Guofan and the other leaders of the Xiang Army received numerous new honors. Zeng then led the campaign to destroy the Taipings, while the Taipings made one last effort to take Zhejiang Province and the city of Shanghai.

The Taipings' final Eastern Expedition was initially very successful. With the bloodless capture of Ningbo on 9 December 1861, and the more bloody siege of Hangzhou that ended with victory on 31 December 1861, the Taipings finally had direct access to the sea. While this success promised increased trade with western merchants, mainly in modern weapons and ammunition, it also opened the possibility of Taiping fleets attacking and destroying cities along China's seaboard, which frightened the foreign merchants.

This seaborne threat once again prompted foreigners to side with the Manchu Dynasty. As Taiping troops led by Li Xiucheng surrounded Shanghai for the second time during early January 1862, British and French forces under the command of Admiral James Hope pledged to defend the city walls. With the return of a part of their Northern Expedition in mid-February, the foreign community had sufficient troops and artillery to repel a Taiping attack. Frederick Ward also reappeared on the scene, having recovered from his earlier wounds, and organized a foreign-officered Chinese force of more than 1,000 men.

The first significant engagement with the Taipings took place on 1 March 1862 at the town of Xiaotang, south and slightly east of Shanghai. Relying on their superior weaponry, Admiral Hope's 500 foreign troops and Ward's 750 mixed troops routed the Taiping force of about 5,000; they inflicted about 1,000 Taiping casualties and captured 300 prisoners. As a result of this victory, Ward was made a brigadier general, and later a major general, by the Manchu Emperor. His army was renamed the "Ever-Victorious Army." Ward later died on 22 September 1862 as a result of wounds sustained while pushing the Taipings out of Zhejiang Province. Command of the "Ever-Victorious

Army” fell to General G. G. Gordon, now the highest ranking foreigner in Chinese service.<sup>127</sup>

From early April to May 1862, the foreign troops cleared out the most important Taiping strongholds within a thirty-mile radius of Shanghai. British steamships also transported from Anqing to Shanghai a new Imperial army, the Huai or Anhui Army, commanded by Li Hongzhang. In mid-May, Li Xiucheng, leading 10,000 Taiping troops, engaged these combined forces at Jiading and forced them to retreat to Shanghai. By mid-June the Taipings had gathered a force 50,000 to 60,000-strong and they approached Shanghai in twelve columns. However, they were beaten back by Li Hongzhang.

Li Xiucheng was recalled to Nanjing to defend it from the ongoing siege by the Xiang Army, and command was passed to Tan Shaoguang. In what would prove to be the final Taiping attempt to take Shanghai, Tan’s forces attacked in late August. Opposed by Li Hongzhang, the Ever-Victorious Army, and by British and French soldiers, Tan was pushed back to Jiading, a town to the northwest of Shanghai. In a series of battles during October 1862, about 2,200 British and French soldiers, 1,500 troops from the Ever-Victorious Army, and a division from the Huai Army defeated the Taipings at Jiading.<sup>128</sup> This battle ended the Taiping threat to Shanghai, and was the last major engagement in which British and French troops participated.

Although the Taipings launched a final, and ultimately futile, expedition to the north to take Beijing, their hold over the Yangzi River valley became ever more tenuous. With the loss of Zhejiang and “Sufu” Provinces in 1864, and the death of Hong Xiuquan on 1 June 1864, the Taiping movement was officially over. Nanjing’s walls were finally breached on 19 July 1864, and the city soon fell to the Imperial forces. Isolated groups of Taipings continued to resist for the next eighteen months, but on 9 February 1866 the final Taiping detachment was destroyed. According to Hans J. van de Ven, the “Taiping Rebellion of 1852–64 exacted casualties that should be counted in the tens of millions, and this was merely the most devastating of a series of rebellions.”<sup>129</sup> In fact, estimates of the casualties range from a low of twenty million to as high as sixty million during the fifteen-year conflict.<sup>130</sup>

## Conclusions

The Taiping Rebellion and the Arrow War owe their origins to the Opium War. The rapid defeat of the Qing Dynasty sponsored the Han Chinese view that the “Mandate of Heaven” was no longer firmly in Manchu hands. Meanwhile, the trade privileges that Britain had won during this conflict proved to be inadequate, especially for the protection of foreign shipping from piracy, often at the hands of the Taipings. Although the Taipings and the foreigners resorted to military means to oppose Beijing, in the end the Manchu Dynasty retained political domination over China by granting trade concessions to the

foreigners. As a result, the Manchu Dynasty was given a fifty-year reprieve, finally collapsing in 1911.

Trade once again proved to be at the center of these massive conflicts. While the Taipings' adoption of Christianity might normally have garnered western support, their denunciation of opium interfered with free trade along the Yangzi River. By contrast, the Manchus' apparent willingness to grant new trade rights to Great Britain and France allowed them to undermine potential foreign support for the Taipings. In return for Beijing's trade concessions, the foreign powers used their superior military might to oppose the Taipings' efforts to take Shanghai.

From purely a military viewpoint, the Manchu Dynasty in China would have been too weak to oppose an alliance between the Taipings and the western nations. By exploiting the opium trade as its key negotiating point, Beijing not only kept the two groups apart, but it eventually pitted them against each other. Therefore, by coming to terms with Britain and France, the Manchus were able to defeat the Taipings while granting to the western nations only nominally greater trade advantages. These expanded trade privileges were also centered mainly along the Yangzi River, a region that Beijing largely failed to control at the time.<sup>131</sup> This policy of pitting one barbarian against another ultimately led to the total defeat of the Taipings and to the formation of a new *modus vivendi* based on free trade with the western nations; the trading system that was put in force following the Arrow War would persist essentially unchanged for half a century.

The Manchus' diplomatic and military victories gave new life to an Imperial dynasty that seemed destined to collapse at almost any moment. Their experience fighting the Taipings and the foreign invaders was almost immediately turned to good use quelling internal revolts of the Nian, Muslim, and Tungan Rebellions, a topic that will be discussed in greater detail in Chapter 4. The Manchus also took advantage of the military lessons they had learned during this era to begin the slow and tedious process of modernizing China's woefully outdated army. While the Ever-Victorious Army was perhaps the first modern Chinese force, it was organized, and the officer corps was composed, primarily of foreign mercenaries. By contrast, the creation of the Xiang and Huai Armies under Zeng Guofan and Li Hongzhang, while organized along traditional lines, were armed with modern weapons, thus setting the model as the first indigenous modernized armies in China.

## THE NIAN, MUSLIM, AND TUNGAN REBELLIONS

With the foreigners mollified and the Taipings suppressed, Beijing could now turn its attention to a series of internal revolts, primarily although not exclusively by minority peoples.<sup>132</sup> Its goal was to halt the dynastic decline by reasserting Imperial power through the use of traditional military means, albeit aided by the use of modern weapons purchased from the West. The first of these internal revolts was the Nian Rebellion, which lasted from the early 1850s through 1868. The second was the Muslim Rebellion in Yunnan Province, which began in 1856 and was finally quelled in 1873. Finally, in 1862 a number of Muslim groups in Shaanxi and Gansu Provinces also rebelled. Beijing could only turn its attention to this third rebellion in 1868, and it was finally put down in 1873.

Unlike the Taipings, the leaders of the Nian, Muslim, and Tungan Rebellions did not profess any central unifying ideologies that could compare with the Taipings' anti-Manchu Han nationalism. Therefore, they could not easily rally the majority of the Han Chinese against Beijing. One scholar has stated of the Nian Rebellion: "In marked contrast to their southern contemporaries [the Taipings], the Nian lacked any detailed land policy, religious belief system, or administrative structure."<sup>133</sup> Likewise, the Muslim and Tungan rebels were unified mainly around a common Islamic belief system, which made it highly unlikely that they would attract many ordinary Han Chinese to support their rebellions.

In fact, the Nian, Muslim, and Tungan Rebellions proved to a large degree to be simply a more radical reflection of the increased regionalism that developed during the Chinese government's civil war with the Taipings. During this period of domestic turmoil there was a severe weakening of the Qing government's bureaucratic organs at the local level. Only with the final collapse of the Taipings in 1866 could the Manchus begin to reassert Imperial control throughout many provinces. As a result, the regional rebellions were gradually surrounded and were eventually defeated one by one.

These rebellions never directly threatened the Manchu Court, but from a military point of view the defeat of the Nian, Muslim, and Tungan Rebellions proved to be important for several reasons. First, it spread the use of modern

weapons far into China's interior, making western military equipment more accessible throughout China. Second, a larger number of Han Chinese acquired training in how to use these weapons. Third, once modern weapons and training became more widely available, it proved difficult for the Qing government to regain control over either the weapons or the military knowledge that accompanied their use. Paradoxically, it can be argued that the very act of repressing these regional rebellions proved to be a major step toward supporting the continued growth of regionalism, as well as having a crucial impact on the gradual breakdown of local Qing government.<sup>134</sup> Both movements increased the trend toward Han empowerment, a trend that eventually resulted in the fall of the Qing Dynasty.

It is an open question whether the Manchus' victory over these rebellions injected new life into the Qing court, or whether it contributed to the decline and fall of the Qing Dynasty. Certainly, the creation of largely autonomous local militias—such as the Xiang and Huai Armies—presaged the creation of independent militia armies that later hastened the collapse of the Qing. These local armies were not only instrumental in overthrowing the Qing Dynasty in 1911–12, but they later also served as the military base for the warlord period in early twentieth-century Chinese history.

Finally, the very success of Han Chinese officials in quelling the Nian, Muslim, and Tungan Rebellions—most notably the military leaders Zeng Guofan, Li Hongzhang, and Zuo Zongtang—proved that the Manchu generals were no longer the sole bearers of military prowess in China. With the creation of western trained armies equipped with modern weapons and manned by Han Chinese skilled in the ways of European warfare, the Manchu Bannermen could no longer claim to be the only organized military force in China. The long-range impact of this development would prove to have a devastating effect on the Qing Dynasty.

### **The Taipings and the Nian Rebellion, 1853–66**

Located primarily in Anhui Province, the Nian were originally thought to be salt smugglers and bandits. The term *Nian* appears to be derived from a locally made twisted (*nian*, to twist) hemp rope, and perhaps refers to the strong, unbreakable ties between the members of each band.<sup>135</sup> A second possible explanation is that twisted paper torches were used during nightly raids, or during ritual dragon dances.<sup>136</sup> Unlike earlier secret societies—such as the White Lotus—the Nian was a movement that acted openly. Its members were mainly dependent on farming, but salt smuggling was also an important local industry due to the poor soil and frequent natural disasters.

During 1851 and 1852 there were heavy floods throughout northern Anhui. Animosity against rich landlords was growing. With the 1853 arrival of the Taipings in Anhui, this anger grew into an organized movement. Although the Taipings provided the spark that ignited the Nian Rebellion, many of the



social conditions underlying the rebellion were already in existence prior to the Taipings. For example, the areas from which the Nian drew their support were constantly ravaged by drought, floods, and famine.<sup>137</sup> For this reason, the Taipings and the Nian were never firm allies, but military necessity and simple opportunism led them to ally and work together against the Manchus.

During the Taiping period, the main leader of the Nian band was Zhang Luoxing, from modern-day Bozhou district in Anhui. At the beginning of the Nian movement there were four main Nian bands, identified by colored banners, and later twelve. Zhang was initially the chief of the Yellow Banner. Most of the members of these bands spent the spring and summer tending their fields, but in the fall and winter they would augment their income by conducting extensive, and highly profitable, salt smuggling. After Zhang was declared an outlaw by local Qing officials, he organized the Nian bands into an anti-Manchu force called the Nian League. Zhang was elected "Master" of the Nian League and remained its leader until his capture and execution in 1863.<sup>138</sup>

It is often difficult to separate the early history of the Nian from the Taipings. During 1854, after the Taipings' Western Expedition took control of northern Anhui, many Nian voluntarily joined the Taiping Army. In 1855, the Nian Army adopted the title *Da Han* (Great Chinese). Although this title seems to suggest that one of the Nian's goals was to overthrow the Manchus, this was never part of their original philosophy. In fact, it may have been adopted simply to coopt or compete with the Taipings' clearly anti-Manchu ideology.

Imperial forces, under the command of Yuan Jiasan, quickly, but only temporarily, suppressed the Nian movement. According to Yuan's own account following his retirement:

The destitute livelihood of the people requires relief and reconstruction. The bandits capitulate not because they have changed their minds or because they want to turn to a higher mode of life. . . . Simply because I removed my occupying forces too soon and left the task of rehabilitation undone, the dead ashes consequently rekindled.<sup>139</sup>

After Yuan's army left, the Nian movement reappeared and continued to gather strength. By 1856, it had an estimated one million followers in northern Anhui alone. It was in this year that the Nian formally allied with the Taipings, thus abandoning their own "Great Chinese" reign title and adopting purely Taiping titles. Zhang Luoxing even received noble Taiping titles, including a kingship. This alliance allowed the Taipings to rely on northern Anhui for supplies, and the combined Taiping and Nian forces soon launched an attack on Henan Province in 1856–57. Although this campaign initially met with great success, it ground to a halt once Beijing rushed reinforcements to Henan.

The Nian also participated in defending the Taiping capital at Nanjing. However, in 1858, the Nian chief Li Zhaoshou defected to the Imperialists



with his 18,000 men. Beijing quickly conferred on him the title of lieutenant general. Li's defection was, in part, due to the fact that his mother, wife, and son had been taken hostage by Imperial General Shengbao. This forced him to open negotiations with the Imperialists to ensure his family's safety. Li's defection was also seen as justifying Taiping suspicions and distrust of the Nian, since most of the Nian soldiers never adopted the pseudo-Christian philosophy that was at the heart of the Taiping ideology.

Li also convinced another Nian chief, Xue Zhiyuan, to desert the Taipings. These timely defections allowed the Imperial forces to retake all of the Taiping cities on the northern bank of the Yangzi River, thus putting Nanjing under siege for the third time. It also allowed Shengbao's successor, Yuan Jiasan, to concentrate Imperial forces against Zhang Luoxing in northern Anhui. The Taipings sent an army to assist Zhang, but by the fall of 1861, Imperial troops had successfully taken the city of Anqing, which was the key to conquering northern Anhui.

Although the Taipings and the Nian remained allies in name, the bulk of the Nian Army returned to northern Anhui to protect its power base. In late 1861 and early 1862, the Taipings started the Second Northern Expedition to capture Beijing. Zhang Luoxing's Nian Army played a role in this expedition, since it joined with Ma Ronghe's Taiping division in attacking and laying siege to Yingzhou. The siege was conducted from 14 January until 1 April 1862, when it was finally abandoned. This defeat was a crucial step in weakening the Taipings and contributed to their eventual destruction by Imperial forces, in addition to splitting the Nian Army away from the Taiping forces.

The situation in northern Anhui became dire for the Nian beginning in 1863, with the arrival of a new Imperial Commissioner, the Inner Mongolian Prince Senggelingqin. Senggelingqin, who was accustomed to the wide open spaces of the Mongolian steppe, has been accused of relying too heavily on his cavalry. This policy led to a crushing defeat at the hands of the Nian at the Battle of Loshan in the late summer of 1864. His army was also undisciplined and corrupt, which quickly led to disillusionment and opposition among the civilian population. Finally, he was not particularly honorable: in mid-March 1863, a group of Nian chiefs seized Zhang Luoxing and his son and handed them over for a reward. Unexpectedly, Senggelingqin ordered the immediate execution not only of Zhang and his son, but also the Nian chiefs and any other Nian warriors who had offered to surrender.

The Nian survivors of this debacle followed Zhang's nephew, Zhang Zongyu, to Henan Province. Senggelingqin pursued them, pushing Zhang eastward until they reached the city of Caozhou in Shandong Province. Here, in early 1865, a former Taiping soldier stabbed Senggelingqin to death, thus relieving the Nian from almost certain defeat and giving Zhang an opportunity to return to northern Anhui for reinforcements. Although the Taiping Rebellion was officially defeated in 1864, pockets of resistance continued through February

1866, and Nian bands actually continued to fight for two more years. It was during this period that their distinctive guerrilla warfare tactics became most noticeable.

### **The end of the Nian Rebellion, 1866–68**

In late October 1866, Zhang Zongyu returned to Shandong with much-needed reinforcements. During this phase of the Nian Rebellion, Zhang's soldiers could not return home to farm and so they necessarily became a full-time army, capable of participating in year-round military expeditions. The entire Nian Army, with many former Taiping soldiers remaining in their midst, soon divided into the Eastern Nian and the Western Nian. The Eastern Nian was led by the former Taiping King Lai Wenguang, while Zhang Zongyu continued to lead the Western Nian.

Because the social base of the Nian was primarily among the uneducated peasantry of northern Anhui, few accurate records exist detailing their military strategy. It is clear, however, that women played an important role in the movement and that they fought alongside their men. The study by many Nian members of martial arts, and the Nian's interaction and fitful alliances with the White Lotus Secret Society is also well documented. Finally, the Nian's use of cavalry and guerrilla tactics was undoubtedly prevalent and was due mainly to their relative military weakness. Instead of meeting the Imperial troops in battle, the Nian avoided direct confrontations and would launch lightning attacks against the Manchus' weakest forces.

The military equipment of the Nian changed radically from 1851 through 1868. According to a detailed study of the Nian Army by S. Y. Teng, during the 1850s the Nian were not confined to using steel swords and bamboo sticks, but possessed guns, gingals, and a large number of cannon; some of their largest cannon weighed in at over 5,000 pounds. As the Nian were forced by circumstances to turn more and more to guerrilla tactics, however, their weapons became lighter as well. This was especially important for the Nian cavalry, which proved particularly effective. During the last two years of the Nian Rebellion (1866–68), the Nian even had access to modern western weapons. It was reported that they were getting advice from European military experts: "The Nian rebels had foreign guns, muskets, and possibly some ephemeral contacts with a few Europeans."<sup>140</sup>

Forced to adopt guerrilla tactics, the Nian relied on their cunning to survive. There are numerous folk-tales lauding the Nians' peasant ingenuity and resourcefulness against the Imperial troops. One such story concerns Zhang Zongyu and the Nian siege of Jiaozhou, which was fortified with the help of foreign troops. One day, a Nian soldier named Zhang Heng took his horse and swam in the moat in front of the city's western gate. The foreign defenders, peering over the wall to see this unusual sight, proved easy targets for the Nian archers and many were killed. Because of poor communications

within the city, this trick was then used to good effect at the city's southern gate as well. The following day, Zhang Heng returned with his horse and once again swam up and down the moat. This time, the foreign troops were too fearful to look out. Since the city's defenders refused to look out over the wall, a group of hand-picked Nian troops had the perfect opportunity to sneak up to the city gates and set gunpowder charges. According to this tale, the city walls were then destroyed and the Nian troops victoriously entered the city.<sup>141</sup>

Another folk-tale, called the "Coffin Trick," was about a small force of female Nian soldiers under a woman general named Chen Bagu. This group of women warriors was unexpectedly trapped in a riverside village when they stopped to help a group of wounded male Nian soldiers. Surrounded by a much larger Imperial force, Chen ordered all of her soldiers to change into mourning clothes that had been abandoned by fleeing villagers. The Nian then placed their own uniforms inside an empty coffin. Carrying the black coffin, the Nian—now dressed as wailing mourners—passed right in front of the advancing Imperial troops. To delay discovery, they loudly lamented the plague that had gripped their village, thus slowing the Imperials' advance. When the Imperial commander finally sent a scout into the village and discovered that it was empty, he raced after the mourners. It was too late, and the Nian crossed safely to the opposite side of the river.<sup>142</sup>

The Nian generals relied heavily on traditional military tactics, many of which dated back to Sunzi. For example, in its military encounters with the Imperial forces, the Nian Army would often be divided into three columns. While the central column would tie down the enemy in hand-to-hand combat, the two flanking wings would surround and attack the enemy from the rear. The Nian Army would try to wear down their enemy by gradually "exhausting the manpower and supplies" through constant attacks. Another tactic was to avoid fighting a large Imperial force and wait until they found a weak or isolated enemy contingent before attacking. Finally, they would frequently ambush government convoys, and would even dress up as Qing militia in order to infiltrate and attack an Imperial stronghold from within.<sup>143</sup>

For its own part, Beijing decided to counter the Nian's guerrilla tactics by enlisting foreign help to train their troops in modern warfare. In 1861, Zeng Guofan established China's first modern arsenal at Anqing, and after this time China began to produce an ever larger share of its modern weapons and ammunition. In Guangzhou, Green Standard troops were trained by British and French instructors from 1863 to 1866. In Tianjin, about a thousand men were trained in small arms between 1865 and 1870. Finally, Chonghou, a protégé of Prince Gong, also organized a so-called "foreign arms and cannon corps" composed of 500 men. These troops played an important role in suppressing the Nian.

With Senggelinqin's death in 1865, Beijing first put Zeng Guofan in charge of the Nian suppression. A year later, it assigned Li Hongzhang as replacement

after Zeng was granted leave of absence and transferred back to Nanjing. Both Zeng and Li were Han Chinese, and had gained the Manchus' trust while quelling the Taipings. Zeng quickly identified the Nian's four strongest advantages as (1) their brave infantrymen, who used long spears to attack the enemy; (2) their swift cavalrymen, who could quickly surround and destroy the enemy; (3) their military ability, which they did not squander but used only when challenged; and (4) their rapid mobility, which allowed them to cover 1,000 *li* in a matter of days.<sup>144</sup>

Once Zeng was put in charge of the campaign to suppress the Nian, he devoted an entire year to organizing a force of 50,000 men so as to be able to surround and destroy the mobile Nian forces. Zeng also realized that the Nian did not have many modern guns, and so used this deficit to his advantage. By contrast, the Imperial forces included British-trained riflemen, some of whom had received their initial training as part of Gordon's artillery. Armed with modern rifles, the Imperial troops were far superior to the Nian's cavalry.

By 1867, Li Hongzhang had completed the formation of the Huai Army and led it in a campaign against the Eastern Nian.<sup>145</sup> The Eastern Nian leader, Lai Wenguang, finally surrendered to Imperial forces on 5 January 1868, and was executed. In a last-ditch effort, the Western Nian swiftly crossed Shanxi Province into South Zhili Province, and advanced as far as the outskirts of Tianjin. Zuo Zongtang, the third of the great Han generals who came out of the Taiping conflict, was by this time the Imperial commissioner in Shaanxi and Gansu. By mid-1868 he had helped orchestrate a blockade that trapped the Western Nian between the Tuxie River, the Yellow River, and the Grand Canal. On 16 August 1868, in order to avoid capture and summary execution, Zhang Zongyu drowned himself in a river in Shandong Province.

### **The Muslim Rebellion in Yunnan, 1856–73**

The Muslim Rebellion, also called the Panthay Rebellion in some western sources, was centered in Yunnan Province in southwest China. Although the Muslims were a minority in Yunnan, making up only 20–30 percent of the provincial population, they were extremely unified and powerful. Living on the fringe of Han Chinese society, they had endured decades of discrimination by Qing government officials. Like the Nian, therefore, they were eager to take advantage of the Taiping Rebellion to proclaim their autonomy and oppose the dynasty in Beijing. Unlike the Nian, however, the Muslims did not simply want a new dynasty to replace the old, but hoped to create their own independent Muslim state that was completely separate from China. For this reason, the Chinese opposition to the Muslim Rebellion was intended to shore up the Chinese empire. In other words, Beijing's military actions in Yunnan clearly supported an imperialistic policy.

Tensions between Han Chinese and the Muslims predated the Taiping Rebellion, and in particular increased during the 1840s in various mixed communities in Yunnan. A long-standing argument between Muslims and Han Chinese over ownership of a silver mine in central Yunnan finally erupted, causing this tension to spread. Then, in 1856, the Manchu judicial commissioner in the provincial capital, Kunming, helped instigate a massacre in which several thousand Muslims were killed. The Han gentry throughout Yunnan also organized private military corps, known as *tuanlian*, with orders to “exterminate” the Muslims.<sup>146</sup>

The leader of the Muslim Rebellion, Du Wenxiu, was a Muslim with Han Chinese ethnic origins. In September 1856, he and his followers occupied the prefectural city of Dali. Once other Muslim groups followed suit, they declared an independent Southwestern Muslim “Panthay” Kingdom with Du Wenxiu as the new sultan. By 1868, the Muslims controlled more than fifty towns and the surrounding countryside—equal to almost half of Yunnan Province—and claimed a military force of 350,000. The Muslims also made plans to besiege Kunming, the provincial capital.

At one point Du Wenxiu planned to join with the Taipings in their anti-Manchu crusade. Once the Taipings’ Western Expedition entered Sichuan Province, the Muslims tried to make contact. Du assigned two of his followers, Lan Dashun and Li Yonghe, to lead a Muslim force to meet up with the Taipings. Imperial troops kept on interfering with the fulfillment of this plan, however, until the Taiping force was defeated and forced to retreat from Sichuan. The Muslim Army did assist the Taiping forces in Shaanxi Province during the early months of 1863.

Du also supported ties with the West, but his ambitious plans proved to be too little too late. During the 1860s, all official attempts by French and British representatives to visit Dali were scorned by Du; for example, in 1868 a British delegation from India, under Captain Edward B. Sladen, was greeted at the border but denied permission to visit Dali. However, in the early 1870s, under extreme pressure by advancing Imperial troops, a Muslim tribute mission arrived in England in April 1872. Du’s envoy, Liu Daoheng, “offered to the Queen, in the name of the Panthay sultan, four large boxes containing pieces of Yunnan marble, symbolizing the land Du ruled and his submission to Britain as a vassal.”<sup>147</sup> At this late date, however, the British government had little choice but to refuse, and the boxes of marble were deposited in a museum.

By 1871, Beijing had assigned a new Imperial governor to Yunnan Province, Cen Duying. Cen quickly began the task of organizing a military force. He armed them with modern weapons and hired French military advisers to train them. Although Du Wenxiu remained in charge of the Muslim Rebellion, by late 1872, sufficient Imperial troops were gathered so as to retake his capital at Dali. Surrounded and outgunned, in early 1873, Du Wenxiu killed his family and committed suicide before he himself could be captured.

### The Tungan Rebellion, 1862–73

The Tungan Muslims in northwest China also rebelled. Sparked by the Taipings' invasion of Shaanxi Province and by an increase in the ever-present tensions between the Han majority and the Muslim minority, the Tungan groups rose up in 1862. The major leader of this movement was Ma Hualong, descendant of Ma Mingxin, the founder of a particularly militant Muslim group called the *Xinjiao*, or New Sect. The rebellion quickly spread, since Beijing could not immediately afford to send troops to quell this uprising.

By 1864, the Muslims had taken control of Shaanxi and Gansu Provinces. Their victories put the Muslims in a particularly strong geographic position, since they enjoyed the military advantage of being located upstream on the Yellow River. It was from this location that the Qin Dynasty had first unified China in 221 BC, and from there that the Chinese Communists would do so again almost a century later in 1949. Caravan routes from Beijing to Xinjiang and beyond passed through the Gansu corridor, and allowed for relatively easy communication with Muslims in Xinjiang, as well as with Central Asian Islamic countries.

The Tungan Muslims were Chinese-speaking and had intermarried with Han Chinese for many centuries. Their religious school of Sufism was highly active and served to unify the community. Religious leaders had long claimed a special link with God that would let them perform miracles, such as curing all kinds of disease and forecasting future events. A Sufi practice known as "vocal recollection" was central to the New Sect's teachings, and Ma Hualong became a major leader of this school. His followers believed that through "vocal recollection" Ma could eliminate all thoughts from his mind except those pertaining to God, and in such a manner could predict the future and even cure physical problems like infertility.

In April 1862, one wing of the Taipings' final Northern Expedition moved into Shaanxi Province. This Taiping force approached Xi'an, the founding capital of the Qin Dynasty, before moving eastward into Henan Province. Encouraged by Beijing, the local Han Chinese in Shaanxi formed militia groups to oppose the Taipings. Fearful that these militias would be turned against them, the Muslims followed suit. By late May 1862, Han-Muslim tensions erupted because the Han militia burned a Muslim town, and the Tungan responded by murdering the Imperial commissioner for local defense.

The Muslim groups were originally divided into eighteen "great battalions." Although they were initially scattered throughout Shaanxi, they later became centered in Tongzhou in eastern Shaanxi, near Xi'an in central Shaanxi, and in Fengxiang in western Shaanxi. The Tungan immediately blockaded Xi'an and kept it isolated from Beijing from midsummer 1862 until August 1863, when the new Imperial commissioner, Dolonga, relieved the town. Dolonga also defeated the Muslim forces in Shaanxi and forced the rest to flee west to

Gansu Province. Following Dolonga's death in March 1864, Imperial repression of the Tungan Rebellion shifted to Gansu Province.

The Tungan Rebellion in northern Gansu was based in Lingzhou, only fifty miles from Ma Hualong's hometown of Jinjibao. When Ma's troops took Lingzhou in December 1863, a reported 100,000 Han Chinese inhabitants were massacred. From this base, the movement spread throughout all of Gansu, and the Muslims soon controlled almost the entire province. Many Muslim sects did not agree with Ma's New Sect teachings and so there was continual internecine strife. In May 1866, Ma even agreed to support the Qing. In return for giving up twenty-six cannon, more than 1,000 foreign arms, and 10,000 swords and spears, Ma's record as a rebel was cleared and Beijing proclaimed him a loyalist. Still, the rebellion continued unabated and even spread further west into Xinjiang (see Chapter 5).

Imperial opposition to the Tungan began in earnest only in 1867, with Zuo Zongtang's entry into the fray as the head of the new Hunan Army. Southern Shaanxi was cleared first, and many of the Tungan who had returned to Shaanxi once again fled to southeast Gansu. Meanwhile, even after his "surrender" in 1866, Ma Hualong had continued to strengthen his position in northern Gansu. Zuo's new Hunan Army numbered 55,000 men, and a unit of the old army—about 10,000 men—was commanded by Liu Songshan. In addition, Beijing had assigned 10,000 troops from the Sichuan Army, 7,000 troops from the Anhui Provincial Army, and 6,500 troops from the Henan Army. Altogether, Zuo's total troop force numbered almost 100,000.

Zuo Zongtang's military philosophy was a mix of West and East. Although his troops were armed with western firearms and ammunition brought at great expense from Shanghai, they received only ten days of arms training and minimal practice, so they could not use their weapons effectively. Zuo's army did have a number of western siege guns, however, and they proved to be particularly important for attacking the Muslims' walled cities.

Zuo's highest priority was that his men were courageous and that they had ample rations to fight. Accordingly, he would not order his troops into battle unless he had already accumulated and stockpiled three months of supplies. Even this was not always adequate to keep morale high, so promises of Muslim loot were also made to the flagging troops. Even with these promises Zuo's troops orchestrated a series of mutinies throughout the campaign.

To fund the seven-year campaign, Zuo received government and provincial money from a special "Western Expedition fund." In addition, Zuo arranged for foreign support by taking out loans "from foreign firms, guaranteed by the superintendents of customs at the treaty ports and confirmed by the seals of the provincial governors involved, to be repaid by these provinces to the foreign firms by a fixed date."<sup>148</sup> Needless to say, these arrangements made a Qing victory of great interest to the foreign firms, since full repayment could be made only after the errant provinces were reconquered.



Zuo quickly developed a reputation for carrying out painstaking preparations before sending his troops on rapid and decisive campaigns. Zuo was periodically criticized by members of the Manchu Court for being indecisive, but “he refused to make blind moves before his preparations were complete, even upon an order from the Court.” Instead, he carefully stockpiled food at strategic points along his proposed route, and in so doing “conquered what had seemed to be an insurmountable handicap in Gansu, the shortage of food.”<sup>149</sup>

Finally prepared, Zuo led his troops against the eighteen great battalions. Highly decentralized and without walled cities, most of the Shaanxi Muslims were either easily defeated or fled to Gansu. In early 1869 Zuo moved into Gansu, where his force was flanked to the northeast by Liu Songshan, who had just completed his campaign against the Nian in Zhili Province, and to the north by Zhang Yue, who had been stationed in Shanxi Province. Although this three-pronged attack eventually succeeded, it was not without major setbacks. Specifically, in early 1870, Muslim cavalry cut off supply lines in Shaanxi and, amidst heavy fighting, they killed Liu Songshan and routed Zuo’s army.

Regrouping, Zuo once again took the offensive, and by fall 1870 had surrounded and cut off Ma Hualong in his fortress at Jinjibao. Using Krupp siege guns to fire over the city walls, Ma was eventually forced to surrender and was executed, along with several thousand of his closest followers. The main base of the New Sect was now crushed.

Instead of an easy victory, what followed was a grueling three-year campaign. Although eventually victorious, Zuo’s forces were defeated yet again in early 1872 not far from Hezhou in western Gansu by the so-called “Old Teaching” Muslim Ma Zhanao, before Ma agreed to negotiate his surrender. Finally, on 24 October 1873, the final Muslim stronghold in Gansu, the walled city of Suzhou, was breached and 7,000 surviving Muslim troops were executed. Zuo was to write that this victory, which ended the Tungan Rebellion in Shaanxi and Gansu, was the “most perfect feat of my military career over decades.”<sup>150</sup>

## Conclusions

With the suppression of the Nian Rebellion (1853–68), the Muslim Rebellion in Yunnan Province (1856–73), and finally, the Tungan Muslim Rebellion in Shaanxi and Gansu Provinces (1862–73), the Qing Dynasty once again controlled most of China proper. Although these rebellions were incredibly destructive, and Beijing was forced to devote enormous resources to defeat them, the leaders of the Nian, Muslim, and Tungan Rebellions were not as immediately dangerous to Beijing as the Taiping leaders. Unlike the Taipings, these movements did not promote ideologies supporting anti-Manchu Han nationalism, so it was unlikely that the Han Chinese majority would rally with them against Beijing.



Instead of developing into national movements, these rebellions reflected local resentment of Beijing and were perhaps an opportunistic reaction to the Taiping Rebellion. With the collapse of the Taipings in 1864, these rebellions no longer enjoyed the relative anonymity they had enjoyed while Beijing and Nanjing were fighting. As a result, the Qing once again reasserted central governmental control throughout the provinces, forcing the smaller rebellions to collapse one by one.

The impact of these rebellions was important, since the Qing defeat of the Nian, Muslim, and Tungan Rebellions spread the use of modern rifles and cannon far into China's interior. Once the rebellions were over it was not so easy to reclaim these weapons from the local militias. Therefore, the ultimate impact of the rebellions was that a larger number of Han Chinese became trained in how to use modern weapons.

Once modern weapons and training became more widely available to the Han Chinese, it was almost inevitable that the Qing government would begin to lose total control over the regions, a development that eventually promoted the Manchus' dynastic decline. Therefore, the Manchus' victory did not permanently halt its fall, but merely delayed its decline and dynastic collapse. In fact, by creating largely autonomous local militias and by giving them the opportunity to receive direct funding—often from western lenders—Beijing was instrumental in building up the local armies that took a central role in overthrowing the Qing Dynasty in 1911–12: “Because the Government left the initiative in modernizing the army to the provinces, and most of the financing also, the centrifugal forces released in the struggle against the rebellions were perpetuated.”<sup>151</sup>

Finally, with the creation of western trained armies equipped with modern weapons and manned by Han Chinese skilled in the ways of war, the Manchu Bannermen were no longer the only organized military force in China. The notable success of Han Chinese military leaders like Zeng Guofan, Li Hongzhang, and Zuo Zongtang would later serve to promote the view that a purely Han Chinese military could succeed. This realization, in turn, helped lead to the warlord period in twentieth-century Chinese history.

## Part 2

# IMPERIAL FALL



Figure 2 Imperial trade and territorial imperialism mainly in China's colonies and tributary states.

## THE ILI CRISIS AND CHINA'S DEFENSE OF XINJIANG AGAINST RUSSIA

Domestic rebellion and foreign trade imperialism characterized the first phase of the Qing's collapse. The second phase of the dynastic cycle, which ultimately led to the Manchus' fall, was focussed on the periphery of the Empire. These conflicts erupted primarily in China's contiguous colonies, such as Xinjiang and Manchuria, and in its tributary states, like Vietnam and Korea. China's military suppression of the Muslim Rebellion in Xinjiang (1864–77), coupled with its success in pushing Russia out of the Ili Valley during the "Ili Crisis" (1871–81), was arguably its first successful anti-imperialist war against a foreign power attempting to invade and absorb Chinese territory. Although the Chinese troops used modern weapons bought from the West, their military formation and tactics were still largely traditional. St. Petersburg, faced with Zuo Zongtang's determined military policy, which was linked with Beijing's rigid diplomatic stance, declined to go to war. Instead, it negotiated a political settlement leading to Russia's 1881 retreat from Xinjiang. The Ili Crisis would prove to be China's first and last major nineteenth-century victory against a foreign power.

During the early 1860s, more than a hundred years after Xinjiang's conquest in 1759, China still governed it as a military colony, with a military governor stationed at the city of Ili in northwest Xinjiang. The Ili Valley was strategically and politically important: on the one hand, the 12,208-foot Muzart Pass linked northern and southern Xinjiang, while on the other hand, Ili's location next to China's border with Russia meant that it was China's first geographic barrier against Russia's ongoing expansion into Central Asia. Although the Qing officials and Bannermen in Xinjiang were almost all Manchus, the population was mainly Uighur Muslim. Ethnic tensions were long-standing and divisive.

The Xinjiang Rebellion did not owe its origins directly to the Taipings, but the 1862 Muslim Rebellion in Shaanxi and Gansu Province—which can itself be traced to the Taipings (see Chapter 4)—did spark a parallel movement in Xinjiang.<sup>152</sup> By 1864, the Uighur majority had initiated its own Muslim Rebellion. Under the leadership of Yakub Beg (Ya'qūb Beg), a Muslim general

from the neighboring state of Khokand, the rebels took control of all of southern Xinjiang and a significant portion of northern Xinjiang. This Muslim-controlled state sought to separate from China, and remained defiant of Beijing's control for thirteen years.

Yakub Beg's domestic and international autonomy was precarious, and his independence depended mainly on the Manchus' preoccupation with the Taipings, the Nian, and the other Muslim revolts in Yunnan, Shaanxi, and Gansu. Yakub Beg did try to sponsor diplomatic relations with Russia and Great Britain. In 1871, the Russians occupied Ili and much of the surrounding valley, fearing that Yakub Beg might obtain British assistance that would allow them to take control over this strategic territory. Thereafter, in 1872–73, Yakub Beg signed commercial treaties with both Russia and Britain in return for their recognition of Xinjiang's autonomy.

In 1875, Beijing selected Zuo Zongtang to conduct the military suppression of Xinjiang. During the next two-and-a-half years he led a successful military campaign against Yakub Beg. By 1877, Zuo had regained control over all of Xinjiang, with the notable exception of Ili, which the Russians continued to occupy. War between China and Russia seemed likely, until they signed a last-minute diplomatic solution—the 24 February 1881 Treaty of St. Petersburg—and the Russians withdrew their forces. To try to avoid similar ambiguity over the political status of Xinjiang in the future, Beijing made Xinjiang an official Chinese province in 1884, although, arguably, China continues to treat it as a colonial possession to this day.

Beijing's military success in retaking Xinjiang from the Muslim rebels, coupled with its diplomatic success in forcing Russian troops out of Ili, seemed to prove that China's domestic turmoil was at an end and that the Manchus' dynastic cycle was no longer on the wane. Although the terms of the Treaty of St. Petersburg ceded Russia a small amount of territory in western Xinjiang and paid Russia a huge indemnity to compensate them for sending troops to Ili, the Qing succeeded in regaining this strategic territory. In addition, unlike the Arrow War, the Manchus avoided the public humiliation of having foreign troops in their capital city dictating peace terms. Although Beijing's military and diplomatic victory in Xinjiang proved the viability of adopting western weaponry, the Chinese were clearly still not convinced of the need to move all the way to a western-style military.

### **The Muslim Rebellion in Xinjiang, 1864–70**

News of the 1862 Tungan Muslim Rebellion in Shaanxi and Gansu provoked sympathetic uprisings in Xinjiang. The first took place during March 1863 in Ili, but was quickly defeated by Qing troops. Smaller revolts were quelled throughout Xinjiang during 1863, and it was not until mid-1864 that the Manchus lost control over this territory. Instead of facing only one opponent, the Qing faced three separate revolts: the first in eastern Xinjiang, near Urumchi,

the second in western Xinjiang, near Ili, and the third in southern Xinjiang, near Kashgar. These three movements were unified during the late 1860s by Yakub Beg (c.1820–77), a former general in the neighboring Khokand Army.

It is important to understand that Xinjiang was not a Chinese province, but was under the direct authority of a military governor in Ili, backed by three assistant military governors in Ili, Tarbagatai, and Yarkand. Under the assistant military governors were twelve military commanders. Five were stationed in Ili, and then one apiece in the cities of Tarbagatai, Ush, Yarkand, Urumchi, Turfan, Gucheng, and Krukara Usu. All these top Qing officials were either Manchus or Bannermen, while the civil administration was in the hands of local chiefs, given the title of “Beg.”<sup>153</sup>

Tungan Muslims in eastern Xinjiang struck first during July 1864. The leader of this revolt was Tuo Ming, a Tungan Muslim originally from Gansu Province, and believed to be a follower of Ma Hualong’s New Sect movement. After gaining the military support of Suo Huanzhang, an officer in the Green Standard Army, the Qing garrison revolted and killed their commanding officer, a Manchu general. Backed by the garrison, Tuo Ming easily took control of the Muslim portion of the city of Urumchi and he was proclaimed King. By October, the Manchu section of Urumchi had fallen and the revolt spread to several neighboring cities, including Turfan.

The second focus of the Muslim revolts was in Ili, where rebels under Ma’azzam Khan besieged the Manchu cities of Huining and Huiyuan. The Manchu garrison commander, Mingyi, and the military governor, Mingxu, held off the Muslims for eighteen months. During this time they requested military assistance from Russia, but no help was forthcoming prior to the fall of the two cities in March 1866. A month later, the far western Sino–Russian border area near Tarbagatai also fell to local Muslim rebels.

The third focus of the rebellion was in southern Xinjiang, close to Kashgar, where two groups competed for control. In 1865, one of these requested help from the neighboring central Asian state of Khokand, where many Xinjiang Muslims were living in exile. As a result of this request, Buzurg Khan led a small force into southern Xinjiang and eventually unified the warring factions. The leader of Buzurg Khan’s military force was General Yakub Beg. Described as “an able commander but also a master manipulator of power and of the religious sanction for it, the two being inseparable in Islamic Turkestan,”<sup>154</sup> by 1867, Yakub Beg had succeeded in forcing Buzurg Khan out of Xinjiang and in taking power himself, declaring that all the Muslim rebels in Xinjiang should submit to Kashgar’s rule.

From 1867 to 1870, Yakub Beg consolidated his rule throughout much of Xinjiang. Leading a force of 20,000 men, he first took the cities of Khotan, Aksu, and Kucha in the Tarim Basin. Attacking eastward, he took Korla in 1869, and in 1870 succeeded in capturing Karashahr and Turfan. Finally, in December 1870, Tuo Ming fled Urumchi, and it fell to Yakub Beg. One of Yakub Beg’s biographers has stated that his “chief claim to our consideration

is that, for more than twelve years, he gave a settled government to a large portion of Central Asia. . . . The secret of his power can only be discovered by constantly bearing in mind that fact that he had constituted himself the champion of the Mahomedan religion in Central Asia."<sup>155</sup> In fact, during this period, Yakub Beg added religious authority to his military and political power when the Emir of Bukhara granted him a religious title. Strict Islamic law was followed and many religious schools were opened.

During this six-year period of the Muslim Rebellion, Xinjiang also played an important international role. As the buffer zone between the Chinese Empire to the east, the Russian Empire to the north, and the British Empire to the south, Yakub Beg sent envoys simultaneously to India and Russia in 1868, offering trade in return for diplomatic recognition of his government. Accordingly:

Xinjiang now lay at the crossroads of three empires—Qing, Russian and British. The first two, especially, had a large stake in her future, and for the moment Russia was ensuring that Yakub's Islamic enthusiasm did not lead him to support other states in Turkestan which she was bringing under her control. During the years that saw Yakub's rise of power, Kokand, Bukhara and Khiva were all making their last stand for independence. Russia took Tashkent in 1865 and Samarkand, belonging to the emirate of Bikhara, in 1868. The trend was to continue: Khiva finally capitulated in 1873 and the city of Kokand became Russian three years later.<sup>156</sup>

In addition, he solicited friendly relations with the Ottoman Empire. Fear of a future Xinjiang alliance with Britain, which would be aimed against Russia, apparently helped to spur a Russian invasion of Ili in 1871.

Russia's goal in taking Ili was not merely defensive, and St. Petersburg was clearly interested in absorbing all or part of Xinjiang as a further step in its territorial expansion into Asia. The Russian government had already made good use of the Arrow War to sign diplomatic agreements with Beijing that included significant new territory, including

the 1858 Treaty of Aigun which gave the north bank of the Amur to Russia, a ratification of the Treaty of Tianjin which granted her access to the same ports as the other maritime powers, and a new Treaty of Tianjin which handed over to her the disputed Ussuri territory between the Amur and Vladivostok.<sup>157</sup>

According to S. C. M. Paine, author of the most definitive new book on Russo-Chinese border relations: "For China, the physical territorial losses were enormous: an area exceeding that of the United States east of the Mississippi River officially became Russian territory or, in the case of Outer Mongolia, a [Russian] protectorate."<sup>158</sup> Taking Xinjiang was the next logical step in this

Russian policy. Meanwhile, Russia publicly reassured China that it was merely upholding Beijing's authority in Ili until China's domestic problems were resolved.<sup>159</sup>

Unexpectedly, the Qing Dynasty rebounded from its internal problems. By 1873, the Han Chinese general, Zuo Zongtang, not only used his army to help defeat the Nian Rebellion, but he almost single-handedly destroyed the Muslim Rebellion in Shaanxi and Gansu. Zuo had his army utilize western weapons, even though in matters pertaining to military organization, strategy, and tactics the Chinese continued to rely on traditional practices. Zuo furthermore supported the creation of a modern navy.<sup>160</sup> For a time, the Manchus considered a December 1874 suggestion by Li Hongzhang that Yakub Beg be recognized as a tributary vassal, so that the sums needed to quell the rebellion could be used for building coastal defenses and a larger navy. However, fear that losing Xinjiang would also lead to Russia absorbing Mongolia—which did, in fact, eventually happen in 1946 (see Chapter 13)—caused the Qing Court to back the Xinjiang campaign.<sup>161</sup> The Russian action in turn gave Zuo his first opportunity to direct China's new army against a foreign foe, leading to a diplomatic incident commonly known as the "Ili Crisis."

### **The Russian invasion of Xinjiang, 1871–75**

In June 1871, Russian troops crossed the border and occupied Ili. One interpretation of their actions was that they were fearful that Yakub Beg would soon turn his attention to Ili, and that through him, the British might gain a foothold in central Asia.<sup>162</sup> A second interpretation was that: "The Russian officials endeavored to obtain from . . . Beg concessions that would be advantageous to their country, at the same time that they categorically declined to recognize his official *status* as an independent prince."<sup>163</sup> In addition to keeping the British at bay, the Russians occupied approximately 1,200 square miles of Chinese territory. This territory included Russian control over the strategic Muzurt Pass and the Ili Valley trade routes. From this position, Russia could easily expand and make future territorial acquisitions, should the Qing Dynasty fall or be weakened further by domestic turmoil. It was this aspect of the Russian invasion that Beijing found most worrisome.

The commander who ordered the invasion of Ili was General K. P. von Kaufman, the governor-general of Russian Turkestan. He sent a report to St. Petersburg justifying the need to occupy Ili, but acted independently when ordering the invasion. As Jack Gray has observed, the "advance of Russia across the Asian heartland, scarcely controllable from St. Petersburg, found little to check it."<sup>164</sup> Granting local commanders the authority to make decisions pertaining to territorial aggrandizement allowed St. Petersburg to accept the "fruits of their conquest" if successful, or to decry the incident if unsuccessful.<sup>165</sup>

On 24 June 1871, General G. A. Kolpakovskii led a force of 1,850 Russian troops across the border. They defeated a Muslim force twice their size on



28 June, and occupied the town of Suiding on 1 July. Bowing to the inevitable, the local leader Abul Oghlan surrendered on 3 July 1871. Kolpakovskii accepted his surrender and ordered the Muslims to hand over their weapons. The following day, the Russians entered the city of Ili, and Kolpakovskii declared that Russia had annexed this territory “in perpetuity.” In later diplomatic exchanges, however, Russian officials insisted that Russia’s stewardship of Ili was only an act of kindness to China. Accordingly, Ili would be handed back to China when Beijing sent a military force large enough to control the Muslims.

Beijing did not hear of Russia’s occupation of Ili until 1 September 1871, when the Russian Minister, General G. Vlangaly, explained that Russia had “recovered” Ili from the Muslims. Beijing immediately ordered Yongchuan, the military governor of Ili who had fled to Mongolia, to return. Yongchuan only made it as far as Chuguchak, and in mid-May 1872 he met with Colonel Boguslavskii of the Russian Ministry of Home Affairs. When Yongchuan admitted that he had only a hundred soldiers at his disposal, the Russian envoy refused to consider withdrawing from Ili, claiming that the Chinese were too few to administer Ili effectively.

The Russian Minister in Beijing tried to reassure the Qing officials that Russia’s only goal in occupying Ili was to halt Muslim border raids and to help China. However, on 9 April 1872, a commercial treaty was signed by Russia and Yakub Beg’s Xinjiang government, in which St. Petersburg tacitly recognized the independence of Muslim Xinjiang. The terms of this treaty were favorable to Russia, granting Russian traders in Xinjiang a low import duty of only 2.5 percent and giving them the freedom to trade anywhere in Xinjiang. One of Yakub Beg’s nephews was also allowed to represent Muslim Xinjiang in St. Petersburg.

In order to compete with Russia, Britain also sent a mission to Xinjiang. A commercial treaty was soon signed recognizing Beg’s government in return for preferential trade rights. By means of this agreement, Muslim Xinjiang was able to buy modern weapons from the Central Asian Trading Company. Finally, diplomatic relations with the Sultan of Turkey led to deliveries of 3,000 rifles, thirty cannon, and three military advisers to train Xinjiang’s infantry, cavalry, and artillery.<sup>166</sup> Yakub Beg’s diplomacy insured the survival of his government through 1875. It was only after that time that Beijing’s victory against the Tungan Muslims allowed it to consider retaking Xinjiang by force.

### **The defeat of the Muslim Rebellion in Xinjiang, 1876–77**

Zuo Zongtang, who had successfully put down the Muslim Rebellion in Shaanxi and Gansu Provinces, was put in charge of retaking Xinjiang. Zuo’s military force, which eventually exceeded 90,000 men, faced approximately 45,000 troops under Yakub Beg. Considering the great distances involved in

moving these forces, Zuo's success was rapid: the Xinjiang expedition left central China in April 1876, and by December 1877 had defeated Yakub Beg and retaken all of Xinjiang, with the notable exception of the Russian-occupied Ili Valley. The Xinjiang expedition proved to be an enormous undertaking. In letters to his family, Zuo compared it to the legendary territorial conquests of the Han and Tang dynasties.<sup>167</sup>

Zuo's full army was composed of 178 battalions, and his plans for retaking Xinjiang were fivefold: (1) reorganizing and equipping his army; (2) forming a base of operations in western Gansu, which would incorporate the region from Liangzhou to Ansi; (3) preparing a large supply base at Suzhou—to the east and slightly south of Xinjiang—with smaller bases immediately to the west in Yumen and Ansi; (4) occupying Hami, Barkul, and Gucheng—to the east and slightly north of Xinjiang—and preparing these three cities as advance bases for two lines of attack, one to the north of the Tianshan mountains that would head for Urumchi and Manas, and the other south of the mountains that would head for Turfan and Korla; and (5) once the supply lines were ready, and sufficient supplies had been placed along the proposed route, Zuo's army would set out from Barkul and Gucheng in order to take Urumchi and Manas, after which it would turn south and join the column from Hami in order to attack Turfan and Korla; the fall of Kashgar would signal the total defeat of Yakub Beg's forces.<sup>168</sup>

From his experience fighting in Shaanxi and Gansu, Zuo realized the importance of providing supplies for his troops. To transport supplies from central China to Xinjiang required 5,000 wagons, some 29,000 camels, and over 5,000 donkeys and mules. To purchase these supplies, Zuo required huge sums of money. Overall, he received funds totaling 52.3 million taels during the entire seven-year period of the campaign. Although Beijing ordered most of this money to come from the southern provinces, about 8.5 million taels were in the form of loans from the Hong Kong and Shanghai Banking Corporation.

Of equal or greater importance to Zuo's massive supply lines was his wholehearted use of European weapons. His infantry was well supplied with modern repeating rifles and Krupp needle guns, while the artillery used 12- and 16-pound steel cannon. A Chinese arsenal at Lanzhou manufactured ammunition and shells and, by 1875, had even succeeded in producing its own weapons. Finally, Zuo's forces continued to use a wide array of Chinese weapons, including light mortars and siege equipment.

Zuo's first objective was to retake northeastern Xinjiang. Zuo's subordinate, General Liu Jintang, quickly succeeded in taking Gucheng by 15 July 1876, Fugang by 28 July, and then, on 17 August, a major battle was fought at Gumudi, a walled city just fifteen miles northeast of Urumchi. Relying mainly on their German-made siege guns, Liu's forces quickly defeated the Tungan force inside the city. Urumchi fell without a fight on 18 August, as the last remnants of the Xinjiang Tungsans now retreated westward to Manas. After

a two-month siege, the city of Manas also fell on 6 November. Zuo's troops now controlled all of northeast Xinjiang.

Zuo then focussed on defeating Yakub Beg's forces in southern Xinjiang. Dividing his troops into three columns, General Liu attacked from Urumchi, while General Zhang Yao attacked from Hami, and General Xu Zhanbiao attacked from Barkul. Although Yakub Beg's troops were also equipped with modern weapons, their training was inadequate and they fled when faced with superior numbers. This second phase of the operation went well, and by 26 April 1877 Liu's forces had taken Toksun. Soon afterwards, Zhang's forces took Turfan.

Faced with almost certain defeat, Yakub Beg retreated to Korla. In early May, an ailment that began as a nosebleed struck him down. Yakub Beg reportedly died seven days later.<sup>169</sup> Because of the suddenness of this event, it was long suspected that Yakub Beg was poisoned; other reports suggested that he was killed outright in an argument with a subordinate.<sup>170</sup> His sons immediately began to fight over the throne and the government quickly disintegrated. By December 1877 Zuo's troops had taken Kashgar, and the Muslim Rebellion in Xinjiang was over. China's recovery of Ili from Russia and reassertion of Chinese control over the Ili valley was to take many more years.

### **Sino-Russian negotiations on Ili, 1878–80**

Although Yakub Beg was defeated, the Russians were not eager to depart from Ili. Not only would continued control over Xinjiang's mountain passes provide Russia with a military advantage, but trade with Gansu, Shaanxi, and Mongolia would also be greatly facilitated. Therefore, Russia's price for withdrawal was high, and China's diplomatic representative—the Manchu official Chonghou—appeared to agree to this price with the signing of the Treaty of Livadia on 2 October 1879. As soon as the Manchu Court understood the terms of this agreement, however, it immediately repudiated this treaty. The resulting diplomatic scandal threatened to end in war between Russia and China.

Chonghou was appointed to negotiate the return of Ili in mid-1878. He was given full ambassadorial powers, and was therefore also given full power to sign a final agreement with Russia. When Chonghou arrived in St. Petersburg on 31 December 1878, he was received by the Russian Tsar and was entertained by the highest circles of Russian society. During the next ten months, Chonghou more than repaid the Russians' kindness by agreeing to most of their conditions for Ili's return, an outcome that has led Immanuel Hsü to conclude that "the Russians were trying to dupe him."<sup>171</sup>

The terms of the Treaty of Livadia were very generous to Russia. In return for handing Ili back to China, Beijing agreed to cede the Tekes Valley, the passes in the Tianshan Mountains accessing Kashgar and Khokand, and to pay St. Petersburg a so-called "occupation fee" of five million rubles. Seven

Russian consulates were established throughout Xinjiang and western China, Russian goods would be duty-free throughout Xinjiang and Mongolia, and Russian merchants obtained permission to ship goods through these areas all the way to coastal China. In addition, a separate agreement gave the Russians the right to navigate the Sungari River, in Manchuria, as far as Potuna.

Chonghou was in constant touch with Beijing by telegraph and he sent copies of the treaty's terms to China in late September. However, he apparently signed the treaty on 2 October 1879 without the prior approval of his government. When Beijing then questioned the generosity of these terms, Chonghou reportedly answered: "The treaty having been clearly settled, it is absolutely impossible to re-negotiate."<sup>172</sup>

Only when the full terms of the Treaty of Livadia were reported to China did it become clear that they were unacceptable to Beijing. The Manchu Court refused to ratify the agreement. As punishment, Chonghou received the death sentence upon his return to China. The foreign powers in China were concerned about the bad precedent this punishment would set, since Chonghou was a diplomat who "had tried to solve an international difficulty by the accepted rules of diplomacy, and who was charged, not with treason, but with failure." Accordingly, protests were duly made—including a personal appeal for clemency from the Queen of England to the Empress Dowager—and the execution order was overturned only at the urging of various western powers and the insistence of Russia.<sup>173</sup>

Chinese outrage at the treaty's lopsided terms prevailed throughout official circles. Zuo Zongtang, who was primarily responsible for regaining Xinjiang, reportedly advised the throne: "We shall first confront them [the Russians] with arguments . . . and then settle it on the battlefields."<sup>174</sup> The Russians seemed willing to fight, since they had thousands of troops stationed near Ili and sent twenty-three warships on their way to China. In response, Beijing expressed its determination not to back down by assigning many of the most famous Hunan officers from the Taiping repression to key positions. It also hired the former leader of the Ever-Victorious Army, Charles Gordon, to advise Beijing on how best to defend against a future Russian attack.

In the end, war was avoided when Russia agreed to accept a new negotiator, Marquis Zeng Jize. Zeng was the son of the famous general Zeng Guofan. Zeng was also China's Minister to Great Britain, and diplomatic pressure from western nations undoubtedly contributed to Russia's decision to back down. Finally, since St. Petersburg hoped to avoid an expensive and unpopular war, in the end it proved willing to return to the table to negotiate how best to hand Ili back to China.

### **The Treaty of St. Petersburg, 1881**

Zeng Jize's negotiations with St. Petersburg were neither quick nor particularly amicable. They did result, however, in the signing of a new Sino-Russian

treaty to replace the now defunct Treaty of Livadia. Completed during February 1881, the Treaty of St. Petersburg increased China's compensation to Russia from five million to nine million rubles. Almost the entire Ili area—including the Tekes Valley and the Muzart Pass—was returned to China, and the former trade privileges granted to Russia were curtailed. As a result, the Treaty of St. Petersburg has been viewed as a Chinese victory that halted, temporarily at least, Russia's expansion into northwestern China.

Zeng left his post in London, and traveled through Paris and Berlin before arriving in St. Petersburg on 30 July 1880. In addition to a number of Chinese and Manchu assistants, Zeng brought along the English adviser to China's London Legation, Sir Halliday Macartney, and the former French supervisor of the Fuzhou docks, M. Prosper Giquel. It was apparent to all that Zeng enjoyed the diplomatic support of most of the western European nations, especially England. Unlike his predecessor, Zeng also knew full well that China's relations with Russia were not particularly friendly, and so he was not lulled into a false sense of friendship with his Russian hosts.

Russia, on the other hand, was in a weaker position than it had been a year earlier. First, the effect of the 1878 Congress of Berlin was now being felt, as Russia's hoped-for expansion into Turkey and the Near East was checked.<sup>175</sup> Second, England's decision to take control of Afghanistan in 1879 weakened Russia's already tenuous hold over central Asia. Third, Russia's financial situation in the wake of the Turkish War was deplorable, with government expenditures far out-pacing its tax revenues. Fourth, without a railway line to Siberia, the logistics of fighting a war with China over Xinjiang were not encouraging: not only did Zuo Zongtang's troops in Xinjiang vastly outnumber the Russians, but it was reported that fully 40,000 of them possessed modern weapons. Finally, if war did erupt with China it would most likely become a prolonged war of attrition, from which Russia could not possibly emerge unscathed.

For all these reasons, it was in both China's and Russia's interests to reach a diplomatic agreement, rather than allow the situation to escalate to all-out war. The negotiations were long and drawn out, and Russia's primary goal seemed to be to find a way to renounce the gains it had made by means of the Treaty of Livadia without losing its "national dignity," the Russian equivalent of "losing face." A sharp increase in China's payment to Russia—the new indemnity was 80 percent higher—eventually smoothed the path to an agreement, and by late fall 1880 the two sides had agreed on nine million rubles. In exchange, Russia now agreed to return the Tekes Valley and give up its claim to the Muzart Pass. The number of Russian consulates in Xinjiang was reduced to two and exemption from paying duty in Xinjiang was made temporary only. Finally, the clause allowing Russian navigation on the Sungari was dropped altogether.<sup>176</sup>

The Treaty of St. Petersburg was signed on 24 February 1881. Even though Russia's indemnity was almost doubled, this treaty was widely viewed as a

Chinese victory, especially since Russia—one of the most powerful of the western European nations—was perceived to have backed down under pressure. In 1884, soon after these negotiations ended, Xinjiang was turned into a regular province, and General Liu Jintang was made its first governor. Not only did this governmental change appear to signal a new importance for China's frontier, but it also seemed to show that China's three decades of domestic turmoil were finally nearing an end. For these reasons, the Qing Dynasty's successful handling of the Ili Crisis has received generally favorable praise from both Chinese and western historians.

### Conclusions

With the suppression of the Muslim Rebellion in Xinjiang (1864–77), and the successful resolution of the Ili Crisis (1871–81), the Qing once again controlled all of China's border areas in the far west, including the strategic Ili Valley and the 12,208-foot Muzart Pass linking northern and southern Xinjiang. The human cost of this victory was enormous, with estimates of the number of dead ranging into the millions.<sup>177</sup> Determined never to have to face this situation in Xinjiang again, the Qing government reasserted central governmental control throughout all of Xinjiang. Xinjiang was soon made a full Chinese province with its own governor.

The effects of the military campaign were enormous. First, the Qing victory spread the use of modern weapons even further into China's interior, as Zuo Zongtang led tens of thousands of troops into Xinjiang. Second, during the two-and-a-half-year campaign, Zuo proved that his western-equipped forces could defeat Yakub Beg and retake control over all of Xinjiang, with the notable exception of Ili. Finally, the fact that Zuo's army was stationed in Xinjiang and fully equipped and prepared to fight Russia undoubtedly helped prevent a new war between China and Russia. Although by the terms of the Treaty of St. Petersburg China paid Russia to compensate them for sending troops to Ili, the Qing government succeeded in regaining the most strategic portions of this territory.

Through the use of modern weapons and western-style diplomacy, Beijing not only regained control over Xinjiang, but also avoided the humiliation of having foreign troops remain within its borders. To many Chinese and foreigners, Beijing's military success in retaking Xinjiang from the Muslim rebels, coupled with its diplomatic success in forcing Russian troops out of Ili, proved that China's domestic turmoil was at an end. Beijing's victory in Xinjiang was further proof of the long-term viability of adopting western military and diplomatic techniques. Unfortunately for the Manchu Dynasty, the next stage in China's long process of dissolution and reunification involved retaining control over its far-flung tributary state in Annam. As Chapter 6 will examine in greater detail, the newly modernized army and navy would not prove as successful in the Sino-French War.

## THE SINO-FRENCH WAR IN ANNAM

Soon after Beijing succeeded in eliminating—for a time at least—Russia's intervention into the Chinese colony of Xinjiang, the Qing faced a new Imperial challenge to its authority: French efforts to break away and dominate China's southern tributary state in Annam (Vietnam). The Sino-French War in Annam (1884–85) was China's second anti-imperialist confrontation after Ili, and was a war that China lost. While China now used some modern weapons for its infantry, the recently constructed but largely untested Chinese Navy proved to be no match for the French.

Annam was under Chinese influence as early as the reign of Han Wudi (140–87 BC) and remained a Chinese colony until after the end of the Tang Dynasty (618–907). Thereafter, unlike Xinjiang's later colonial status, Annam's troops successfully defeated Qianlong's armies and so Annam did not fall under direct Qing control, but was considered instead to be an autonomous tributary state. Beginning in the seventeenth century, western influence increased following the arrival of the Jesuits. By the mid-nineteenth century, France sought to use its self-declared position as protector of Catholicism to add Annam to its colonial empire.

France's opportunity to absorb Annam appeared in 1859, when anti-missionary riots provided the French with an excuse to send troops. This action quickly led to the French acquisition of Annam's three southernmost provinces in 1862. Later, in 1874, the French government completed the task of turning Annam into a protectorate when it obtained the right to navigate the Red River in northern Annam. By 1880 it had troops stationed as far north as Hanoi. Faced with this western threat, the government of Annam sought Chinese assistance. Responding favorably to its tributary's request, Beijing agreed to dispatch troops to Hanoi in 1883.

Increasing tensions between the Chinese and French troops stationed in Annam led to open conflict in 1884. Although China's Navy was well on the way to becoming modern, it was still no match for the French. During the summer of 1884, the French fleet attacked Fuzhou, in southeast China, and quickly sank most of China's southern fleet. They also destroyed the Fuzhou



Navy Yard, which France had originally helped China to build. Eventually the French forced Beijing to negotiate peace, and in June 1885 China recognized the French treaties with Annam that turned it into a protectorate.

China's loss in the Sino-French War forced her to concede the tributary status of Annam and to acknowledge that the region was a French colony. This defeat had immediate consequences throughout southeast Asia, as Britain soon challenged Burma's tributary status. China conceded Burma without a fight in 1886. What is more important, France's success undoubtedly prompted Japan to make similarly aggressive moves to the northeast of China in its Korean tributary (see Chapter 7).

Historians have claimed that Annam's loss also "signaled the failure of [China's] twenty-year-old self-strengthening movement."<sup>178</sup> However, this assertion largely overlooks China's long string of military successes in suppressing the Taipings, the Nian, and the various Muslim rebellions to the south and west. It also completely ignores China's diplomatic success in recovering Ili from Russia without resorting to war. Therefore, a more sympathetic appraisal of Chinese self-strengthening is that while China proved to be sufficient to oppose and defeat civil, ethnic, and religious unrest within the borders of the Empire, it was insufficient to halt foreign expansion into its traditional system of tributary states in southeast and northeast Asia.

In fact, it would take China an additional seventy years of military development and modernization before it was capable of reinserting itself once again into the affairs of these tributary states, as the People's Republic of China was to do in the Korean War during the 1950s, and the Vietnam War during the 1960s. Before China was once again able to play a role in these tributary states, however, it lost control over enormous sections of its former Imperial territory, including Tibet, Xinjiang, Outer Mongolia, Inner Mongolia, and Manchuria. The Sino-French War proved to be an important precedent, therefore, since it was the first Qing confrontation with a foreign power that resulted in the loss of a tributary state.

### **The origins of the Sino-French War, 1859–83**

China influenced Annam as early as the third century BC, and conquered Annam during the Han Dynasty. Even the name *Annam* is Chinese, from the term meaning south-pacifying, or *an-nan* campaign, during the Tang Dynasty. Although Annam gained its independence from China in 938 after the Tang collapsed, it remained a Chinese tributary state. This tributary relationship proved to be especially important during the Qing Dynasty (1644–1911), and according to one account, Annam sent approximately fifty tribute missions to Beijing during the period 1664 to 1881.<sup>179</sup>

France began to form relations with Annam when the Jesuits became some of the first westerners to enter Annam in 1615. French trade with Annam was



initially opened by the French East India Company during the late seventeenth century, but was not a financial success. Fearful of China renewing its southern military campaign, Annam's leaders sought outside allies. Although French officers thereafter helped Nguyen Phuc Anh found the Nguyen Dynasty (1802–1945), once he became Emperor Gia-Long and realized that China was occupied with domestic and ethnic rebellions he quickly spurned his French benefactors.<sup>180</sup> In a classic case of Asian power politics, however, Annam's new 'friend' turned out to be worse than its traditional "enemy," since once the French were invited in they refused to leave (see Chapters 11 and 12 for a Chinese example of what happened when the Nationalists asked the Japanese to intervene in Manchuria against Russia).

French missionaries and Vietnamese converts had enjoyed a long and generally productive relationship in Annam, but under Tu Duc's (1848–83) xenophobic rule, anti-Catholic riots became more common and widespread. This proved to be a perfect excuse for Napoleon III, who was also urged by his Catholic wife Eugenie to send troops to Annam. In 1858, Napoleon ordered the military to intercede.<sup>181</sup> By 1859, a French force seized Saigon in southern Annam and garrisoned it. Supported by twenty-seven French warships and some 3,500 troops, the French used their superior weaponry to break through a Vietnamese blockade. Soon, they controlled Saigon and the three surrounding provinces.<sup>182</sup>

A temporary French peace was achieved with the Vietnamese Emperor, Tu Duc, in June 1862. The resulting French–Annam treaty granted a US\$4 million indemnity, trade privileges, and religious freedom for Annam's Catholic minority. This treaty went much further by also ceding France outright the three southern provinces of Gia-dinh, Dinh-tuong, and Bien-hoa—the French called them Cochin China—and prohibited the Vietnamese from sending any troops into these provinces. Although Tu Duc criticized the terms of this treaty and called the Vietnamese negotiators who signed it "criminals," Mark McLeod has suggested that Tu Duc secretly gave his approval to these important concessions while publicly condemning his officials as scapegoats.<sup>183</sup>

French domination of Annam expanded throughout the 1860s, and by 1874 a second French–Annam treaty was signed that made Annam a French protectorate. This agreement not only confirmed French possession of Cochin China and asserted French control over Annam's foreign affairs, but it also added the important right of navigating the Red River in northern Annam. This provision made the French domination of northern Annam possible. By 1880, the French had erected forts along the Red River and had stationed troops as far north as Hanoi and Haiphong.

Annam now turned to China to halt French expansion. Despite French opposition, the Annamese government sent tributary missions to Beijing in 1877 and 1881. It also requested help from the Black Flag Army, a pirate army associated with the Heaven and Earth Society (an offshoot of the Taiping movement). The Black Flags were commanded by Liu Yongfa, a Hakka

Chinese who was from Guangdong Province.<sup>184</sup> Liu reportedly dreamed as a youth that he would become a famous “General of the Black Tiger” and so used a black flag as his banner.<sup>185</sup>

The Black Flag troops began to arrive in Annam during 1882. For over a year before China declared war, albeit unofficially, they opposed French forces throughout the Tonkin area. The Black Flags were noted for using a variety of military strategies, ranging from defensive entrenchments to the cunning ambush of French troops. According to Spencer Tucker, their understanding of modern weapons was poor: “They had artillery but they seldom used it, and they were very poor marksmen, preferring not to fire their rifles from the shoulder in aimed fire.”<sup>186</sup> Although outnumbered by the French, the Black Flag troops made effective use of guerrilla tactics. Many of these tactics would be seen once again almost eighty years later during the US–Vietnamese conflict.

From 13 to 16 December 1883, the French launched an offensive against the Black Flag base in Sontay and routed their forces. Four months later, the French occupation of Bacninh, just north of Hanoi, forced Liu Yongfa to order his troops to withdraw back to China. Even though many members of the Black Flag Army had formerly been followers of the Taipings, Beijing could not ignore the Black Flag’s plight. Beijing responded to Annam’s pleas by sending troops in 1883. Stationed close to the Sino–Annam border, at Lang Són, the Chinese troops were more numerous than their French counterparts. Tensions increased between the opposing French and Chinese troops and fighting soon broke out. Although the Chinese weapons were modern, the Chinese troops’ training would still prove to be largely inferior to that of the French.

### **The birth of the Chinese Navy, 1870–83**

Unlike earlier nineteenth-century conflicts, the Sino–French War was the first war during which China possessed a modern navy. Credit for this development largely goes to Li Hongzhang who, during 1870 to 1895, was governor-general of the northern province of Zhili, and a primary sponsor of China’s modernization.<sup>187</sup> Not only was Li still considered to be the head of the Huai (Anhui) Army, which had born the brunt of fighting against the Taiping, the Nian, and the Muslim Rebellions, but he soon became responsible for forming the Beiyang Navy in China’s northern waters.<sup>188</sup> The Chinese government ordered the development of three other modern fleets as well, based at Guangzhou, the Fuzhou Naval Yard in southeast China, and along the Yangzi River.

China’s need for a modern navy was first revealed during the Opium War, but was dramatized in 1873 when Japan claimed the Ryukyu (Okinawan) Islands as Japanese territory.<sup>189</sup> These islands had become a Chinese tributary in 1372, but from 1609 were slowly dominated by the Satsuma feudal state in Japan. The incident that sparked Japan’s action was the 1871 massacre of

fifty-four shipwrecked Ryukyu sailors by Taiwanese aborigines. When Beijing refused to take action in what was technically a part of China, the Japanese launched their own expedition in 1874 and sent troops to Taiwan. Lacking an effective navy to counter the Japanese force, China was forced to pay Japan an indemnity both for its expedition and to compensate the murdered sailors' families. Beijing also agreed not to dispute Tokyo's claim to the Ryukyu Islands. In 1879, Japan formally annexed these islands and changed their name to the Okinawa Prefecture.

Beijing could not counter foreign aggression from the sea without a modern navy. Previously, funds for building a navy were particularly scarce because of the military demands of opposing the Muslim rebellion in Xinjiang and resolving the Ili Crisis. In addition, the Manchu Court decided in 1874 to use scarce funds to rebuild the Summer Palace; although widely condemned by westernizers as a waste of money, the construction of a new Summer Palace was intended to prove to the Han Chinese that the Manchus were still firmly in control, and so had important domestic consequences.

Li Hongzhang was the leader of a group of Qing officials who pushed for building a proposed forty-eight-ship navy. He argued persuasively that Beijing was vulnerable mainly from the coast, not from the western borderlands. Still, although Li obtained permission to purchase ships from abroad beginning in 1875, only two million taels were set aside for this task. This amounted to just a fraction of the sum Zuo Zongtang received during the same years to fund his Xinjiang expedition.

As John Rawlinson recounts in great detail in his study of Chinese naval development, Li had a particularly difficult time deciding whether China should build ships herself or should buy them from British, French, and German shipbuilders. As a result of his indecision, by the early 1880s the various Chinese fleets were far from being standardized and so experienced great difficulty working together as units. Accordingly:

In that disordered buy-and-build situation, there was no plan, no grasp of the problem. There were only varying degrees of hostility to China's several external foes. Much money was spent, but with little effect. The variety of equipment, which reflected the political compartmentalization of the coast, contributed to the lack of coordinated action and grand strategy. Li Hongzhang only added confusion with his wily and opportunistic purchasing of ships and arms.<sup>190</sup>

By 1882, the Qing Navy consisted of approximately fifty steamships. While China built half of these at either the Shanghai or Fuzhou shipyards, the government purchased the other half abroad. For example, China ordered four gunboats and two 1,350-ton cruisers from England, while ordering two other Stettin-type warships and a steel cruiser from Germany (the German vessels, however, did not arrive in China until after the Sino-French War was over).

Not surprisingly, considering Li Hongzhang's political power, many of the best and most modern ships found their way into Li's northern fleet, which never saw any action in the Sino-French conflict. In fact, fear that he might lose control over his fleet led Li to refuse to even consider sending his ships southward to aid the Fuzhou fleet against the French. Although Li later claimed that moving his fleet southward would have left northern China undefended, his decision has been criticized as a sign of China's factionalized government as well as its provincial north-south mindset.

While China possessed much of the equipment for a modern navy by the early 1880s, it still did not have a sufficiently large pool of qualified sailors. One of the major training grounds during the early 1870s was at the Fuzhou shipyards, which had hired foreign experts to conduct training classes. By the late 1870s, many of the foreigners had left Fuzhou, and a new naval academy was opened at Tianjin, in northern China. This academy lured many of the best-trained Chinese sailors away from southern China.

By 1883, therefore, at the outset of the Sino-French War, China's navy was poorly trained, especially in southern China. Although many of China's modern ships were state of the art, the personnel manning them were relatively unskilled: according to Rawlinson, only eight of the fourteen ship captains that saw action in the war had received any modern training at all.<sup>191</sup> In addition, there was little, if any, coordination between the fleets in north and south China. The lack of a centralized admiralty commanding the entire navy meant that at any one time France opposed only a fraction of China's total fleet. This virtually assured French naval dominance in the upcoming conflict.

### **The Battle of Baclé**

The Qing infantry joined the fray in Annam almost a year after the Black Flag started harassing the French. Chinese troops showed their flags for the first time at Sontay, in December 1883, but were defeated there along with the Black Flag. Unlike the Black Flag, the Qing troops tended to use conventional military tactics over guerrilla warfare. Chinese land victories against the French were notable, albeit few in number, and the June 1884 Baclé incident is perhaps the most well known of the Chinese military victories.

During spring 1884, negotiations between Captain Francois Ernest Fourier and Li Hongzhang resulted in a preliminary agreement, signed on 11 May, which specified that all Chinese troops would withdraw from Tonkin and return to China. Although Li had agreed that China would retreat, the exact timetable was unclear. Thinking that the Chinese had already left Annam, a French force of 900, under Lieutenant Colonel Alphonse Dugenne, was sent to occupy Lang Són during early June 1884. Before reaching Lang Són, however, Dugenne's troops encountered a Chinese garrison near Baclé and fighting erupted.

The exact origins of the hostilities are difficult to determine. On the Chinese side, the garrison reportedly acknowledged the Li-Fourier agreement but stated that they had not yet received specific orders to leave. They therefore asked the French officers to be patient until instructions could be obtained from their superiors. As for the French, Dugenne evidently demanded immediate withdrawal according to the terms of the agreement and, when this was not forthcoming, ordered the assault on 23 June 1884.

Once fighting began, Wang Debang, a Chinese officer who had received his training under Zuo Zongtang, led the Chinese troops in a three-day battle against the French forces. Although Chinese casualties were high—approximately 300 Chinese killed to France's twenty-two dead and sixty wounded—the Chinese pushed back the French force. The Chinese portray the Baclé incident as a French defeat. Because of the ambiguity underlying the origins of the conflict, however, French accounts referred to it as a Chinese "ambush."<sup>192</sup> Lloyd Eastman has commented on how this incident filled the French public with a "sense of righteous indignation."<sup>193</sup>

### The Mawei Battle

Spurred on by their defeat at Baclé, the French decided to blockade the Chinese island of Taiwan (Formosa). Beginning on 5 August 1884, Admiral Lespes bombarded Taiwan's forts at Jilong (Keelung) Harbor on the northeast coast and destroyed the gun emplacements. However, Liu Mingchuan, a former commander of the Huai Army, successfully defended Jilong against an assault by Admiral Lespes' troops the following day; the French abandoned this attack in the face of the much larger Chinese forces.

While the Chinese Army enjoyed limited victories in Annam and on Taiwan, the Chinese Navy was not so successful. On 23 August 1884, a French fleet of eight ships under Admiral Courbet challenged and destroyed all but two of the eleven modern Chinese-built ships at port in Fuzhou Harbor. The heart of the French force was the 4,727-ton *Triomphante*, which led the artillery attack. Within the space of only one hour, naval bombardments destroyed not only the cream of China's southern fleet but also the Fuzhou shipyards, which had been built with French aid beginning in 1866. This attack left approximately 3,000 Chinese dead, and damages have been estimated as high as fifteen million dollars.<sup>194</sup>

Rawlinson has discussed this naval battle at some length, and has concluded that the "French advantage was not overwhelming" and that: "Had they been decisive, the Chinese might have seized a last opportunity." The French took advantage of the swift tides in Mawei Harbor to move against the Chinese ships, which were still moored in their docks. Beginning with the deployment of their torpedo boats, the French then used their heavy 10-inch guns to destroy first the Chinese fleet, and then the neighboring dockyards.<sup>195</sup>

Following this setback, the Qing Court officially declared war on France on 26 August 1884. On 1 October, Admiral Courbet landed at Jilong with 2,250 men, and the city fell to the French. Chinese forces continued to encircle Jilong throughout the rest of the war. Although a French blockade thwarted all subsequent Chinese efforts to send a fleet to relieve Taiwan, the French troops never succeeded in taking the riverside town of Danshui (Tamsui) in Taiwan's northwestern coastal plain, immediately north of modern-day Taipei. As a result, French control over Taiwan was limited merely to the northern coast.

China's central fleet, based in Jiangsu Province, proved unable to break through Admiral Courbet's blockade of Taiwan. Although the south quickly requested assistance from the northern fleet, Li Hongzhang refused to place his own ships in danger. This decision almost guaranteed that China's coastal waters would be dominated by the French. Following an abortive Chinese relief mission to Taiwan during February 1885—as a result of this naval encounter, the French sank two Chinese ships and blockaded three others—the French managed to land troops and take control of the Pescadore Islands during March 1885, a victory that strengthened their blockade.

### **The Battle of Lang Són**

The Qing Court whole-heartedly supported the war, and from August to November 1884 the Chinese military prepared to enter the conflict. During the early months of 1885, the Chinese Army once again took the offensive as Beijing repeatedly ordered it to march on Tonkin. However, the shortage of supplies, poor weather, and illness devastated the Chinese troops; one 2,000-man unit reportedly lost 1,500 men to disease. This situation led one Qing military official to warn that fully one-half of all reinforcements to Annam might succumb to the elements.<sup>196</sup>

The focus of the fighting soon revolved around Lang Són. Pan Dingxin, the Governor of Guangxi, succeeded in establishing his headquarters there by early 1885. In February 1885 a French campaign forced Pan to retreat, and the French troops soon reoccupied the town. The French forces continued the offensive, and on 23 March they temporarily occupied and then hastily torched Zhennanguan, a town on the China–Annam border, before pulling back once again to Lang Són.

Spurred on by the French attack, General Feng Zicai led his troops southward against General Francois de Negrier's forces. The situation quickly became serious for the French, as their coolies deserted, interrupting the French supply lines, and ammunition began to run short. Even though the training of the Qing troops was inferior to the French and the Chinese officer corps was poor, their absolute numbers were greater.

This precarious situation worsened for the French when General Negrier was wounded on 28 March. Lieutenant Colonel Paul Gustave Herbingier,

who had been in Tonkin for only three months, took command. He immediately ordered the evacuation of Lang Són. Although Herbinger may have been retiring to more strongly fortified positions further south, the retreat seemed to many to be the result of panic. Widely interpreted as a Chinese victory, the Qing forces were able to capture the strategic northern city of Lang Són and the surrounding territory by early April 1885.

China's forces now dominated the battlefield, but fighting ended on 4 April 1885 as a result of peace negotiations. China sued for peace because Britain and Germany had not offered assistance as Beijing had hoped, and Russia and Japan threatened China's northern borders. Meanwhile, China's economy was injured by the French "naval interdiction of the seaborne rich trade."<sup>197</sup> Negotiations between Li Hongzhang and the French minister in China were concluded in June 1885. Although Li did not have to admit fault for starting the war, Beijing did recognize all of the French treaties with Annam that turned it into a French protectorate. This admission gravely weakened China's tributary system.

### **Negotiating a peace, 1882–85**

The Sino–French War was somewhat unusual because diplomatic negotiations were conducted almost non-stop throughout the entire period of the conflict. The first series of negotiations was from November 1882 until March 1883. The second series began in June 1883 and lasted through July 1883. During the third series, in May 1884, the two sides signed a five-article agreement known as the Li–Fournier Convention, but it became moot almost immediately as a result of the Battle of Baclé. Finally, on 4 April 1885, the two sides signed a peace protocol and, on 9 June 1885, they signed the final Sino–French treaty ending the war. By means of this peace treaty, France agreed to evacuate its troops from Taiwan and the Pescadores in return for China's accepting that Annam had become a French protectorate.

The first set of Sino–French negotiations took place during November 1882 between French Minister Frederic Albert Bouree and Li Hongzhang. Over a period of two weeks, in meetings held in Tianjin, the two men negotiated a three-article agreement. Completed by 28 November 1882, this treaty agreed that Chinese troops would withdraw from Tonkin, French trade could be conducted as far north as the Red River town of Lao-Kay, and the territory between the Red River and the Sino–Annam border was turned into a buffer zone.

It appeared that this treaty might avert further conflict over Annam, but suddenly the Zongli Yamen began to make new proposals. In particular, the Qing Court was unhappy that Chinese troops would have to evacuate Tonkin. Chinese delays in ratifying this agreement also undermined its value to the newly established second ministry of Jules Ferry, one of the strongest French proponents of turning Annam into a colony. On 5 March 1883, Paris notified



Minister Bouree that he was no longer France's minister to China and disavowed his agreement with Li Hongzhang.

In early June 1883, Li Hongzhang undertook a second series of negotiations with Arthur Tricou, France's Minister to Japan and Bouree's temporary successor. Meeting five times in Shanghai, the two diplomats conducted several stormy sessions in which the status of Annam was hotly disputed. Tricou insisted that China desist from intervening in Annam's internal affairs and that Annam become a French protectorate. Li countered that since Annam was a Chinese dependency, Beijing could not dissociate itself from Annamese affairs. About the only thing the two appeared to agree on was that China would not go out of its way to aid the Annamese resistance movement against France. These negotiations soon fell apart and Li returned to Tianjin in early July.

Sino-French negotiations opened again almost a year later, in May 1884. This time, Li Hongzhang conducted talks with François Ernest Fournier, a long-time personal acquaintance and an assistant during the failed Li-Tricou talks of the previous year. During 5–11 May, the two men met in Tianjin and agreed on a five-point accord to demilitarize the Tonkin. However, they avoided discussing some of the trickier issues involving Chinese sovereignty in Annam. On 17 May, the two men also signed a memorandum of intent, but this document did not specify details of the planned withdrawal.

According to Fournier's interpretation of the treaty and the 17 May memorandum, Chinese troops should withdraw immediately from Tonkin. He reported to Paris that all Chinese troops would evacuate Tonkin by 6 June 1884.<sup>198</sup> However, Article V of the treaty specified that a second, more detailed treaty would be negotiated three months later to clarify China's exact relationship with Annam and France's new trading privileges there. According to Lewis Chere, the Chinese government interpreted this article to mean that troops could remain until the "signing of the final, as yet unnegotiated, treaty."<sup>199</sup> It was this ambiguity that led indirectly to the Baclé incident, after which the Li-Fournier Convention fell apart and the Sino-French conflict intensified.

Although China's forces in Tonkin achieved some notable land victories against the French, it became clear by late 1884 that China would not receive any foreign assistance. This forced Beijing to open negotiations with Paris through the offices of Robert Hart, the British-born inspector-general of the Chinese Maritime Customs Service. The Chinese victory at Lang Són on 28 March 1885 finally prompted the French into action. On 4 April 1885, a peace protocol ended the conflict by reaffirming the Li-Fournier agreement of the previous year.

Once again, Li Hongzhang was in charge of negotiations as he met with France's new Minister to China, Jules Patenotre, during June 1885. On 9 June 1885, the final Sino-French treaty was signed in Tianjin. Its main points reaffirmed that Annam was a French protectorate and that it could conduct foreign relations only through France. In addition, French firms could trade



directly with China's southern provinces, and over the next couple of years a total of five ports of entry were to be opened along China's southern border. Finally, although China did not have to pay France an indemnity, Beijing had already accrued an estimated 20 million taels in debts by defending Annam and had suffered another 100 million taels in economic losses.<sup>200</sup> By almost any modern standards, therefore, China "lost" the Sino-French War.

## Conclusions

The Sino-French War of 1884–85 was China's first test of its newly modernized army and navy. During the previous two decades, China's opponents had included political rebels, ethnic separatists, and religious militants, most of whom were even less developed technologically than the Han infantry and the Qing Bannermen. Now, for the first time since the Opium and Arrow Wars, the Chinese faced a modern European army and navy. Clearly, China failed this test.

Although China's army and navy showed a marked improvement since the Opium and Arrow conflicts, it still squandered an enormous amount of money, equipment, and manpower, not to mention ultimately losing its Imperial claim to Annam as a Chinese tributary state. China's failure not only allowed Annam to be turned into a French protectorate and later colony, but, in 1886, China conceded Burma to Great Britain without a fight. France's success also undoubtedly prompted Japan to make similarly aggressive actions to dominate Korea, with equal success.

By the 1884–85 Sino-French War, a clear pattern of Chinese Imperial decline had emerged. During the nineteenth century, unrest in China appeared to be concentrated at three distinct levels: (1) domestic uprisings and civil war between rival groups or parties—such as the Taipings and to a lesser degree the Nian—seeking to gain control over the central government administration located in Beijing; (2) separatist ethnic, religious, and minority rebellions on the periphery of China's Empire—such as the Muslim Rebellions in Yunnan, Shaanxi, and Gansu, and the separatist movement in Xinjiang—which attracted foreign interest and at times led to active foreign intervention; and (3) unrest among China's far-flung tributaries—such as Annam, Burma, and Korea—which was either directly sponsored, or at the very least supported, by foreign powers through their active military intervention.

Only some eighty years later, during the twentieth century, did China even begin to reverse these nineteenth-century losses to its tributary system. After seventy years of political turmoil, intermittent military development, and sporadic modernization, China finally proved capable of reinserting itself in the affairs of its former tributary states. This policy was perhaps best seen during China's military intervention in the Korean War and economic and military support for the Vietnam War. The Sino-French War has a greater historical importance, therefore, because it was arguably the first Qing

confrontation with a foreign power to directly affect the status of a tributary state. Perhaps not too surprisingly, almost a century later China's last major modern foreign conflict—the 1979 border war with Vietnam (see Chapter 17)—was largely an attempt by China to force Vietnam once more into accepting its unwelcome status of tributary state.

## THE SINO-JAPANESE WAR AND THE PARTITIONING OF CHINA

The Sino-Japanese War (1894–95) was China's third anti-imperialist war after Ili and Annam. The war took place in Korea—a Chinese tributary state—and in Manchuria and Taiwan—contiguous colonies of the Chinese Empire—and so shared many characteristics with these two previous conflicts. Even though China possessed armies equipped with modern weapons and navies composed of top-of-the-line western warships, it lost the Sino-Japanese War, and thereby lost control over Korea, Taiwan, and—for a time—parts of Manchuria's Liaodong Peninsula. China's defeat can be attributed to poor training and to an inadequate understanding of modern strategy and tactical organization, areas in which Japan's newly modernized army and navy excelled.

On 4 December 1884, in the midst of the Sino-French War, pro-Japanese conspirators in Seoul, Korea, staged an uprising that attempted to link Korea more closely to Japan. Although the coup leaders broke into the palace and captured Korea's king, Chinese troops under General Yuan Shikai soon intervened and the plot failed. With the signing of the Tianjin Convention on 18 April 1884, China and Japan agreed to protect Korea jointly. By granting Japan the right to send troops to Korea, this convention virtually guaranteed future Sino-Japanese conflict.

Ten years later, in 1894, two events helped precipitate war between China and Japan. The first was the murder of Kim Ok-kyun, the Korean leader of the failed 1884 uprising who was lured to Shanghai and murdered by a Korean assassin. When Kim's body was sent back to Korea on a Chinese warship for burial, members of the pro-China faction mutilated and publicly displayed the corpse, apparently as a warning to the pro-Japanese faction in Korea. Many Japanese considered this insult as also directed against Japan, and nationalist groups called for war.

The second, and more important, reason for war was China's intervention in Korea to suppress the Tonghak Insurrection, a group of religious zealots who demanded in 1892 that the Korean government lift its official ban on their movement. When the government refused the Tonghak rebelled, and Korea requested assistance from China. When Li Hongzhang sent Chinese

troops to crush the rebels, however, Japan did the same, insisting on its rights in the Tianjin Convention to participate in any reforms in Korea. When China tried to send reinforcements to Korea during July 1894, Japanese warships sank a troop ship, an act that led the two countries to declare war on 1 August 1894.

Fighting during the Sino-Japanese War was on both land and at sea. Japanese troops quickly defeated Li Hongzhang's renowned Huai Army at a battle near P'yongyang, and set up their own government of an "independent" Korea. At sea, the skilled Japanese Navy proved far superior to China's poorly trained sailors. Japan soon defeated and captured the bulk of China's northern fleet. Perhaps in repayment to Li for his failure to aid the southern fleet against France, China's southern fleet remained neutral against Japan.

As a result of its successful war against China, Japan made numerous demands. With the signing of the Treaty of Shimonoseki on 17 April 1895, China not only lost its claim to suzerainty over Korea, but forfeited the island of Taiwan, the Pescadores, and—temporarily—the Liaodong Peninsula in Manchuria. For the first time, not only was Beijing losing control over its tributary states, but it was forced to cede large sections of its traditional colonial empire. In effect, the foreign powers began "partitioning" China.

The long-range impact of the Sino-Japanese War was enormous. Following Japan's success, other foreign governments quickly demanded concessions of their own. This process weakened the already tottering Qing Dynasty, and anti-Manchu Han nationalism increased accordingly. However, the Sino-Japanese War was to have a positive impact on China's wavering path toward military modernization, since being "ignominiously vanquished by an Oriental neighbor who had long been a cultural protégé . . ." proved to be ". . . a rude awakening for the Manchu Empire."<sup>201</sup>

### **The origins of the Sino-Japanese War**

Kim Ok-kyun's assassination in 1894 and the Tonghak Insurrection were not by themselves sufficient to have caused a war between China and Japan, but they did exacerbate an already delicate situation. In fact, by October 1893, Yamagata Arimoto, the head of the Japanese Army and future Commander of the 1st Army in China, had already concluded that the real threat to Japan was not China or Korea, but the continued encroachments in Asia of "Britain, France, [and] Russia."<sup>202</sup> Japan's goal in Korea, therefore, was not just to weaken China's influence, but also to build an outer defense perimeter against these three greater opponents. Therefore, the Kim and Tonghak incidents merely provided a ready excuse to put this policy into effect.

Kim Ok-kyun was tricked by a supposed friend into traveling from Japan to the foreign concession in Shanghai, where he was murdered on 28 May 1894. Since Kim was the Korean leader of a failed pro-Japanese uprising, his death

intensified the Japanese public's concern about their Chinese neighbor. The Chinese government seemed to go out of its way to fuel these concerns. For example, after Kim's death, a Chinese gunboat was allocated to return his body to Korea to be "hung, drawn and quartered and the head, feet and hands exposed to public view at different places."<sup>203</sup>

More to the point, the Chinese showed their contempt for international law—a legal system Japan was in the process of adopting in order to gain equal standing with the so-called Great Powers—when they set free the suspected assassin, who had been arrested by British authorities in Shanghai and then in accordance with treaty obligations turned over to the Chinese for trial. Not only did the Chinese authorities refuse to press charges against the assassin, but he was even allowed to accompany Kim's mutilated body back to Korea, where he was "showered with rewards and honors."<sup>204</sup>

Japanese police had foiled an earlier 1894 attempt in Tokyo to assassinate Pak Yong-hyo, one of the other Korean leaders of the 1884 uprising. When two suspected Korean assassins received asylum at the Korean legation, it instigated a diplomatic furor. Kim's assassination called Japan's commitment to its Korean supporters into question. Although the Japanese government could have immediately used Kim's assassination to its advantage, it concluded that since Kim died on Chinese territory the treatment of the corpse was outside its authority. Many Japanese people considered these Chinese-supported actions as also directed against Japan. Nationalistic groups immediately began to call for war with China.

The second, and ultimately more important reason for war between China and Japan was the Tonghak Insurrection. The Tonghak were a religious movement based in the heavily agricultural districts of southern Korea. Their demands were primarily concerned with obtaining religious freedom, but they also had an international agenda: the Tonghak insisted that the Korean government enforce treaty limitations on foreign merchants by restricting them only to the international ports. Although the Tonghak proclaimed their loyalty to the throne, in spring 1894 their well-organized and well-disciplined forces began marching on Seoul to deliver their demands. Fearful of a full-scale rebellion, on 4 June 1894, the Korean King sought Chinese military assistance.

China quickly agreed to send troops to Korea.<sup>205</sup> In accordance with the Tianjin Convention, China informed Japan of its decision on 7 June 1894. That the Manchu Court considered Korea to be a Chinese tributary state was best shown by Beijing's communiqué to Tokyo stating that "it is in harmony with our constant practice to protect our tributary states by sending out troops to assist them."<sup>206</sup> Beijing's decision to send troops conformed to the Tianjin Convention. However, in Tokyo's opinion, openly proclaiming that Korea was a tributary state went against the bilateral treaty with China from 1876, leaving Korea's status ambiguous. Therefore, soon after Beijing ordered Li Hongzhang to send Chinese troops to crush the Tonghak rebels, the Japanese government sent its own troops. On 5 June 1894, the Hiroshima 5th Division

was mobilized. The Imperial military headquarters for the duration of the war was also established in Hiroshima.<sup>207</sup>

### **The sinking of the *Gaosheng* and the Battle of Songhwan**

It is an irony of history that the Korean troops quickly defeated the Tonghak rebels without Chinese or Japanese assistance, but the Sino-Japanese tensions aroused by this event continued unabated. On 25 June 1894, the Seoul representatives of the United States, Russia, France, and Britain urged the simultaneous withdrawal of Chinese and Japanese troops. Li Hongzhang also tried to defuse the standoff by turning to Britain for help. Japan rejected Britain's suggestion that Chinese troops withdraw to the north and Japanese to the south, thus leaving a neutral zone near Seoul, a plan that was remarkably similar to the later post-World War II scenario. In the end, all efforts to reconcile the parties proved futile, as Japanese and Chinese forces clashed.

Tokyo publicly claimed that its 7,000 troops landing in Inch'on, close to Seoul, were merely there to protect Japanese citizens and their property. On 16 June 1894, the Japanese cabinet, under Prime Minister Ito Hirobumi, also demanded that China accept a Sino-Japanese commission to reform the Korean government. China responded that it did not intend to meddle in Korea's internal affairs and reminded Japan that if Korea was really independent—as Tokyo claimed—then neither country had the right to interfere. On 22 June 1894, Japan informed China that it intended to undertake the task of reorganizing the Korean government alone. On 28 June 1894, the Japanese envoy in Seoul even urged the King that he should reject being a Chinese tributary and declare Korean independence.

Beginning in mid-July 1894, the Japanese representative in Seoul presented a governmental reorganization plan to the Korean King. Divided into twenty-six departments, the new government would help initiate modernization by building railways, roads, and telegraphs. The King rejected this plan. Japanese troops broke into the royal palace at 4:00 A.M. on 23 July, and took the Queen and her children to the Japanese legation for “safe-keeping.” The 80-year-old father of the King was made Regent, and at Japan's instigation he declared war on China on 27 July. He also requested assistance from Japan to force out the Chinese troops. Because of the timing of Japan's action, the British Foreign Office later determined that the Sino-Japanese War began at 4:00 A.M. on 23 July 1894.

With a Sino-Japanese confrontation appearing likely, China chartered three British steamers to carry reinforcements to Korea in late July. These troop ships were defended by three Chinese warships: the *Jiyuan*, the *Guangyi*, and the *Zaojiang*. In what was later called the Battle of Pung Island, the three Chinese ships opened fire on the Japanese ships *Akitsushima*, *Yoshino*, and *Naniwa*. In a clear Japanese victory, within one hour the Japanese forced the *Jiyuan* to flee, stranded the *Guangyi* on a shoal, and captured the *Zaojiang*.

The first two of the three troopships arrived safely in port. On 25 July 1894, the 3,709-ton *Naniwa* intercepted the third, a British steamer named the *Gaosheng* (*Kowshing* in Japanese sources) carrying 1,200 Chinese troops. After examining the ship's papers, the Japanese ordered the *Gaosheng* to follow them to port, presumably to be interned and the Chinese troops imprisoned. The Japanese order was perfectly legitimate during wartime, which had officially begun two days before. However, it is unclear whether the Chinese troops ever realized that they were at war. Therefore, the Chinese troops rebelled, took control of the *Gaosheng*, and refused to follow the *Naniwa* to port or to allow the European captain and crew to leave the ship.

Rebuffed, the *Naniwa* raised a red flag to warn the *Gaosheng* that it planned to attack. It then used a torpedo and its naval guns to sink the *Gaosheng* in the Korean Bay. Although estimates vary, approximately 950 Chinese soldiers drowned. Major C. von Hanneken, a military instructor working for the Chinese Army, succeeded in swimming ashore. He later testified that the Japanese fired on helpless Chinese in the water.<sup>208</sup> However, the undeniable fact that the European captain and his crew, plus many Chinese troops, were rescued by boats sent out from the *Naniwa* contradicted this account.<sup>209</sup>

Since there was as yet no formal declaration of war, the Chinese view has long been that the Japanese Navy acted "like pirates on the high seas."<sup>210</sup> Since the *Gaosheng* was a British-owned ship, the British government initiated an exhaustive study and concluded that hostilities had begun two days previously, so Japan's actions were not technically illegal. As reported in a study of the Sino-Japanese War by F. Warrington Eastlake and Yamade Yoshi-aki, the commander of the *Naniwa* negotiated for four hours with the *Gaosheng*, but the Chinese threatened its captain and crew with "instant death" if they obeyed the Japanese. After negotiations proved futile, there "was nothing for it [the *Naniwa*] but to sink the transport, and so in another moment a shell was fired at her engineroom with fatal precision."<sup>211</sup>

The first land encounter of the war took place several days later. On the morning of 29 July 1894, General Oshima led about 3,000 troops, composed of the 5th Division and the 9th Brigade, against the Chinese encampment near Songhwan, just south of Seoul. The Japanese easily routed the surprised Chinese forces, and only eighty-two Japanese were killed or wounded versus a reported 500 Chinese casualties. The Chinese survivors fled north to join China's other troops stationed near P'yongyang.

Japan now commanded all of Korea south of Seoul. The sinking of the *Gaosheng* and Japan's Songhwan victory led to official declarations of war on 1 August 1894. Japan soon landed reinforcements at Pusan. The remainder of the 5th Division arrived in Seoul in late August, but there were no other land engagements until mid-September. At that time, Japan scored decisive military and naval victories at both the Battles of P'yongyang and the Yellow Sea.

### The Battle of P'yongyang

Although the Battle of Songhwan was China's first military defeat in Korea, its importance was downplayed because the bulk of the Chinese forces in Korea were not stationed near Songhwan but near P'yongyang; before the battle began, many Chinese troops had left the Chinese camp to join the main army in P'yongyang. The same could not be said for the Battle of P'yongyang, however, which took place on 15–16 September 1894. Not only did the Chinese have ample time to prepare their defenses at P'yongyang, but they had plenty of warning when and from what directions the Japanese forces were approaching. These tactical advantages made China's subsequent defeat even more embarrassing.

Between early August and mid-September, the Chinese forces at P'yongyang reinforced the existing walled stronghold with massive earthworks. Four Chinese generals had their banners flying there, representing infantry, artillery, and Manchu cavalry; one source has listed these forces in the following order: Wei Ruguai leading 6,000 troops, Ma Yuguan leading 3,000 troops, Zuo Baogui leading 3,500 troops, and Nie Guilin leading 1,500 troops.<sup>212</sup>

By Chinese standards, their troops in Korea had received modern training and equipment. For example, some of the infantry carried American Winchester rifles, while the artillery had a total of four field artillery, six machine-guns, and twenty-eight mountain guns. Weapons were not standardized, however, and a major concern was the proper supply of ammunition. Ralph L. Powell has commented that "even an honest and efficient supply corps could never have furnished proper ammunition for the conglomeration of weapons carried by the troops."<sup>213</sup> In addition, the Manchu cavalymen still used outdated 15-foot lances. Even so, the cavalry's mobility and speed were far superior to the infantry forces and could have been used to great tactical advantage by a skilled commander.

The location of P'yongyang lent itself to a strong defense. Directly to the north were hills, and on the highest of these—Moktan-tei—there was a fortress that overlooked the entire area. To the east and south was a broad river, named the Taedong, and forts had been built to deter any enemy from crossing. The terrain was open only to the southwest, and here the Chinese constructed solid redoubts. According to one account:

It was evident that the Chinese army resolved to take the offensive on this occasion; for they had erected two bridge-head forts on the left bank of the river in order to protect the pontoon-bridge, while in the pine-woods on the opposite side of the stream they had thrown up earthworks, a mile apart, intended to drive back an intruding force and co-operate with the forts on the right bank. Finally each small camp had a redoubt to protect it, and every post about the town was thoroughly fortified. In all, the Chinese earthworks numbered twenty-seven.<sup>214</sup>



Undeterred by the Chinese defenses, four Japanese columns converged on P'yongyang beginning in early September 1894.

Although the Japanese 1st Army was under the overall command of General Yamagata, and he has been given credit for orchestrating the strategy at P'yongyang, he did not land with his forces at Inch'on until 12 September. Lieutenant-General Nozu Michitsura commanded the Japanese troops involved in the attack on P'yongyang, which included the Wonson column under Colonel Sato Tadashi, the Sangnyong column under Major-General Tatsumi Naobumi, the Combined Brigade under Major-General Oshima Yoshimasa, and finally the Main Division under Nozu himself. The plan of attack was for the Combined Brigade to make the frontal assault from the south, while the Main Division attacked from the southwest. Flanking actions would then be carried out by the two columns. If the Chinese tried to retreat, the Wonson column was given the duty of intercepting and harrying the enemy as it fled to the northeast.

The Main Division attacked from the southwest early during the morning of 15 September 1894. Following a twelve-hour battle, the Chinese repulsed this force. Heavy rain turned the battlefield into a field of mud strewn with the wounded, supply carts, and horses. Meanwhile, the Combined Brigade attacked the forts protecting the southern bank of the Taedong River. However, their artillery was too far back to be effective, and by nightfall the Japanese evacuated the few earthworks they had captured. The apparent inability of these two divisions to take P'yongyang led to initial newspaper reports, which later turned out to be false, that China had won the battle.

In fact, the Wonsan and Sangnyong columns succeeded in taking the Chinese fortress at Moktan-tei, to the north of P'yongyang. From that position Japanese artillery could fire across the city walls. This position of strength forced the Chinese to offer to surrender late on 15 September 1894. The Chinese commander promised that his troops would remain within the city gates, but since it was already getting dark, the Japanese declined to enter until the following day. During the evening of 15 September, many Chinese troops tried to flee. Japanese snipers killed large numbers of Chinese on the northern roads.

As a result of the Chinese surrender, early the following morning the two Japanese columns entered the northern gate of the city unopposed. There was no way to communicate their success to the rest of the Japanese Army, however, so when the Main Division began its attack on the city's West Gate on 16 September, they were surprised to find the gate undefended. Later that morning, the Combined Brigade entered the city through the South Gate.

Throughout the battle of P'yongyang, the Chinese troops fought valiantly, but were unable to counter the greater training and morale of the Japanese troops. For example, every time the Chinese sent out their cavalry, Japanese marksmen began to pick them off at long range and so were able to drive them back before they got close enough to use their lances. In this manner, the Manchu cavalry made one suicidal charge at the Japanese after another.

Another problem was the improper use of ammunition. The Manchu troops initially inflicted high losses on the Japanese with their modern repeating rifles. As a result, the Japanese infantry soon learned to hug the ground under the Chinese volleys. After waiting for the Manchus to expend their small supply of ammunition, the Japanese charged with bayonets. The Chinese usually fled. Expendng their ammunition and then running was evidently so common an occurrence among the Chinese troops that Japanese officers would joke once a Chinese fusillade began: "Now they are off."<sup>215</sup>

The reported number of combatants at the battle of P'yongyang varied widely, with earlier high estimates stating that 108,000 Chinese faced 70,000 Japanese.<sup>216</sup> Casualty numbers were also considerably inflated, with estimates of 6,000 Chinese casualties against only 700 Japanese.<sup>217</sup> Later, more reasonable force estimates put the Chinese between 15,000 and 20,000 and the Japanese at 12,000; total losses were also revised downwards at just over 2,000 for the Chinese and 698 for the Japanese.<sup>218</sup>

Soundly defeated, the Chinese forces retreated in poor order to the Yalu River, joining a larger contingent there. Only General Zuo Baogui was praised for his courage in the engagement. As for the Chinese troops, "those who made some stand were thereby made late in retreating, and suffered heavy losses."<sup>219</sup> As a result of the military victory at P'yongyang, the Japanese Navy was put in a strong position to meet China's Beiyang fleet the following day. This naval battle took place near the island of Haiyang, just off the mouth of the Yalu River.

### **The Battle of the Yellow Sea**

The Battle of P'yongyang had succeeded in pushing Chinese troops north to the Yalu, removing in the process all effective Chinese military presence in Korea. As for naval affairs, Japanese ships tried to halt further Chinese reinforcements to Korea, with notable success. During mid-August, Vice-Admiral Ito Sukehiro even attempted a surprise attack to destroy the Chinese Beiyang fleet at its base at Weihaiwei, on the northern coast of Shandong. Inadvertently, a nearby British vessel fired a salute upon sighting the Japanese fleet and thereby tipped off the Chinese. On 17 September 1894, the two fairly equal naval forces engaged in the Yellow Sea, with the Chinese fleet under Admiral Ding Ruchang and the Japanese fleet under Vice-Admiral Ito. The Japanese were victorious, and arguably it was the Chinese defeat at the Battle of the Yellow Sea that really gave Japan full control over Korea.

In the early 1890s, China's navy ranked eighth in the world, with a total of sixty-five ships, compared to Japan's eleventh ranking with only thirty-two ships. Remembering the Beiyang fleet's neutrality in the Sino-French War, the Nanyang fleet and the two smaller squadrons at Guangzhou and Fuzhou quickly declared their neutrality in the Sino-Japanese war. According to one account, except for some chance assistance by these fleets that was "largely

inadvertent, and regretted,” the only other ships dispatched northward were sent *after* the Beiyang’s defeat in February 1895, almost four months after the Beiyang fleet requested help.<sup>220</sup>

The decision of the other Chinese fleets not to become involved in the Sino-Japanese War forced Li Hongzhang’s Beiyang fleet to fight the Japanese alone. One in-depth study of the Beiyang fleet has determined several reasons, including strategic, financial, and scientific and technological, that led to its defeat. In terms of strategy, Li originally planned the Beiyang Navy for coastal defense, and so unlike the Japanese did not have the “ambition of extending naval power to the high seas.” In terms of finance, Li worked with a government bureaucracy “riddled with bureaucratic abuse, provincialism, and factional infighting.” Finally, as for science and technology, when “considering all aspects—industry, science and technology, personnel, and finance—China at the time was quite unqualified to support a modern navy.”<sup>221</sup>

Admiral Ding, a former Huai army general, was named the naval commander of the Beiyang fleet, which was originally organized in 1888 with twenty-five ships. The most notable ships in the northern Chinese fleet were two German-built battleships, the *Ding Yuan* and the *Zhen Yuan*, each weighing 7,430 tons. They were protected by a 14-inch armored belt and four 12-inch Krupp cannon apiece. It was widely rumored that these two ships were even more powerful than the U.S. Navy’s largest battleships, the *Maine* and *Texas*. The *Lai Yuan*, *Bing Yuan*, and *Jing Yuan* all displaced 2,800 tons and were heavily armored. Meanwhile, the *Yang Wei* and *Zhao Yang* were Armstrong ram cruisers, the *Zhi Yuan* was a 2,355-ton steel cruiser, and there was a large selection of smaller and older ships. Although the Chinese fleet was substantially larger in tonnage than its Japanese opponents, the Chinese ships were much slower, with a maximum cruising speed of only fifteen to sixteen knots.

During the Sino-Japanese War the Japanese fleet had twenty-one ships, with only a couple that exceeded 4,000 tons in size. However, nine of these ships had been built after 1889, and the fastest were capable of cruising at maximum speeds of over twenty knots. To take advantage of its great mobility, the Japanese fleet was divided into two groups at the Battle of the Yellow Sea: the First Flying Squadron under Rear-Admiral Tsuboi Kozo and the Principal Squadron under Vice-Admiral Ito.

The First Flying Squadron included the *Yoshino*, *Takachiho*, *Akitsushima*, and the *Naniwa*. When it was built in 1893, the 4,140-ton steel cruiser *Yoshino* was reputed to be the fastest ship in the world at twenty-three knots, and had quick-firing guns and five fixed torpedo tubes. Meanwhile, the other three cruisers each weighed over 3,000 tons and could achieve eighteen to nineteen knots.<sup>222</sup>

The Principal Squadron was composed of the *Chiyoda*, *Itsukushima*, *Hashidate*, *Hiyei*, *Fuso*, and the *Matshushima* as flagship. The *Matshushima*, *Itsukushima*, and *Hashidate* were French-built coastal defense ships displacing 4,277 tons apiece. They each carried thirty-two Canet guns, mounted in open-topped

barbettes protected with 12-inch-thick armor plate. The *Chiyoda* was a 2,450-ton British-built cruiser, while the *Hiyei* was an old armored cruiser and the *Fuso* a former British iron-armored corvette. Two other older Japanese ships, the gunboat *Akagi*, and the converted cruiser *Saikyo Maru*, followed behind the Principal Squadron, thus making a total fleet size of twelve ships.

The most immediate and obvious difference between the formation of the two fleets was tactical. On the day of the battle, Admiral Ding's ten ships were sailing in a wedge-shaped formation. The two iron warships, the *Ding Yuan* and the *Zhen Yuan*, were in the center, with the *Lai Yuan*, *Jing Yuan*, *Yang Wei*, and *Zhao Yang* on the right, and the *Kong Yuan*, *Zhi Yuan*, *Ze Yuan*, and *Guang Jia* on the left. This formation allowed the battleships to achieve maximum firepower but greatly reduced the maneuverability of the Chinese fleet as a whole.

While the Chinese adopted a unified formation, the Japanese divided their fleet into two squadrons. This tactical difference played to the Japanese fleet's faster speed and greater mobility: later, it proved much easier for the Japanese fleet to outflank the Chinese fleet. In the end, the decision to divide the Japanese fleet into two squadrons was to give the Japanese a crucial advantage. By contrast, while the Chinese apparently believed that a unified formation would give them the advantage because of their greater firepower, once the battle disrupted central communications it made their ships easy targets. After the battle, some reports suggested that Admiral Ding had initially ordered a different fighting formation but the captain of the Chinese flagship overruled him, apparently hoping to protect his own ship by placing it in the center.<sup>223</sup> This story may have merely been wishful thinking on China's part, or perhaps an attempt to shift sole blame on to Ding.

On the day of the battle, the sea was calm and the weather clear. The Japanese first reported smoke on the horizon at 10:50 A.M. and Vice-Admiral Ito ordered the fleet to close with the Chinese at 12:05 P.M. The First Flying Squadron steamed at full speed toward the center of the Chinese wedge-shaped formation, but gradually veered to port so that it could attack the Chinese flank. Meanwhile, at 12:50 P.M. the Japanese Principal Squadron crossed in front of the Chinese formation and began to maneuver around behind it. The ships in the Principal Squadron bore the brunt of China's initial artillery attack when they were still 6,000 meters away. These first shells missed, and five minutes later the Principal Squadron formed its own wedge-shaped formation to protect the older and more vulnerable *Akagi* and the *Saikyo Maru* at the center and began firing at 3,000 meters.

The main goal of the Japanese fleet was to damage the *Ding Yuan* and the *Zhen Yuan*, since without these battleships in the lead the Chinese fleet would falter and likely fail. Purely by chance, within minutes of the battle starting, a shell fired by the *Matsushima* seems to have damaged the upper half of the *Ding Yuan's* central mast. This disrupted Admiral Ding's ability to signal his fleet with flags. Later, an exploding shell also injured Admiral Ding.

Taking advantage of the Chinese ships' poor communications, the Principal Squadron split apart and began to surround the Chinese fleet, firing continuously at the main group. The Chinese responded by breaking formation. Since each ship was now on its own, several turned on the 600-ton *Akagi*, and her captain was killed and the mainmast soon destroyed.<sup>224</sup> Although apparently doomed, the Flying Squadron intervened and the *Akagi* limped away to safety. The Chinese severely damaged two other smaller Japanese ships, the *Hiyei* and the *Saikyo*, but they did not sink. The Chinese also hit the *Matsushima*'s main battery, and it looked as if her main magazine might explode. Only when a gunner's mate and a seaman stripped off their clothing and filled all the cracks was the magazine "saved and the *Matsushima* escaped a most serious danger."<sup>225</sup>

By the end of the encounter, the Japanese fleet had weathered the battle off Haiyang without the loss of a single ship. The Chinese did not fare so well during the four-and-a-half hours of battle, as Japanese rapid-fire cannon poured thousands of shells into the Chinese ships; the *Zhen Yuan* reportedly sustained over 400 hits during the course of the battle.<sup>226</sup> The Japanese fleet sank a total of four Chinese ships—the *Zhao Yang*, *Yang Wei*, *Zhi Yuan*, and the *Kong Yuan*—as well as inflicting over 1,000 Chinese casualties. As a result of damage to the other ships, the Chinese fleet retreated to Lüshun (Port Arthur in English sources) for repairs. Although the Beiyang fleet still existed in name, it had lost some of its best ships and its reputation had been severely damaged. More importantly, the Japanese fleet now dominated the sea routes between China and Korea. This strategic position gave the Japanese virtually a free hand to conduct further land operations during the remaining months of the war.

### The Battle of Jiuliancheng

As a result of the Battles of P'yongyang and the Yellow Sea, Japan broke China's hold over Korea. But China's strategic position, with forts along the Yalu and the Beiyang fleet in nearby Lüshun, was still strong. In particular, the Chinese headquarters at Jiuliancheng, a fortified town guarding the Yalu, was thought to be impregnable. It was here that the Japanese attacked in late October 1894. China's fate appeared to hang in the balance, since control of the Yalu River fords cut access between Manchuria and Korea. Instead of fighting to the death, the Chinese retreated to defensive positions along the Motianling mountains protecting Mukden (later called Shenyang), thus opening the gates of Manchuria to the Japanese.

General Song Jiang, who had received training in western military tactics in Europe, commanded the Chinese troops. Under his command were approximately 25,000 men, divided into fifty camps strung along the Sino-Korean border. The defenses at Jiuliancheng (in Japanese sources Kiulien-ching) were impressive, with more than a hundred redoubts and earthworks. The

Chinese had placed their mountain guns strategically, so that they had a clear view of the major fords. Finally, in addition to the entrenched infantry centered at Hushan, a hill near Jiuliancheng, Manchu cavalry units were available to rush to any faltering point.

The Commander-in-Chief of Japan's 1st Army, General Yamagata, took personal command of the operations at Jiuliancheng. In typical European fashion he ordered Colonel Sato to lead a small flanking force—six companies of the 18th Regiment, some cavalry, and two cannon—across the Yalu upstream of Jiuliancheng. Against heavy Chinese resistance, Sato succeeded in crossing the Yalu. By the evening of 24 October 1894, Sato had positioned his force to cross the Ngaeho, a small tributary of the Yalu. His plan was to attack the Chinese force at Hushan from the rear. Meanwhile, the main body of the Japanese force would divert the Chinese defenders by attacking Hushan from the front.

During the morning of 25 October, the Japanese constructed a metal and wood pontoon bridge across the Yalu at a point that was normally impassable. Completed by 4:00 A.M., Japanese troops were positioned on the north bank of the river by sunrise; the Japanese flanking units attacked the Chinese fort at Hushan simultaneously from the northeast and the southwest. The Japanese artillery decimated the Chinese defenders inside the fort. The Chinese commander at Jiuliancheng tried to send reinforcements to Hushan, but the Japanese pushed them back. Although the Chinese at Hushan were superior to the Japanese in absolute numbers, the Japanese surrounded and besieged them. By mid-morning, the Chinese called for a retreat. By noon, the Hushan fort fell to the Japanese.

During the rest of the day, the Japanese repositioned their forces to prepare for the main attack on Jiuliancheng. Beginning at 4:30 A.M. on 26 October, three columns of Japanese troops cautiously approached the city walls. The Chinese did not fire, which surprised the Japanese since shots had come from the city all night long. Upon scaling the city walls Japanese scouts discovered that the Chinese had apparently fired occasional shots simply to cover their retreat during the night. Jiuliancheng was empty. Total casualties on both sides were relatively light, with an estimated 500 Chinese dead compared to Japanese losses of approximately 140 killed and wounded.

Although the Chinese troops conducted their tactical retreat in good order, the price for keeping their retreat secret was that they did not destroy either Jiuliancheng's fortifications or its massive supply dump. As a result, the Japanese confiscated sixty-six cannon, 35,000 shells, 3,300 rifles, over three million rounds of ammunition, and valuable food supplies.<sup>227</sup> These unexpected spoils greatly aided the Japanese winter campaign. The Chinese commander's decision to order a retreat, most likely because of concern that he might be outflanked by the 2nd Army landing in Liaodong, in fact gave the Japanese uninhibited access to Manchuria, the venue for the major battles of the Sino-Japanese War.

## The Japanese invasion of Liaodong Peninsula

On 24 October 1894, at almost exactly the same time as the 1st Army was preparing to go into battle at Jiuliancheng on the Yalu River, Japanese troops from the 2nd Japanese Army were landing 150 miles to the southwest at the city of Huayuankou (Petsewo). Against all odds, the Japanese defeated the Chinese at Jinzhou (Kinchow) and Lüda (Dalian in English sources, Dairen in Japanese sources) during early November and succeeded in reducing Lüshun (Port Arthur in English sources, Ryojun-ko in Japanese sources) on 21 November 1894. China's Beiyang fleet escaped destruction only by retreating to Weihaiwei, but Beijing was powerless to stop the loss of its best naval dockyard. The Manchu government was also thrown into panic by Japan's rapid and apparently irreversible series of military and naval victories.

In late October, with the 1st Japanese Army poised to move into Manchuria, it became important to fortify Japan's lengthening supply lines by occupying the Liaodong Peninsula and taking Lüshun, China's premier naval base. Since it was deemed impossible to take Lüshun from the sea, the Japanese high command decided to land a force north of the port, march around to the southwest, and then attack from the rear. The 2nd Japanese Army disembarked at Huayuankou, a small port on the east coast of Liaodong about seventy miles northeast of Lüda and one hundred miles from Lüshun.

Field Marshal Oyama Iwao, a firm proponent of European, and especially Prussian, military tactics, commanded the 2nd Japanese Army. In 1884, Oyama headed a Japanese mission to Europe comparing the various armies. After visiting Berlin, he decided to adopt the Prussian military system in order to build an offensive force based on "mobile, self-sufficient operational units combining infantry, cavalry, artillery, engineers, and supply troops."<sup>228</sup> This style of independent warfare proved to be perfectly adapted for fighting in Liaodong, where steep mountain ranges were cut by narrow passes.

Ever since the Battle of the Yellow Sea, the Japanese fleet had reigned supreme in the northern waters. Japanese naval superiority allowed the landing on Liaodong Peninsula to proceed unopposed. After only ten days, on 4 November 1894, Oyama's force was ready for action. The first objective was to take Jinzhou, a fortified town commanding the neck of the Liaodong Peninsula directly to the north of Lüda and Lüshun. If Jinzhou could be reduced, the Japanese could attack Lüshun's virtually unprotected western side.

Although sporadic fighting between Chinese and Japanese units occurred throughout 4 and 5 November, it was on the morning of 6 November that the Japanese succeeded in outflanking the Chinese and attacking Jinzhou. After heated fighting against stiff Chinese opposition, the Japanese forces took the hills to the northwest of the city, and by 9:00 A.M., thirty-six Japanese artillery pieces began shelling the city itself. Within one hour, all of the Chinese cannon had been silenced and teams of Japanese engineers moved



in to mine Jinzhou's main gates. At 10:30 A.M., the Japanese dynamited two of the city gates and Japanese infantry entered the city.

Within two days of completing their landing on Liaodong Peninsula, therefore, the Japanese had seized the strategic town of Jinzhou. The severity of Jinzhou's loss was immediately apparent to the Chinese. During mid-November General Song led a force of 8,000 south from Motianling, in Manchuria, to try to regain this fort. Song attacked Jinzhou on 21 November, but his troops were defeated.

Two days after Jinzhou's fall, the Japanese Navy assisted in taking the city of Lüda and its even more strategic port. The Japanese advance was so rapid that the Chinese commanders, as had happened at Jiuliancheng the month before, failed to destroy important munitions and supplies. According to one report, at Lüda the Japanese captured "large stores of military supplies, including 621 rifles, 129 guns, over 33 million rounds of small-arms ammunition, and nearly 2.5 million rounds of cannon shells."<sup>229</sup> An American correspondent also reported that at Lüda the Japanese found a naval chart, showing the exact location of the Chinese mine defenses at Lüshun.<sup>230</sup>

In fact, the Japanese immediately diverted most of the Chinese military assets confiscated at Jinzhou and Lüda against Lüshun, which was widely proclaimed to be "impregnable." A German defense expert, Major von Hanneken, designed Lüshun's defenses, which included twenty enormous forts surrounding the central fortress. General Wei Ruzheng commanded the Chinese defenders, and was reported to have at his disposal the "best-trained division of China's best army."<sup>231</sup>

Field Marshal Oyama ordered the attack for the morning of 21 November. The first goal was to take the three Chinese forts on *Etse-shan*, or "Chair Hill," directly to the west of the main fortress. Using a total of forty cannon, composed of mountain, siege, and field guns, the Japanese shelled the hill for almost an hour before the Chinese guns were silenced and Japanese infantry succeeded in storming the walls. The second goal was the massive Songshushan stronghold, which the Japanese artillery quickly reduced by a chance hit to its ammunition magazine. The third goal included a total of seven fortifications on two different hills named Erlongshan and Jiguangshan. By this time, Japanese control over several of the Chinese fortifications within the outer defense perimeter allowed for devastating cross-fire that made it possible to reduce these other objectives by midday. A total of eleven inland fortifications, defended by over fifty cannon, were taken by the Japanese forces in little more than half a day.

Once the Japanese captured and destroyed most of Lüshun's inland defenses, the coastal fortifications were vulnerable, since only a small number of their guns could be directed inland against the besiegers. After continuous assaults by the Japanese infantry, they occupied the primary coastal forts by 4:00 P.M., when fighting ended for the day. Altogether, the nine coastal fortresses at Lüshun housed more than sixty cannon. Although the Japanese troops expected



to resume fighting the next morning to subdue the main fortress at Lüshun, when the sun rose on 22 November, it showed that the remaining Chinese defenders had fled during the night. Estimates of Chinese dead and wounded topped 7,000, while Japan announced that its side had sustained only forty killed and 200 wounded.

Japan's easy victory stunned the world. However, Japan's success was marred when news reports detailed a civilian massacre at Lüshun, in which an estimated 2,000 to 3,000 men, women, and children were shot and hacked to death by sword. The Japanese denied these reports, claiming that many of the dead were Chinese soldiers who had illegally removed their uniforms to aid their escape; pro-Japanese supporters considered the numbers to be highly exaggerated and well within the parameters of modern war, even by European standards.<sup>232</sup> However, Red Cross officials accompanying the Japanese troops later confirmed that the Japanese killed civilians, and American newspapers discussed Japan's indefensible "lapse into barbarism."<sup>233</sup>

Later, the Japanese government admitted that some atrocities had occurred. One explanation given was that the victorious troops entering the city sought revenge against the Chinese for the severed heads and mutilated bodies of tortured Japanese prisoners hanging on the city gates. The massacre may also have been considered as partial repayment for the earlier assassination and mutilation of Kim Ok-kyun, the pro-Japanese Korean leader.

China's one-day loss of Lüshun was an event almost without precedent in the annals of military history. Even though the Japanese had attacked the fort's most vulnerable side, the Chinese still had well over a hundred cannon, including the most advanced 50-ton Krupp guns, which were set up so as to cover all possible points of entry. The greatest weakness of the Chinese defenders appears to have been an almost complete lack of artillery coordination, thus giving the Japanese forces the opportunity to overrun the outermost forts one by one. However, because of the much publicized, albeit sensationalized, Lüshun massacre, the Chinese began to enjoy a certain amount of sympathy among the western press. This pro-Chinese sympathy later helped prod Tokyo to agree to terms of a peace treaty with China that stripped Japan of many of its hard-fought gains in Liaodong Peninsula.

### **The Japanese invasion of Manchuria**

Following their unexpected retreat from Jiuliancheng, the Chinese forces fled north to Fenghuangcheng. Under pressure from the Japanese advance guard, the Chinese burned Fenghuangcheng three days later before retreating again, this time to the mountain passes immediately south and east of Haicheng, where they secured strong defensive positions. By now the damage had already been done, and the Japanese forces had sufficient momentum to continue their advance far into Manchuria. Splitting at Xiuyan in early December, the northern wing quickly took Ximucheng, Haicheng, and Niuzhuang, while the

southern wing took Yingkou, effectively cutting off the road to the Liaodong Peninsula. Not only did the Japanese forces now threaten Liaoyang and Mukden, two of the largest cities in Manchuria, but their success allowed the Japanese to consolidate their control over Liaodong by cutting it off from Manchuria proper.

Only the precipitous Chinese retreat from Jiuliancheng and Fenghuangcheng allowed the Japanese to move north and west toward Liaoyang and Mukden. The Chinese strategy was clearly to let Manchuria's bitter winter weather deter the Japanese advance.<sup>234</sup> Although the Japanese temporarily took Motianling, on the main road to Liaoyang, the Chinese continued to occupy the hills overlooking the town immediately to the north, so the Japanese soon abandoned it. The new goal became Xiuyan (Suiyen), to the northwest, which the Japanese occupied in late November. By mid-November, the winter weather had set in and the Chinese dug into their defensive positions, forcing the formerly rapid Japanese advance to slow considerably.

In early December, the Japanese force once again divided into three columns—the Right, Left, and Main—with the immediate goal being Ximucheng (Tomuh-ching), a town on the road to Haicheng (Haiching). At dawn on 12 December, the three columns converged on Ximucheng. Although the Chinese force, estimated at around 10,000, fought resolutely, the Japanese outflanked and surrounded it. Abandoning their field guns, the Chinese retreated. By 10:00 A.M., the Japanese had taken the town. Reported losses were 104 Chinese casualties and only seven Japanese.

Haicheng, located southwest of Mukden, was the next goal. If it fell to the Japanese, they could pressure the Chinese forces to retreat further west. An estimated 9,000 Chinese troops defended the 20-foot thick walled city, and Haicheng should have been virtually impregnable. Once again, the Japanese outflanked the Chinese defenders and attacked the city from several directions. The Japanese attack began at dawn on 13 December 1894 and lasted until almost noon, at which time the Chinese retreated toward Niuzhuang. Chinese casualties were over a hundred, while the Japanese troops sustained only four injuries, none of them serious.

In the aftermath of their loss at Haicheng, the Chinese forces made repeated attempts to retake the city, and experienced huge losses. It was during this period that the Chinese succeeded in inflicting on the Japanese 1st Army what was arguably their single greatest one-battle loss during the Manchurian campaign. At what the Japanese call the Battle of Kangwasae, "the Japanese lost more in killed and wounded than in any other of the conflicts during the war." At this engagement, the Japanese attacked uphill through fields covered with 2 feet of snow; for three hours, the Chinese fired down on the unprotected Japanese attackers. At the end of the battle, Japanese bodies littered the field; one estimate lists fifteen officers killed or wounded, and over 200 casualties among the non-commissioned officers and troops.<sup>235</sup>

At the same time as the Japanese 1st Army was working westward, the 2nd Army made its way northward from Lüshun. In early December it secured

the city of Fuzhou, close to the western coast of Liaodong. By early January 1895 this force was ready to attack Kaiping, thus allowing Japanese forces to completely control the Liaodong Peninsula. Kaiping was a medium-sized town of 30,000, but it possessed a large castle and the city walls were 30 feet high. It was defended by a Chinese garrison with ten guns, manned by approximately 5,000 men, including 500 cavalry.

The commander of the Japanese force was Major-General Nogi Maresuke. Advancing on Kaiping from the south on the morning of 10 January 1895, the Japanese marched through open fields covered with fresh snow. At one point, it looked as if some 2,000 Chinese troops were preparing to charge downhill from a neighboring hill to the east—thus trapping the Japanese on two sides—but a Japanese battalion succeeded in taking the hill and capturing the earthworks. As the Japanese force pushed the Chinese troops backward, its field cannon poured shrapnel into their ranks.

The Japanese advance was proceeding as planned and they soon took the town of Kaiping. However, the Chinese scored a tactical victory by using the stream fronting Kaiping to their advantage. Taking a lesson from ancient Chinese military texts, the water in the stream had been manipulated by Chinese engineers so that it froze at a sharp angle, making a crossing tedious and difficult. When trying to cross this obstacle, many Japanese troops fell and were shot by detachments of Chinese on the opposite bank.

Partly as a result of this unexpected Chinese maneuver, Japanese casualties were large, with fifty-three dead and 296 wounded. As one Japanese author commented about the Chinese strategy: “Their method of rendering the river well-nigh impassable was really excellent; but in these days of long range guns and easily maneuvered regiments, the experiment did not meet with the hoped-for success.”<sup>236</sup>

The final strategic goal of the Japanese 1st and 2nd Armies was to complete their linkup at Yingkou (Yingkow) and cut off the Liaodong Peninsula from the rest of Manchuria. Control of Yingkou would also give the Japanese 1st and 2nd Armies the opportunity to communicate directly with each other. The Chinese prepared for this eventuality, and gathered approximately 40,000 troops. The first step was to control access to the plain of Yingkou, some twenty-five miles long from north to south and seven miles wide, by taking Dapingshan—meaning “Mountain of Great Peace”—which overlooked the Yingkou road.

Between 24 January and 23 February 1895, there were a series of skirmishes, but the main Japanese attack took place on the morning of 24 February. Under the command of Lieutenant-General Yamaji, the Japanese attacked from the west and the east, pushing the Chinese back and taking full control of the hill by 9:00 A.M. The Chinese forces regrouped immediately to the north and their presence threatened the Japanese position. The Japanese effort to break them up, which they succeeded in doing later that day, cost them 280 killed and wounded; estimates of Chinese casualties were in the thousands.

As the 1st and 2nd Armies approached each other, the 1st Army fought the Battle of Niuzhuang on 4 March 1895. Assaulting the city from the northwest and the northeast, the Japanese attacked the Chinese double line of breastworks. The battle lasted the entire day, and house-to-house fighting continued well into the night. The Japanese sustained 242 casualties versus an estimated 1,884 Chinese casualties; in addition, the Japanese took over 700 prisoners, and confiscated twenty-one field and mountain guns, 2,138 rifles, and over 1.5 million rounds of ammunition.<sup>237</sup>

Meanwhile, on 6 March 1895, at the Battle of Yingkou, the 2nd Army succeeded in taking the town without a fight, since the Chinese retreated from the fortified city during the night and it was deserted by the next morning. The Japanese spoils included forty-five cannon and 180 rifles, not to mention much-needed supplies of food. Now that the 1st and 2nd Armies had joined up, one final battle took place at Tianzhuangtai (Tienchwangtai) on 9 March 1895. This port city on the Liao River controlled river traffic to Yingkou and Niuzhuang. The Japanese concentrated ninety-seven guns against the Chinese defenders' twenty guns and the battle was over after only four hours. Following this defeat, China's loss of the Liaodong Peninsula was complete.

### **The Japanese take Weihaiwei**

The final Japanese offensive in Shandong Province proved to be a spectacular conclusion to the Sino-Japanese War. In early January 1895, the Japanese landed forces in eastern Shandong and marched to a position behind the Chinese naval base at Weihaiwei. In a remarkably well-coordinated offensive of both naval and land forces, the Japanese destroyed the forts and sank much of the Chinese fleet. With Shandong under Japanese control, the way was open for a two-prong pincer attack against Beijing, the Chinese capital. This strategic threat forced China to sue for peace and the war ended in April 1895.

Weihaiwei was China's second strongest naval base, after Lüshun. Its defenses included a circle of massive forts equipped with heavy caliber guns, while underwater mines defended the sea lanes. Following its defeat in the Yellow Sea and the fall of Lüshun, what was left of the Beiyang fleet retreated to Weihaiwei. From its base at Weihaiwei, the Chinese fleet could theoretically prevent a Japanese landing anywhere near Beijing. By all accounts, Admiral Ding was highly regarded as the commander of the Beiyang fleet and he seemed ready to offer firm resistance to the Japanese.

On 19 January 1895, Marshal Count Oyama departed with the Second and Sixth Divisions of the 2nd Army from Lüda. They landed successfully the next day at Yingcheng, a port on the eastern tip of the Shandong Peninsula. Within five days, the entire army had been transported and the march westward began on 26 January. Divided into two columns, the Japanese began by taking all of the forts to the southeast of Weihaiwei and promptly turning their guns on the remaining Chinese forts. By 2 February Japanese troops

had entered the town of Weihaiwei, only to discover that the garrison had withdrawn.

Although the Japanese had made rapid progress, the most important forts were those located along the northern coast of the bay, facing Liugong Island. Not only were they strongly fortified, but they were under the protection of the Chinese warships in the harbor below. As the Japanese troops advanced on these forts, shrapnel shells took a heavy toll, but the forts fell one by one. This task was made easier by the fact that many Chinese defenders fled before the Japanese even appeared. By the evening of 2 February the Japanese controlled all of the forts surrounding Weihaiwei. In addition to a large assortment of small arms and ammunition, the Japanese took sixty-three cannon and almost 4,000 shells.

The task of reducing the Beiyang fleet, which consisted of fifteen ships, supported by thirteen torpedo boats, could not be accomplished solely from the land. The Japanese fleet, commanded by Admiral Ito, although numerically larger with twenty-five ships and sixteen torpedo boats, was unable to attack Weihaiwei directly because the Beiyang fleet was defended by forts on Liugong Island, as well as fortresses at the entrances to the harbor. During the land fighting, the Japanese ships hovered just outside the harbor, trying to entice the Chinese ships to come out to battle. The Chinese declined to engage the Japanese fleet and continued to keep to the relative safety of the harbor. During the early mornings of 5 and 6 February, however, Japanese torpedo boats succeeded in sneaking unseen into the harbor, damaging the *Ding Yuan* and sinking the *Lai Yuan*, the *Wei Yuan*, and the *Bao Hua*.

The final Japanese assault began on 7 February 1895. For five days, the Japanese fleet bombarded the remaining forts on Liugong Island and the ships in the harbor. When the thirteen remaining torpedo boats made a final mad dash for safety, the Japanese either destroyed or captured all but two of them. By 9 February, only four men-of-war and six gunboats out of the original twenty-eight Chinese ships remained afloat. Although these ships were seaworthy and the Liugong forts operational, Admiral Ding decided that the tactical situation was hopeless and, on 12 February, he surrendered.

Later that day, Ding and two high officers committed suicide to atone for their failure. Because the Japanese considered Ding's suicide to be an honorable ending for a defeated commanding officer, his body was placed on one of the few ships that belonged to the southern fleet—the *Guangxi*—and as it departed the harbor for Qufu (Chefoo), “the Japanese men-of-war lowered their flags and fired their guns in honor of the late Admiral.”<sup>238</sup>

### Sino-Japanese conflict in Taiwan and the Pescadores

Following the surrender of the Beiyang fleet and Admiral Ding's suicide, Japan's next concern was the remaining Chinese fleets, especially the Southern—or Nanyang—fleet. Although none of these could compare to the Beiyang in

either size or the modernity of ships and weaponry, if combined they could prove to be a threat to Japanese naval supremacy along the Chinese coastline. For this reason, Japan sent a mixed naval and military detachment to take control of the Pescadores and to establish a Japanese stronghold on the island of Taiwan.

The Japanese force of warships and transport ships assembled and was on its way just over a month after Admiral Ding's surrender, departing on 15 March 1895. Encountering poor weather, the force arrived at the Pescadores on 23 March. After only an hour of naval bombardment, the artillery at the main Chinese fort was silenced. On the following day, Japanese troops succeeded in taking the fort in record time, in under thirty minutes. The next goal was the city of Makou, which fell by noon. Finally, a naval contingent successfully stormed a Chinese fort on Yuanjing Peninsula and, two days later, on Yuwang Island, making the Japanese control of the Pescadores complete.

The campaign in Taiwan was equally successful, although not nearly as rapid. By this time, negotiations had formally opened at Shimonoseki to end the Sino-Japanese conflict. The first step was a cease-fire agreement, negotiated by Li Hongzhang as China's representative, and Baron Ito as Japan's. The Japanese proposal excluded their expeditionary forces in the south from the cease-fire, but a failed assassination attempt by a Japanese fanatic against Li—although alive, Li had a bullet permanently lodged under his left eye—almost undermined their strong diplomatic position. When Li proposed that Taiwan be included in the cease-fire, however, the Japanese made it clear that they could not agree to his request.<sup>239</sup>

The Japanese campaign in Taiwan lasted far longer than the Sino-Japanese War itself. When China ceded Taiwan to Japan, the local coastal population—mainly Han Chinese who had immigrated from China proper—resisted and declared independence. Japan sent large contingents to the island and they had largely suppressed the local opposition by fall 1895. Although the Japanese conducted many military operations in Taiwan during the Sino-Japanese War, the main problem turned out to be extraordinary casualties due to disease; fully one-quarter of the 4,000-man detachment died of cholera.<sup>240</sup>

## Conclusions

The Sino-Japanese War proved to be a major embarrassment both for China's land forces and her navy. Japanese troops not only quickly defeated China's famed Huai Army, but at sea the Japanese navy repeatedly defeated, and eventually completely destroyed, the Beiyang fleet. Granted, China never committed her full army or navy to the war—the southern fleet's refusal to assist Li Hongzhang's Beiyang fleet was perhaps fitting revenge for his failure to aid the southern fleet ten years before against France—but the Chinese forces were consistently larger and often better armed than the Japanese fleet, which was faster and more mobile.

What proved most important to Japan's success was: (1) her highly trained forces, (2) her rapid and sustained offensive, and (3) the strategic ability to outflank her Chinese opponents and forever keep them off balance. Once the Japanese gained the momentum, they made sure not to give it up; Japanese troops even continued their invasion of Manchuria in the dead of winter, not a tactic that the Chinese could have easily foreseen.

As for China's generally poor showing, Powell concluded that her leaders were the main reason for her defeat:

In part, this series of Chinese defeats can be explained by the decentralization of command, the lack of specialization, the inadequacy of training, and the shortage of modern weapons. Even more important was the corruption which extended from top to bottom of not only the military hierarchy but also the civil bureaucracy. Yet, the greatest weakness was the matter of leadership. In general, the Chinese commanders displayed a deplorable ignorance of basic strategy, tactics, and the employment of weapons. It was criminal to send men into action under such incompetent, old-fashioned protégés of powerful men. In almost every case in which the Chinese had attempted to hold a position, the enemy had turned their flank, forcing a retreat. The Chinese just did not know how to protect themselves.<sup>241</sup>

Allen Fung has argued that it was not just the leaders but inadequate military training that made the biggest difference: "It was the lack of reforms in the quality of the officers corps, the lack of attention to drilling and training, and the numerical inferiority of Chinese soldiers that had real fighting value, which in the end made the defeat as crushing as it was."<sup>242</sup>

With an estimated 80,000 Japanese troops poised to march on Beijing from both the north and south, the Manchus had little choice but to negotiate.<sup>243</sup> On 17 April 1895, China and Japan signed the Treaty of Shimonoseki ending the Sino-Japanese War. Its points included: (1) recognition of Korea's independence; (2) a 200-million-tael indemnity; (3) the cession of Taiwan, the Pescadores, and the Liaodong Peninsula to Japan; (4) the opening of Chongqing, Suzhou, Hangzhou, and Shashi as international ports; and (5) the right for Japanese to open factories and carry out manufacturing and other industry in China.

Later, the so-called "Triple Intervention" of Russia, France, and Germany forced Japan to give up Liaodong in return for an additional 30-million-tael indemnity. Although Japan reluctantly agreed, the anger generated by—what seemed to most Japanese at least—the reduction of their hard-fought spoils was to linger well into the next century. When Russia tried to claim the same territory in 1900, it resulted in the Russo-Japanese War. Later, during World War I, Japan ousted Germany from Shandong in 1914.



As a result of its successful war against China, Japan was in a position to secure numerous demands, including China forfeiting its claim to suzerainty over its tributary in Korea and ceding the island of Taiwan and the Pescadores. For the first time, not only was Beijing losing control over its tributary states, but over large sections of China's traditional colonial Empire as well. The Sino-Japanese War, therefore, more than any other event, began the process whereby the foreign powers "partitioned" China.

The long-range impact of the Sino-Japanese War on Chinese history was enormous. According to the Chinese intellectual Liang Qichao, for the first time the "Sino-Japanese War of 1894–1895 shook the Chinese out of their four thousand years' dream."<sup>244</sup> This resulted in a period of intense military reforms, beginning with the creation of the "Newly Established Army" in 1895.<sup>245</sup> The immediate success of these reforms was revealed in 1900 during the Boxer Uprising, when "the Chinese army was quickly able to cause serious problems for even first-rate [western] armies."<sup>246</sup>

Following Japan's almost complete military victory over China, other foreign governments—including most notably Germany, Russia, and Great Britain—quickly demanded territorial concessions of their own. According to Hans van de Ven, "only the first Sino-Japanese War made clear to both Chinese and foreigners that the occupation of substantial parts of China was possible."<sup>247</sup> This realization began a period characterized by many scholars as the "carving up" of China into foreign-run territorial and economic concessions. This weakened the already tottering Qing Dynasty, and in the process anti-Manchu Han nationalism increased dramatically.

In 1898 the United States declared its "Open Door" policy. Washington hoped to sponsor foreign trade with China without carving Chinese territory into competing spheres of influence. The United States alone among the major western nations and Japan did not demand that China grant it a fixed territorial concession. All of the major powers publicly—what they said in private may have been very different—agreed to respect this policy. However, the Open Door policy had barely had a chance to take hold when the next great military conflict—the Boxer Uprising—broke out in 1900.

Unlike all the other wars, rebellions, and invasions discussed above, the Boxer Uprising was not simply another domestic Han Chinese rebellion against the Manchus, but turned into an anti-foreign uprising when the Manchus cleverly coopted it and directed it against the foreigners; this was not dissimilar, albeit a mirror image, to the successful Qing policy of using foreigners to defeat the Taipings. At its peak in 1900, the Boxers surrounded and besieged the foreign diplomatic quarter in Beijing, and attempted to kill all the "foreign devils" trapped inside. As Chapter 8 will discuss in greater detail, the Boxers' denunciation of western learning and their faith in traditional Chinese military weapons and tactics was to have a deeply negative—albeit temporary—impact on China's military modernization.



## THE BOXER ANTI-FOREIGN UPRISING

The Boxer Uprising was not a typical conflict by any means, but a combination of domestic and anti-imperialist war. In addition, the participants made extensive use of both traditional and modern military methods. It deserves special attention in a work on modern Chinese warfare because it represented the last major retreat in China's path toward military modernization. The Boxers were members of a Chinese secret society known by 1900 as the "Yihe Tuan" or the "Righteous and Harmonious Militia." They practiced traditional Chinese martial arts, spurning the use of guns in favor of swords and lances, weapons that had already proven themselves to be singularly ineffective against the Japanese in the Sino-Japanese War. The Boxers also believed in magic, and claimed to new converts that their followers could become immune to bullets after only a hundred days' training and could fly after 400 days.

Although the Boxers were reportedly linked to China's anti-Manchu secret societies, such as the White Lotus and Eight Trigram sects, which would normally have led a civil uprising, the Qing government coopted the Boxers into an anti-imperialist movement against the foreigners. This policy was possible mainly because of foreign encroachment after the Sino-Japanese War, as Japan took Taiwan, Russia expanded into Manchuria, Germany acquired a foreign settlement in Shandong, the British took new holdings in north and south China, and France spread further into Southeast Asia.

With the failure of the 1898 pro-western reform movement, culminating in the Empress Dowager Cixi's September coup, reactionary officials in Beijing and the provinces actively supported the Boxers against the foreigners.<sup>248</sup> Close links between the Qing Court and the Boxers were forged. In May 1900, the Empress Dowager even summoned the Boxer leaders to Beijing, was suitably impressed by a demonstration of their boxing abilities, and ordered court officials to study boxing.

Understandably, the diplomatic community in Beijing was concerned about the anti-foreign nature of the Boxers. In early June 1900 they began to bring troops from Tianjin to guard the legations in Beijing. The Boxers cut the railway on 3 June, and further reinforcements were halted. By mid-June the

Boxers were openly attacking foreigners in Beijing and Tianjin, and had burned churches, houses, and shops. On 21 June the Empress Dowager declared war on the foreigners. Refusing to retreat, the ministers of twelve countries, supported by approximately 1,000 foreign troops and civilians, and an additional 2,300 Chinese Christian converts, defended the legation grounds; the siege of the diplomatic legations lasted for almost two months.

The Boxer Uprising resulted in the deaths of 231 foreigners and hundreds of Christian converts. From purely a military perspective, however, it proved to be yet one more Chinese military *débâcle*. As soon as an international force of 18,000—including troops from Japan, Russia, Britain, America, France, Austria, and Italy—landed in Tianjin in early August 1900, it only took ten days for them to reach Beijing and relieve the legations. As might be expected, the Boxers' self-proclaimed invulnerability to bullets proved to be false. With the foreign troops at Beijing's gates, several top Qing officials who had backed the Boxers committed suicide. The Qing Court fled Beijing and retreated to the inland city of Xi'an.

In desperation, the Empress Dowager turned to Li Hongzhang, the Han Chinese statesman who had negotiated the Shimonoseki treaty for the Sino-Japanese War, and ordered him to negotiate a similar peace settlement with the foreign powers. Signed in September 1901, the Boxer Protocol enacted an enormous indemnity—approximately \$333 million—and granted the foreign legations the right to have permanent guards. The Manchus agreed to arrest and execute the leaders of the Boxers. Finally, as a punishment for China's military, which had partly sided with the Boxers, all imports of foreign-made arms into China were banned for two years.

### **The origins of the Boxer movement**

Before looking at the Boxers themselves, it is important to outline the foreign and domestic factors that sponsored the growth of the Boxer movement in China. The most important of the factors was China's defeat in the Sino-Japanese War, which resulted in the loss of Korea as a Chinese tributary and the outright cession of Taiwan to Japan. In addition, Japan for a time obtained the Liaodong Peninsula. On 23 April 1895, Russia, France, and Germany protested this decision in the "triple intervention," and Japan reluctantly gave up her claim. Although the European governments forced Japan to return Liaodong to China in November 1895, the apparent ease of Japan's victory over China spurred the European powers to claim their own territorial concessions in China. The partitioning of China began in 1895 and continued through 1898. This period of western expansion greatly exacerbated anti-foreign feelings in China.

Following Russia's assistance to China in the triple intervention, in 1896 Beijing granted St. Petersburg land to build a railway through Manchuria. Russia promised to defend China against future Japanese aggression. More

importantly, this Russian railway threatened Japan's position in Korea and so merely increased Russo-Japanese tensions. In November 1897 Germany demanded and received a naval base in Shandong Province, using the murder of two German missionaries as an excuse to seize Qingdao and its valuable warm-water harbor. Galvanized by Germany's easy success in Shandong, Russia next took control of the port cities of Lüda and Lüshun, and soon afterward consolidated control over the entire Liaodong Peninsula. After Russia and Germany expanded their holdings, Great Britain leased the Shandong port of Weihaiwei for twenty-five years and the so-called New Territories near Hong Kong for ninety-nine years. Finally, France extended her control within Indochina and into China's Yunnan Province.

The "scramble" for concessions from 1895 to 1898 has often been described as if the foreign countries were in the process of cutting China open like a melon. This imagery is somewhat deceptive, since many foreigners—including the British and Americans—mainly wanted trade, not land. Increased trade was essential if China was to modernize. However, the immediate impact of this process was to increase the pre-existing xenophobia of the Han Chinese majority. As a result, the Han Chinese redirected their anti-Manchu hatred against the foreigners.

A second domestic factor that led to the Boxer Uprising was the failure of the 1898 Chinese reform movement.<sup>249</sup> Spurred by China's defeat in the Sino-Japanese War, and the continuing encroachment of the other foreign powers, radical Chinese intellectuals, like Kang Yuwei, urged western reforms on the Manchu Court.<sup>250</sup> Emperor Guangxu (1875–1908) supported Kang's reforms, but the Empress Dowager Cixi, who feared that it would weaken the Manchus' power, opposed them. According to Yen-p'ing Hao and Erh-min Wang:

In spite of all these [modernizing] changes, the power of conservatism remained strong. Success in the introduction of things Western into China depended in large measure on the extent to which they were compatible with this tradition. Accordingly, the armament industry was easily accepted, yet mining and railway construction, which undermined the geomantic practices, encountered difficulties. Christianity, which challenged the authority of Confucianism, was most vehemently opposed.<sup>251</sup>

The resulting power struggle in Beijing pitted the young, westernized intellectuals against the conservative forces of the Manchu Court. The reformers hoped to adopt a constitutional monarchy, largely patterned on Japan's Meiji reforms of the 1870s, that would have made the Beijing government more representative of the Han Chinese majority.

The battle between the reformers and conservatives came to a head in 1898. During a hundred-day period from early June through late September

the reformers issued, with Emperor Guangxu's approval, some forty to fifty decrees reforming China's education, government, and foreign relations. The impact on China's industry and military promised to be substantial, since these reforms promoted western-style innovation. They would have also sponsored numerous visits by high government officials to observe and learn from other countries.

Fearing that the power of the Manchu Dynasty would be permanently weakened, the Empress Dowager sponsored a coup, on 21 September 1898, that effectively ended the reform movement.<sup>252</sup> She claimed that the Emperor was seriously ill, but the Empress Dowager in fact imprisoned him on a small island in the Imperial garden. Cixi reversed most of China's recent westernizing reforms and ordered the arrest of many of its intellectual supporters. She also ordered the execution of six reformers.<sup>253</sup> Kang Yuwei managed to flee to Japan, where he remained in exile for many years.<sup>254</sup>

Following the failure of the 1898 reforms, the Manchu Court sought to oust the foreigners, return to traditional rule, and shore up its own domestic legitimacy. Beijing was unexpectedly aided by the Boxers, who soon turned against the foreign communities. The Boxers were traditionally thought of in terms of a secret society, considered by many scholars to be an offshoot of the Eight Trigram Sect, which in turn was associated with the White Lotus Sect. In Shandong Province, the Boxers of the "Big Sword Society" were the "Yihe Chuan," a name that dated back as early as 1808, when an official government edict mentioned their existence in Shandong, Henan, Jiangsu, and Anhui Provinces. "Yihe Chuan" can be translated as the "Righteous and Harmonious Fists," and referred to the Boxers' practice of ancient martial arts techniques.

The most important characteristic of the Boxers was their belief in magic. The Chinese populace readily believed the Boxers' claim to wielding supernatural powers. Even Manchu officials in Beijing apparently accepted this claim at face value. Through the use of secret rituals and magic charms the Boxers could be impervious to bullets. Highly trained Boxers could even learn to fly. The Boxers' weapons of choice were swords, lances, and fire—they only reluctantly resorted to cannon and dynamite when the situation demanded it. Prior to battle they burned sacrifices to Taoism, to military gods like the "True Martial God," and to famous historical figures.

The sudden popularity of the Big Sword Society in Shandong Province during the mid-1890s was due to the appearance of a new teaching method to provide invulnerability to weapons, known as the "Armor of the Golden Bell." According to one description, the followers of this technique would first recite spells and swallow charms before having their bodies beaten with "bricks and swords" in order to toughen their resistance to injury. After three nights of undergoing this ritual, the Boxer trainee could face swords without injury, and after even longer training they could stand up to firearms. The charms and incantations used by the followers of the Big Sword Society were

highly guarded secrets, and even sons and fathers could not discuss these spells.<sup>255</sup>

By the time the Boxer movement had developed fully between 1899 and 1900, their ritual incantations to provide invulnerability also involved calling down gods to possess their bodies. This technique could be taught to uneducated peasants in as little as one day, and the Boxers promoted it as being “much easier than the Armor of the Golden Bell.” Boxer groups were usually fairly small and tended to come from the same village. Their uniforms consisted of red or yellow turbans, and they placed charms on their heads and bodies to intensify their powers. If they died in battle, the leaders would usually blame the followers’ own lack of discipline or the violation of one of their strict rules, such as lusting after women. In fact, their charms and spells could fail if women were present, since women’s inherent “pollution” counteracted magic. For example, the Boxers cited this excuse for why they failed to take the Northern Cathedral in Beijing.

China’s decades of domestic and foreign turmoil indirectly sponsored the growth of the Boxers. These groups were typically anti-Manchu in the beginning.<sup>256</sup> However, faced with the foreign threat and Emperor Guangxu’s westernizing reforms, they supported the most reactionary elements of the Beijing Court. According to Robert Hart:

On the Chinese side there is pride, innate pride—pride of race, pride of intellect, pride of civilization, pride of supremacy; and this inherited pride, in its massive and magnificent setting of blissful ignorance, has been so hurt by the manner of foreign impact that the other good points of Chinese character have, as it were, been stunned and cannot respond; it is not simply the claim for equality, or the demonstration of physical superiority, or the expansion of intercourse under compulsion, or the dictation of treaties, that have hurt that pride—were it only these, time would have healed the wound long ago, but it is something in those treaties which keeps open the raw and prevents healing.<sup>257</sup>

The strongest Boxer group came from Shandong Province. Spurred on by calamitous flooding of the Yellow River during 1898, the “Big Sword Society” set up camps to train their followers. Yuxian, the governor of Shandong Province, subsidized these camps. He renamed the “Yihe Chuan” the “Yihe Tuan,” or “Righteous and Harmonious Militia,” and encouraged them to support the Manchus and oppose the foreigners.<sup>258</sup>

Once the Boxers’ philosophy became militantly xenophobic, they divided all foreigners into three categories of so-called “Hairy Men.” The first, or “primary,” Hairy Men included Europeans, Americans, and Japanese. The second group included Chinese converts to Christianity and any other Chinese who worked closely with foreigners. Finally, the third group included all

Chinese who bought and/or used imported goods. The Boxers promised that only after the Qing expelled all the “Foreign Devils” could it unite China and “bring peace” to the land.<sup>259</sup>

### **The Boxer movement, 1897–1900**

A major event underscoring the anti-foreign nature of the Boxers took place during spring 1897 in the western Shandong town of Liyuantun, when Christian converts tried to build a church on the site of a former Buddhist temple. Local opposition was intense, and the “Plum Flower Boxers” held a boxing exhibition opposing the building of the church. Fighting broke out in late April, when the Boxers destroyed the church and the Christian converts fled with their families. With the arrival of German missionaries in Shandong later that year, the Christians regained control of the church site. This unified local support for the Boxers, who proclaimed their “righteous indignation over the usurpation of the Liyuantun temple for use by the Christian church.”<sup>260</sup>

The anti-foreign movement in Shandong grew, and by late 1898/early 1899 it had become a widespread movement. The Boxers burst upon the national scene in mid-October 1899, at the Battle of Senluo Temple, when a group of about 1,000 Boxers encountered approximately 500 government troops. While the Boxers fought only with swords, spears, and a few hunting rifles, the government troops carried single-shot rifles. During this battle the Boxers sustained an estimated thirty to forty dead. The Qing troops had three killed and ten wounded. The high casualties evidently did not undermine local faith in the Boxers’ invulnerability however, and this battle proved to be a major watershed because it brought official attention for the first time.

During November 1899 the Boxer movement intensified, as roaming bands attacked Christians throughout western Shandong. The Boxers’ anti-Christian slogans and periodic attacks on converts greatly concerned the foreigners, and on 15 November the Boxers even attacked and burned a fortified Catholic village. Foreign pressure on Beijing to remove Governor Yuxian increased, and the Manchu Court recalled him on 6 December. Although the new governor of Shandong, Yuan Shikai, arrived in late December and immediately began suppressing the Boxers, the movement continued unabated. On 31 December 1899, the first foreign victim—a British missionary named S. M. Brooks—died near the town of Feicheng.

The Boxer unrest quickly spread throughout Shandong Province during 1899, but the winter weather and approach of the Chinese New Year slowed its progress. It is important to note that the Boxer influence gradually moved northward along the official highway toward Beijing. The new governor of Shandong instituted policies to suppress the Boxers, but many local officials tolerated them as a legitimate form of village militia. Beijing buckled to foreign pressure to recall Governor Yuxian. However, when he arrived in the capital he praised the Boxers to Beijing court officials. These reactionary court

officials included Prince Duan, Prince Zhuang, and Grand Secretary Gangyi. They recommended the Boxers to the Empress Dowager, who needed “to give the uncontrollable Boxer bands a target other than the Imperial throne,” and so began to consider them as a potential ally against the foreigners.<sup>261</sup>

As a result of the positive reports, the Manchu Court in Beijing began to form links with the Boxers. Governor Yuxian provided government subsidies so that the Boxers would redirect their energies away from the Manchus and against the Europeans instead. During 1899 the Boxers founded more than 800 training centers throughout Shandong, largely funded with government money. In fact, Beijing’s policy had dual objectives. On the one hand, the Manchus hoped to use the Boxers to push the foreigners out of China. On the other hand, should the Boxers fail, Beijing could turn to the foreigners to destroy the Boxers, much in the same way that foreigners had assisted the Qing Court by defeating the Taipings forty years earlier.

Following Yuxian’s recall to Beijing in late 1899, the reactionaries and the Empress Dowager decided to extend special favors to the Boxers. On 11 January 1900, the Manchu Court declared that citizens engaged in military drills for the purpose of self-defense should not be treated the same as bandits. Later, on 17 April 1900, Beijing actively supported the spread of the Boxer movement by announcing that the organization of militia groups, such as the Boxers, was in line with ancient principles of mutual aid. These government proclamations immediately led to further civil unrest, and Boxer attacks became more common.

Beijing gradually succeeded in its efforts to coopt the Boxers and direct their energies against the foreigners; during 1899 their banners began to bear the slogan “Support the Qing, destroy the foreigner,” but the Boxers still wanted to overthrow the Qing Dynasty. According to one poster from early 1900, the “chief offender” for China’s problems was the Manchu Emperor. It was the “unspeakable” faults of the Qing leaders that had allowed the foreign “devils” to become such a threat to China in the first place.<sup>262</sup>

The decision whether to assist or oppose the Boxers ultimately rested with the Empress Dowager. Many government officials, such as the new Shandong governor, Yuan Shikai, did not trust them. He warned that once the Boxers became strong enough they would turn against Beijing. Even though the Manchu Court ordered Yuan to avoid excessive force and to use only peaceful means to suppress the movement in Shandong, he refused to comply and resorted to strict measures. Later, when his younger brother, Yuan Shidun, used harsh methods to repress the Boxers, Yuan Shikai reportedly also tried to cover up this incident.

In opposition to her own advisers, the Empress Dowager decided to take the risk of pitting the Boxers against the foreigners. According to some accounts, she believed in the Boxers’ proclaimed magical abilities, and even attended a demonstration proving their invulnerability to bullets.<sup>263</sup> In addition to a desire to make use of their supernatural powers, the Empress Dowager’s



decision was also a last-ditch effort to humble and destroy the foreigners, who had proven that they could easily defeat China's regular army and navy. In fact, according to one biographer of the Empress Dowager, Cixi had a "passionate desire to deal with the foreign Powers from a position of strength" and so accepted "the Boxers as her last weapon against the foreigners."<sup>264</sup> Perhaps Cixi thought that time was on her side, especially since the Boer War was diverting Britain's attention from China.

Beginning in late 1899, the Diplomatic Community in Beijing—including ministers representing Great Britain, France, Germany, Russia, and the United States—protested the Boxers' actions and criticized the Chinese government for its failure to protect foreigners and Chinese converts. During early 1900, they jointly protested to the Zongli Yamen on 27 January, 27 February, 5 March, 16 March, and 3 April. On 7 March, the foreign ministers further requested that their home governments support a naval demonstration to show Beijing they were serious.

Although the Qing reassured the diplomatic legations that it was suppressing Boxer activity, it covertly encouraged their attacks. In early May, a Chinese correspondent to the *North-China Herald* even reported that the Empress Dowager was the leader of a "secret scheme" to crush the foreigners and take back the concessions. According to this report, the Boxers were merely auxiliaries to the anti-foreign Manchu troops—50,000 under Prince Jing, 10,000 under Prince Duan, and then 12,000 Imperial Guards.<sup>265</sup>

During mid-May, the Boxer threat moved closer to Beijing, when a raid against Roman Catholic converts in Baodingfu, a small village only eighty miles from Beijing, left approximately seventy dead. Later, Boxers harassed Protestant converts only forty miles from the capital.<sup>266</sup> When Beijing failed to act, the Ministers voted on 28 May to bring in additional troops to protect the legations. In early June the diplomatic quarter was reinforced by the arrival of seventy-five Russians, seventy-five British, seventy-five French, fifty Americans, forty Italians, and twenty-five Japanese troops. Before these foreign forces arrived, however, a group of French and Belgian railway engineers ran into an armed Boxer band twenty miles west of Tianjin, which left four foreigners dead and several others wounded.

Other outbreaks of Boxer violence took place during early June. In one encounter on 4 June, Chinese government troops killed several hundred Boxers. This action prompted a government decree on 6 June ordering the appeasement of the Boxers. The Manchus appointed Grand Councilor Zhao Shuqiao to take a message to the Boxer leaders demanding them to disperse, but at precisely the same time the Manchu Court ordered government troops to withdraw from Boxer strongholds, such as the city of Tianjin. The Boxers won many "bloodless" victories as a result.

On 4 June, twenty-four British, French, Japanese, and Austrian ships arrived at the Dagou forts, which guarded the entry to Tianjin. Under the command of Admiral E. H. Seymour, and at the urging of the ministers in Beijing, a joint



force of 300 British, a hundred Americans, sixty Austrians, and forty Italians left Tianjin by train for Beijing. Other troops from Russia, France, and Germany joined later, making a combined force estimated at 1,876. Meeting strong resistance from the Boxers, Admiral Seymour was eventually forced to order his troops to fall back to Tianjin.

With the failure of these reinforcements to reach Beijing, the plight of the foreign legations became grave. The Boxers cut the telegraph lines from Tianjin to Beijing, burned the British summer legation in the western hills, and, on 11 June, killed Chancellor Sugiyama of the Japanese legation at Beijing's main gate. Spurred on by the government's failure to halt their efforts, large groups of Boxers entered Beijing on 13 June. Soon, they began to torch all western churches in Beijing and massacre large numbers of Chinese converts. Faced with an all-out uprising, the Manchu Court sided even more with the Boxers. Beginning on 15 June, the reactionaries under Prince Duan tried to persuade the Empress Dowager to declare war against the foreigners. Prince Duan apparently even forged a document, purportedly from the foreign ministers, listing four demands including putting all China's military affairs into western hands.<sup>267</sup>

On 19 June, the Zongli Yamen warned all foreigners to leave Beijing within twenty-four hours. When the German Minister, Baron von Ketteler, set out for the Zongli Yamen on the morning of 20 June to discuss the situation, he was shot and killed by Boxers. Although the Zongli Yamen extended the deadline by twenty-four hours, Chinese troops began firing on the diplomatic legations at precisely 4:00 P.M. on 20 June. The ministers dug in and refused to leave. On 21 June 1900 an Imperial edict declared war between China and all the so-called Great Powers.

### **The siege of the diplomatic quarter**

As soon as they declared war, the Manchu Court turned to the Boxers to eject the foreigners from their legations in Beijing. Assuming command over tens of thousands of supporters, the court reactionaries, led by Prince Duan, directed the Boxers to work with the government troops under General Dong Fuxiang. With the support of the Empress Dowager, rewards were offered to anyone who brought in a live foreigner: 50 taels for a man, 40 for a woman, and 30 for each child. The Boxers told the people that once they had forced the foreigners from their legations, and eradicated the "roots" of the barbarian invasion, China would live in peace.

Opposing the Boxers in the legations were approximately 450 troops, 475 civilians including twelve foreign ministers, about 2,300 Chinese converts, and fifty Chinese servants.<sup>268</sup> The eight-nation force included three British officers and seventy-nine men, two Russian officers and seventy-nine men, three American officers and fifty-three men, one German officer and fifty-three men, seven Austrian officers and thirty men, and one Japanese officer in charge of twenty-four men. Meanwhile, the French and Italians were divided, since

from the two French officers leading forty-five men and the one Italian officer leading twenty-eight men, a total of two officers and forty-one men were assigned to defend the Northern Cathedral in Beijing.<sup>269</sup>

The dangers facing those trapped in the legations should not be understated. One of the best sources of firsthand information is from diaries. One such diary was kept by Lancelot Giles, a young British interpreter and the son of Herbert Allen Giles, a former British Consul in China. According to Giles, by the time the Chinese ultimatum expired on 20 June, hundreds of missionaries, women, and children crowded into the British legation. They sandbagged the windows, barricaded and fortified the gates, and stored large stocks of food and water throughout the legation.

Although the Chinese began firing at the legation at 4:00 p.m. on 20 June, the first serious attack occurred on 21 June. The Chinese troops had virtually unlimited ammunition—Giles estimated that the Chinese expended more than half a million cartridges during the first ten days of the siege—but their aim was poor, and the greatest hazard was the possibility of a chance fire spreading and engulfing the entire legation. To offset this danger, the ministers promptly created a Fire Defense Committee and organized waker pumps and bucket lines.<sup>270</sup>

All the initial Chinese attempts to burn down the diplomatic quarter failed. They destroyed instead several historic Chinese buildings, including the Hanlin Academy and library across from the British legation. On 24 June, the Chinese set up a 3-inch gun on the Qianmen gate, which overlooked the diplomatic quarter from the southwest, and began shelling the buildings. It became imperative to take control of the gate, and German troops quickly advanced to within about a hundred yards. After silencing the gun, they hastily constructed a defensive barricade on the city wall manned by the American troops.

Meanwhile, the Japanese troops, commanded by Colonel Shiba, protected the main entry point into the palace of Prince Su, which faced the British legation from the other side of the Imperial Canal. By mid-July, five of the twenty-five men under Shiba's command were dead and thirteen wounded. The Chinese managed to break through a side wall on 27 June, but the Japanese produced a "withering fire" from well-placed loopholes. A sortie of British marines, five Japanese, ten Russians, and twenty Italians soon pushed the Boxers back.<sup>271</sup>

Beginning in late June, the besieged foreigners began to carry out sorties in order to seize the Chinese guns shelling the legations. These attempts met with mixed success, and by early July most of the defenders began to fall back to the British legation, which was to be the last stronghold. On 3 July the British Minister, Sir Claude MacDonald, sent a letter to Admiral Seymour by way of a young Chinese boy carrying a rice tin with a false bottom. Although he described the Chinese as "cowardly," he estimated that the Boxers' sheer superiority of numbers meant that the legations could only hold out for another ten days, and only four or five more days if the Chinese "attack in earnest."<sup>272</sup>

The legations had four heavy guns at their disposal, including an American Colt machine-gun with 25,000 rounds, an Italian one-pounder with several hundred shells, an Austrian Maxim machine-gun, and an 1887 British Nordenfolt machine-gun;<sup>273</sup> but the defenders made numerous ingenious attempts to strengthen the defenses. The Americans, for example, took apart an old fire-engine and used the brass tubing to make a serviceable cannon. Meanwhile, the Russians, who had transported 9-pound shells from Tianjin but had been forced to leave the gun behind, acquired a forty-year-old muzzle loaded cannon that a group of Chinese workers dug up by accident. By chance, the shells, when removed from their casings, fit the cannon exactly and caused a great deal of damage on impact. One of the many nicknames given to the gun was "Dowager Empress." The legations even managed to manufacture their own 1-inch bullets out of lead, and used them with great success in the Italian field gun.

During mid-July the fighting calmed somewhat. The Chinese hoped that supplies would begin to run short and force the legations to surrender. A message from the Zongli Yamen once again ordered the foreigners to vacate Beijing, but Sir Claude MacDonald refused and offered to open negotiations instead. On 17 July, the Chinese stopped shooting, and a cease-fire continued for several weeks. Still, Giles estimated that between 100 and 200 shots were being fired every day.

One probable reason for the cease-fire was that foreign troops were collecting in Tianjin and were expected to begin their march to Beijing within a couple of days, and so many of the Chinese troops left to intercept them. In addition, the Zongli Yamen hoped to open direct negotiations with the ministers prior to their troops' arrival. Later, the Zongli Yamen even proclaimed that all foreigners in China were now under their protection. The Zongli Yamen even assigned Chinese troops to escort the foreign ministers from Beijing to Tianjin, but none of the foreigners took them up on their offer.

### **The siege of the Northern Cathedral**

While the siege of the foreign legations is perhaps the most well-known event during the Boxer Uprising, a more revealing episode was the Boxers' siege of the Catholic Cathedral in northern Beijing. Unlike at the legations, where Chinese troops equipped with modern rifles and guns carried out the bulk of the fighting, at the Northern Cathedral there were approximately 10,000 Boxers opposing about 3,000 Christian converts and only forty-three French and Italian marines. Throughout the entire fifty-five-day siege, the Boxers repeatedly tried and failed to take the Cathedral. The well-armed marines gunned down large numbers of Boxers, who were unwilling to rely on modern weapons. The Cathedral survived the siege intact.

The Northern Cathedral—also known as the Beitang—was inside the Imperial City close to the western gate. Beside the Cathedral itself, the adjoining

compound was quite large and included an “orphanage, the bishop’s house, a convent, a dispensary, several schools, a printing press, a chapel, a museum, as well as stores, stables and other buildings.”<sup>274</sup> Since the Cathedral was on the other side of the Imperial Palace from the Legation quarter, which was to the south and slightly east of the Imperial City, it was effectively cut off from succor during the siege.

In mid-May the Vicar-Apostolic in Beijing, Monseigneur Favier, warned French Minister Pichon of a possible Boxer attack. He asked that a detachment of troops be assigned to guard the Cathedral. Favier had ample time to collect huge stores of food, arms, and ammunition. Because the Cathedral was built of stone, and the foreign marines had excellent positions from which to fire on anyone who approached, the Northern Cathedral proved to be virtually impregnable to Boxer attack.

When the first Boxers arrived at Beijing on 13 June 1900, foreign churches and residences were one of their primary targets. After burning these buildings, the Boxers’ hatred for foreigners led them to exhume and destroy the graves of early Jesuits to China, including Matteo Ricci, Schall von Bell, and Ferdinand Verbiest; they also killed or buried alive hundreds of Chinese converts.<sup>275</sup> The Boxer bands roamed the city and continued to plunder Beijing for a week. They swiftly attacked and burned the Eastern Cathedral and the Southern Cathedral. Within a few days the Northern Cathedral was the only surviving Catholic church left in Beijing.

More than 3,000 people converged on the Cathedral. Of this group, fewer than a hundred were Europeans, and many of these were women and children. As a result, the Cathedral’s main defenders were the two French officers and forty-one French and Italian marines. Although Favier had stored large amounts of supplies, he did not foresee the huge numbers of converts who would seek protection in Beijing’s last remaining Catholic cathedral. Unlike at the legations, there was never a truce, and so the siege lasted without respite for the entire eight weeks. However, the defenders began rationing immediately and their supplies barely outlasted the siege.

If the Manchu Court thought that taking the Cathedral would be easy, the defenders soon taught it a valuable lesson. One author has even suggested that the Manchu Court gave the Cathedral siege to the Boxers “as a kind of special treat.”<sup>276</sup> Even though ammunition was limited, the marines defending the Cathedral took a heavy toll from the Boxers, who would—in broad daylight—swarm empty-handed into the open spaces bordering the Cathedral and attack. Faced with the obvious failure of their mystical powers, the Boxer leaders blamed their defeat on the presence of women inside the Cathedral, arguing that this “female pollution” counteracted their powers.

The Boxers finally resorted to explosives. On 18 July, a bomb under one of the compound buildings caused fifty casualties inside the Cathedral walls. Later, on 12 and 13 August, other explosions killed more than a hundred of the defenders, including five Italian sailors. Even though they breached the

compound wall, the Boxers did not try to force their way in. By 14 August it was too late, as the relief force reached the gates of the Imperial City.

### **The Boxers in Tianjin and the provinces**

While the Boxer siege in Beijing was the longest and has been romanticized in popular stories, and later in Hollywood films, in fact the injuries suffered by those trapped in the foreign legations and the Northern Cathedral accounted for fewer than half of the total foreign deaths. There were many other notable clashes with the Boxers, most importantly in the coastal city of Tianjin southeast of Beijing. Although the foreign settlement in Tianjin had over 2,000 troops—and more were arriving every day by water and rail—the battle for control of Tianjin was particularly bitter, since it was rightly seen as the strategic gateway to Beijing. By the time foreigners finally took control of Tianjin on 14 July the Chinese had lost two of their most important arsenals, administrative control over the railways leading to the coast, and the ability to adequately defend the road to Beijing. It was the battle for Tianjin that determined the ultimate fate of those besieged in Beijing.

Boxer groups began to enter Tianjin on 15 June. They immediately attacked the train station across the river from the international settlement. The station might have fallen, except that 1,700 Russian troops just happened to be waiting for a train to Beijing, and staunchly defended the building. On 17 June, combined groups of Boxers and Chinese soldiers attacked Tianjin and cut the foreigners' communications with the sea.

The siege of the international settlement in Tianjin involved an estimated 25,000 Boxers and Imperial troops, and this number soon rose to as many as 50,000. The Chinese surrounded the settlement with sixty modern guns and cannon, and it has been estimated that 60,000 shells fell on the settlement during the siege.<sup>277</sup> By contrast, the defenders had a total of only nine field guns. Outgunned, they daringly attacked the Chinese positions and managed to capture eight of the Chinese guns with large quantities of ammunition. They hastily constructed barricades, and the foreign troops and civilians readied themselves for a lengthy siege.

On 19 June a young English resident of Tianjin, James Watts, broke out of Tianjin with three Russian Cossacks and successfully rode to the coast. Hearing of the siege for the first time, an advance party of 500 was immediately dispatched, and marched to within four miles of the international settlement before it was forced to pull back. Three days later, a much larger force of 8,000 allied marines entered Tianjin and fortified the settlement's defenses. Thereafter, on 26 June, Admiral Seymour and his troops returned to Tianjin after an unsuccessful attempt to clear the road to Beijing.

The siege of the foreign settlement in Tianjin differed from the Beijing siege in two important ways. First, the Boxers in Tianjin were more organized

and better disciplined than those in the rest of China. Not only did they have one supreme leader, Zhang Decheng, instead of many competing leaders, but their discipline was more strict: Boxers could not accept gifts, avoided contact with women, and had to follow a strict code of behavior including bowing to fellow Boxers and not staring at other people.

Second, the siege of Tianjin was much shorter, lasting from 15 June until 14 July, or only slightly more than four weeks. During this period, the Boxers launched several assaults on the international concession, but the approximately 2,400 foreign troops with their numerous guns proved sufficient to keep their adversaries at bay. The Boxers, armed mainly with firebrands, swords, and lances, perished in large numbers during these largely futile attacks.

Throughout the siege, the foreign troops made numerous attacks on the Chinese positions. Most notably they destroyed the Tianjin Arsenal on 27 June, and the Western Arsenal on 9 July. With the Chinese source of arms and ammunition gone, a force of about 5,000 allied troops attacked the Chinese section of Tianjin on 13 July. By the following day they had succeeded in pushing the last Boxers out of the city. Soon, the foreigners created an allied government to administer Tianjin and began to prepare for a major offensive to relieve Beijing.

### **Boxer incidents outside of Beijing and Tianjin**

In addition to Boxer activity in Tianjin, there were many other notable clashes in other coastal cities and in several of China's northern provinces. Unlike foreigners in Beijing and Tianjin, the foreigners in the interior of China were, by and large, completely undefended and proved to be an easy target. In one well-known incident, the governor of Shanxi Province rounded up all of the missionaries and ordered them to be executed; forty-six people perished in this one incident alone. This number equaled more than two-thirds as many victims as died during the entire fifty-five-day siege of the legation quarter in Beijing.

One of the first incidents occurred in Baodingfu, a small village near Beijing. In mid-May, some seventy Christian converts were massacred. On 28 May, violence erupted again and demonstrators attacked and killed two British missionaries at Yong Qing, a small town to the northeast. Finally, in a series of incidents from 28 June through 1 July, Boxer bands killed a total of fifteen foreigners—eleven Americans and four British—in Baodingfu; nine of these were women and children.

Soon afterwards, mobs in the town of Daiyuanfu, in Shanxi Province, began to attack foreigners. On 27 June they destroyed a mission hospital and killed a foreigner. On 3 July, the new Provincial Governor from Shandong, Yuxian, ordered all foreigners to congregate at one place for their "protection."

On 9 July, they were taken to the governor's yamen, stripped to the waist like criminals, and decapitated. According to one account:

Arriving at the east gate of the city, the missionaries were dragged from their carts, and stripped of all their clothes. Then both Boxers and soldiers set upon them and literally hacked their heads to pieces. Their bodies were dragged outside the city and left on the banks of a river where they were shamefully treated by the villagers. . . . After the massacre the highest military official went to the mission houses, and then turned the houses over to the soldiers and the people to loot.<sup>278</sup>

During this single incident, the Chinese killed a total of thirty-four English and Scottish Protestants and twelve Roman Catholics: fifteen men, twenty women, and eleven children.<sup>279</sup> Later, a local magistrate sent Yuxian seven more foreigners to be executed.<sup>280</sup>

Although the anti-foreign violence in Zhili and Shanxi was by far the most extensive, other northern areas—such as in Gansu, in Mongolia, and in Manchuria—also had outbursts of Boxer activity and experienced scattered violence. For example, in early July, Boxers killed the Roman Catholic bishop in Mukden, plus nine priests and two nuns located in various parts of Manchuria. Elsewhere in China, sympathetic Chinese joined in the repression even though they were not Boxers, and in Zhejiang eleven foreigners were killed—two men, six women, and three children. Overall, Boxers killed a total of 178 foreigners in Shanxi Province alone, including 113 adults and forty-six children from Protestant groups and twelve men and seven women from Catholic ones. Six American missionaries also died in Shanxi.<sup>281</sup>

After the Boxer Uprising was over, foreign troops marched to Baodingfu. On 18 October, they reached the city and demanded that it surrender. When the Chinese officials refused, the troops attacked on 20 October and took the town by force. Soon afterwards, a special mixed military commission was formed to establish who was responsible for the massacre. After investigating the circumstances, this commission recommended the execution of the Provincial Treasurer and the commanding Manchu general.

After these sentences were carried out, the foreign troops destroyed the temples used by the Boxers and tore down the city gates' towers and part of the walls. They also demanded a special fine of 100,000 taels from the city government to cover the cost of occupation, and another 240,000 taels found in the Treasury was divided among the foreign troops. The foreign commanders held similar local trials in other areas where municipalities had supported Boxer violence involving the execution of defenseless foreigners. These trials resulted in sentencing Qing officials to death, including those officials responsible for the execution in Hangzhou on 25 August 1901 of fourteen foreigners, which was referred to as the Zhuzhou massacre in the foreign press.<sup>282</sup>



### **The international expeditionary force**

Western nations sent two international expeditionary forces to relieve Beijing, but only the second group succeeded, since Chinese troops and Boxers blocked the first group and it was forced to retreat back to Tianjin. At one point, news arrived in Tianjin that the foreign settlement in Beijing had been taken and all of the ministers killed. This news proved to be erroneous, however, and during early August a total of 18,000 foreign troops left Tianjin to relieve the siege in Beijing. By 14 August they had succeeded, and the international troops took revenge on the Chinese by looting and pillaging the city's palaces and private homes.

Admiral E. H. Seymour, who was responsible for the British Navy in Chinese waters, commanded the first expeditionary force to try to relieve Beijing. On 9 June, Seymour received a message from MacDonald, in Beijing, requesting help. Seymour led his British marines to Tianjin the following morning, where they joined with other nations. This force numbered about 2,000 and consisted of 915 British, 450 Germans, 358 French, 312 Russians, 112 Americans, fifty-four Japanese, forty Italians, and twenty-five Austrians.<sup>283</sup>

Seymour evidently expected that an easy one-day train trip would allow his force to travel the 100 miles to Beijing, perhaps not realizing that a large number of Chinese troops under General Nian Shicheng were between Tianjin and Beijing. Although the international force left Tianjin on 10 June in five trains, they only traveled about twenty-five miles the first day and twenty the following day. By the evening of 11 June the troops had reached the village of Lang Fang, when they suddenly realized that government troops had destroyed the tracks ahead of them. Other Boxer bands soon destroyed the tracks behind them as well. The international force was trapped between government soldiers to the north and Boxers to the south.

On 17 June, fighting between the Chinese and foreign troops broke out at the Dagou Forts and at Tianjin. The expeditionary force now came under direct attack for the first time. The movement of such a large foreign force toward Beijing may also have helped precipitate the siege in Beijing, because Boxers cut the telegraph lines between Tianjin and Beijing. In addition, the number and intensity of the riots increased.

Deserting their trains, much of their heavy equipment, and the bulk of their ammunition on 19 June, the force retreated toward Tianjin by river. Chinese troops and Boxers harassed them constantly. Only by chance did they stumble upon the Western Arsenal, which Seymour succeeded in capturing on 22 June. After waiting for reinforcements, Seymour finally led his force back to Tianjin with the help of Russian troops. The foreign community considered the failure of this first expedition to be a disaster, while the Boxers proclaimed it a great victory. This débâcle had an immediate and direct impact on the entire Boxer Uprising, since soon afterwards the Qing Court fully sided with the Boxers and declared war on the foreign powers.



The attack on the Dagou forts may also have helped to precipitate more widespread war. On 16 June the foreign commanders issued an ultimatum to the Chinese demanding that the fortifications be handed over. The Chinese refused, and at 1:00 A.M. on the morning of 17 June the fort's cannon opened fire on the nearby ships. Nine ships took part in the subsequent battle—three Russian, three British, one German, one French, and one Japanese—and their bombardment lasted for six hours before several lucky shots exploded the ammunition magazines and silenced the forts' guns. Soon afterward, 900 foreign officers and troops occupied the forts.

During the battle, the foreign troops sustained 172 casualties, a relatively small number considering that, if the forts had held, the foreign legations in Beijing, Seymour's expeditionary force, and the foreign garrison and community in Tianjin would all have "been massacred piecemeal as their supplies ran out."<sup>284</sup> With the Dagou forts in allied hands, however, it was now possible to land large numbers of infantry and move inland to Tianjin. On 23 June, a combined force of 8,000 troops overcame Chinese resistance and entered Tianjin; Seymour's returning expedition followed close behind on 26 June.

A second relief column was formed in late July. This delay was unavoidable, since false reports of the ministers' deaths had been circulating since early July. As mentioned above, only in late July did the ministers in Beijing manage to smuggle a letter to Tianjin. As a result of the welcome news that the foreign legations in Beijing were still intact, General Gaselee, the British Commander-in-Chief, organized a second expeditionary force of 18,000 troops and left Tianjin on 4 August.

Although this group was much larger than Seymour's first relief force, it was opposing an estimated 50,000 Boxers and Chinese troops. Following the Bei He River, the first major encounter took place on 5 August. The location of this battle was a small village along the main railway line approximately seven miles northwest of Tianjin. Attacking at 4:00 A.M., before the sun was even up, the foreign troops caught the Chinese off guard and by noon had routed them. Credit for this victory goes mainly to the Japanese forces, who advanced on the Chinese trenches in close formation. Because the foreign troops did not have cavalry, it was difficult to pursue the retreating Chinese.

Although the Chinese disengaged in good order and retreated with most of their guns, the foreigners' quick victory over the main Chinese force destroyed their morale and undermined their organization. Any future large-scale Chinese resistance was now futile and the allied troops stormed the Chinese defenses at Yang Zun, a town ten miles further northwest toward Beijing, the very next day. These Chinese defeats, and the ones to follow, led some of China's highest ranked military leaders to commit suicide, including the governor-general of Zhili Province, Yu Lu, on 7 August and the Qing general, Li Bengheng, on 12 August.

Chinese resistance decreased, but did not end completely, as the foreign force continued to encounter Boxers and scattered Chinese troops. Following

the victory at Yang Zun on 6 August, however, the expedition picked up speed and moved quickly toward Beijing. Of the eight original allied groups, only the American, British, Japanese, and Russian contingents remained in the main group of 14,000, since the German, Italian, and Austrian detachments were hampered by poor transportation and so returned to Tianjin. The French troops—mainly Tonkinese from Annam—could not keep up on the rapid march, and so followed at a more leisurely pace.

By 12 August the allies had reached the last major obstacle, the town of Dongzhou. The Japanese advance guard soon blew up the south gate and quickly occupied the city. Without meeting further opposition, the allied force reached Beijing on 14 August. Although the Boxers did not oppose the foreign march to the city walls of Beijing, the Chinese did make a last-ditch effort on 13 August to overwhelm the defenses of the besieged diplomatic quarter. Using a 2-inch quick-firing Krupp gun, the Chinese seriously threatened the safety of foreigners hiding in the legations until the Krupp was silenced by the American Colt and the Austrian Maxim machine-gun. Some of the advancing expeditionary troops evidently mistook these signs of battle for thunder, because the fire was so sustained and constant.

The original plan was that the four advancing columns would stop three miles from the city walls, so that a concerted attack could be made on 15 August. However, the Russians appear to have ‘jumped the gun’ and began the attack on the Dongbianmen gate on 13 August.<sup>285</sup> By 14 August the allied troops had in fact breached the city walls, and by early that afternoon they had reached the legation quarter and relieved the siege.

Although the Russians were the first to attack Beijing’s city walls, the British won the race to the legations; their assigned gate, the Xiagoumen on the southeast corner of Beijing, happened to be deserted when they arrived there. As a result of this fortuitous event, the British troops literally “sauntered” into Beijing without opposition.<sup>286</sup> On 28 August 1900, foreigners for the first time opened the gates of the Forbidden City and foreign troops entered. In a symbolic gesture, detachments from Russia, Japan, Britain, America, France, Germany, Italy, and Austria marched from the south gate to the north gate of the once sacred compound.<sup>287</sup> This parade took place less than a century after guns were first introduced to the Forbidden City.

### **The end of the Beijing siege**

When the siege of the legation quarter did not immediately result in either the destruction or retreat of the foreigners in China, the Manchu Court began to have second thoughts. Beginning in late July, the Empress Dowager authorized the Zongli Yamen to open negotiations with the foreigners. It also became apparent that the Chinese Army was not devoting its entire strength to the siege of the diplomatic quarter. Chinese Communist sources have accused the Empress Dowager of “treachery” in only pretending to oppose

the foreigners, and they have criticized the Manchu Court for asking the foreigners to assist in suppressing the Boxers.<sup>288</sup>

The cease-fire continued through late July. Tensions in the legations eased somewhat when a small market was opened and staples, such as melons, cucumbers, and eggs, were brought into the besieged legations by Chinese traders. This market clearly upset the Boxers, who beheaded one Chinese trader on 19 July. However, on 27 July, the Empress Dowager personally sent a present of ice, melons, and other fruit to the British Minister. At the same time, the Zongli Yamen sent similar presents to Sir Robert Hart, inviting him to act as a mediator between China and the Great Powers; Hart declined this invitation.<sup>289</sup>

As the expeditionary troops approached Beijing in early August, Chinese attacks on the legations increased. During the evening of 13 August, Giles reported that the heaviest attack of the entire siege took place. Three times during the night the Chinese gunners carried out "furious fusillades" and even riddled Sir Claude MacDonald's bedroom with shot. This attack turned out to be a last-ditch face-saving effort by the Chinese. During the early hours of 14 August, the besieged heard the sound of approaching Maxim guns in the distance. By 3:00 P.M. on the afternoon of 14 August, the first troops from the 7th Rajputs entered the legation. The siege of the Beijing legations ended with sixty-six of the defenders killed and 150 wounded.<sup>290</sup>

The very fact that such a small number of western troops could withstand an assault by tens of thousands of Chinese for fifty-five days, until they were relieved by the western forces in mid-August, is a testament to the foreigners' tenacity and bravery. It also reflects poorly on the organization and lack of resolve of the Chinese troops. Some scholars have tried to argue that the Chinese troops did not participate through most of the siege, citing the anti-reactionary sympathies of their military commanders. This argument largely ignores, however, that more than 4,000 shells and hundreds of thousands of gunshot hit the legation buildings from close range.<sup>291</sup> Since the Boxers did not use guns, these must have come from the Chinese troops.

It is difficult to explain from a military point of view why the Chinese never took the legations, since there is ample evidence that the Chinese troops were "potentially capable of seizing the legation quarter." According to Powell, it is "necessary to conclude that the answer was primarily a matter of political considerations." He writes:

Ronglu and certain of the other more enlightened ministers at court realized the futility of attempting to rid China of the foreigners by force. They did not have the authority or courage to halt the attacks once they had begun, but they appear to have sabotaged them. There is no indication that Ronglu's troops, as an organized unit, took part in the assaults. Moreover, upon occupying Beijing the allies discovered large quantities of modern guns and rifles which had not been

issued to the soldiers or irregulars who were attacking the legations. The failure to employ these weapons may have been due to incompetence, but it is also possible that they were deliberately withheld. Certainly their use would have greatly increased the danger to the defenders of the legations.<sup>292</sup>

This interpretation would tend to support the view that while the Manchu Court actively pitted the Boxers and the foreigners against each other, the Imperial troops played a relatively inactive role during the siege and perhaps even kept the Boxers in check.

Once the international expeditionary force reached Beijing, the superior arms and numbers of the foreign troops quickly cleared the area of Boxers and Chinese troops. On the morning of 15 August, the Empress Dowager fled the capital. In a final act of spite, she ordered that Emperor Guangxu's favorite wife, Zhen Fei, be thrown down a well. With little or no preparation, the Court began the arduous journey to Xi'an; after more than two months, the Qing Court re-established itself in Xi'an on 26 October 1900. Once there, the Empress Dowager again turned to Li Hongzhang, the Han Chinese statesman who had formerly negotiated the Shimonoseki Peace Treaty with Japan, and assigned him as chief negotiator of a peace treaty with the foreign powers.

Li Hongzhang arrived in Tianjin on 18 September 1900, moved to Beijing three weeks later, and began negotiations with the eleven foreign powers on Christmas Eve. The two sides signed a final treaty only in September 1901, almost a year after Li's arrival. The first stumbling-block proved to be punishment for the government officials involved in the uprising. In a series of Imperial edicts, the Empress Dowager agreed to exile Prince Duan, execute Yuxian, and degrade major military leaders, including Li Bengheng who had already committed suicide. In addition to punishing highly placed officials in Beijing, the Manchus sentenced 119 other minor officials, many of them to death, for crimes against foreigners living in China's interior.<sup>293</sup>

A second major problem was the size of the indemnity that China had to pay to the foreign powers. When negotiations were over, and the treaty was signed on 7 September 1901, the Boxer Protocol enacted an enormous indemnity of 450 million taels—approximately \$333 million—to be paid over thirty-nine years.<sup>294</sup> This treaty also granted the legations permission to have permanent guards in Beijing to protect them and to ensure that relief missions could always make it to the capital. The Dagou forts also had to be destroyed and twelve foreign garrisons were to be built between the coast and Beijing.

Finally, several additional articles in the treaty were to have a dramatic impact on China's future military development. As a punishment for China's army, which had fought alongside the Boxers, the treaty banned all imports of foreign-made weapons into China for two years. Official examinations for government employment were also suspended for five years in cities where foreigners were killed or mistreated. Any officials who in the future refused to

repress anti-foreign actions would also be instantly dismissed from government employ and would never regain their official standing.

### Conclusions

Following the Boxer Uprising, many questions about its origins and its ultimate failure arose. These are still difficult to answer today. Perhaps the most important question is why, during the entire two-month siege of the legation quarter in Beijing, the Chinese troops failed to storm the buildings. Certainly they had the manpower, and they would also have had sufficient guns and ammunition if they had decided to use them, but they evidently chose not to do so. Perhaps the best explanation for this mystery is that the commander-in-chief of the Imperial troops in Beijing, while not actively supporting the Boxers, did not want to openly oppose the Qing Court and the Empress Dowager. As a result, the Chinese troops carried out the siege only “halfheartedly.”<sup>295</sup>

Although this view of the siege may be correct, it does not explain the fact that 231 foreigners—many of them women and children—died throughout China during the Boxer Uprising. The Boxers brutally murdered many of these foreigners, often after being tortured and physically maimed. For example, according to Morse, the only foreigner to escape outright execution in Shanxi was a woman who, after having her breasts cut off, managed to crawl away and hide under the city wall, where she subsequently bled to death.<sup>296</sup> Perhaps the most accurate appraisal of this mystery is that the Manchus tried to stay in the middle, siding with the Boxers when it appeared they might win, and then immediately denouncing them when it became clear they would lose.

After ending the Boxer Uprising by force, the foreign countries felt justified in demanding a heavy penalty from China’s Manchu leaders. However, what is perhaps most notable about the Boxer Protocol is that even though the Empress Dowager and the Qing Court initially supported the Boxers, and officially declared war on the foreign nations, the eleven allied countries did not insist that the Manchus give up their power or the throne. Late in 1901, the Empress Dowager and her court returned to Beijing and once again took up residency in the Forbidden City as if nothing had happened. Therefore, in a pattern set during the Arrow War, the Manchus arguably succeeded in employing the foreigners to destroy the Boxers. Seen in this light, the enormous foreign indemnity—paid for, of course, not by the Manchus, but by the subjugated Han Chinese—was for “services rendered.”

Unlike before the Boxer Uprising, however, the myth of imperial infallibility was now broken. Foreign troops violated the Forbidden City, the Manchus had to apologize for the deaths of the German and Japanese ministers, and the Beijing government had to agree to construct special monuments in foreign cemeteries that had been desecrated. What is more important, foreign envoys could now enter the Throne Hall in the Imperial City, a symbol of

their diplomatic equality with the Chinese. The Han Chinese eagerly observed all these signs that the Manchus had lost their Mandate of Heaven.

In addition to the negative impact of losing a war, and then “losing face” yet again by having to pay a huge indemnity and apologize for the foreigners’ deaths, there were other incidents during the Boxer Uprising that deserve special notice. The first was the various declarations of neutrality by Qing officials in China’s major southern cities and provinces, including Li Hongzhang in Guangzhou, Liu Kunyi in Nanjing, and Yuan Shikai in Shandong Province. This break with Beijing—primarily by Han Chinese officials—meant that virtually all of southern China avoided the turmoil both of the Boxer Uprising and the later foreign reprisals.

The second point of importance was the independent nature of the military units under the provincial governors, such as Yuan Shikai, who declined to come to Beijing’s aid when the Manchus ordered him to attack. Within only ten years, the Manchu Dynasty would collapse, arguably in large part because of the independent actions of provincial governors just like Yuan Shikai. Thus the long-term impact of the Boxer Uprising proved to be very important to China’s later warlord history. As will be shown in greater detail in the following chapters, the origins of the autonomous warlords of the post-Manchu period can perhaps even be traced back to these seminal events.

Finally, the Boxer Uprising was a major psychological watershed in the history of Chinese military development. China’s military modernization had begun much earlier, but the appearance of the Boxers represented a temporary retreat from this modernization. In particular, the Boxers’ reliance on traditional Chinese martial arts, not to mention their use of swords and lances to oppose modern weapons, failed miserably. The Boxers’ superstitious faith in magic, and their claim that their converts could become immune to bullets and could even learn to fly, was also proven to be false. The only road left open to China after the Boxers was to modernize and adopt western methods. As one author has noted, Qing officials “who held office within reach of foreigners were, however reluctantly, beginning to acknowledge the need for change and even to lead it.”<sup>297</sup> That path also inevitably led to the permanent twentieth-century trend of modernizing China’s military forces along western lines.

## THE CHINESE REVOLUTION AND THE FALL OF THE QING

Within ten years of the Boxer Uprising, China experienced an ethnic revolution pitting the Han Chinese against the Manchus. This chapter will begin by discussing the military and naval reforms following the Boxer Uprising. It will then look at the impact of military modernization on the 1911 Revolution, highlighting the Han-dominated “New Army” and their role in overthrowing the Manchus. Arguably, this revolution inaugurated almost forty years of intermittent civil wars to determine which Han dynasty would fill the power vacuum left by the Qing’s collapse. This era ended in 1949, when the Chinese Communists took power.

China’s defeat in the Boxer Uprising immediately led to a number of governmental and social reforms. These involved studying western history and politics, adopting European science and technology, and encouraging travel and study abroad. The Manchus also initiated extensive military and naval reorganization. These reforms included eliminating the old-fashioned examinations, establishing military academies throughout China, and forming a government bureau to monitor training. By 1904, the “New Army” reforms had led to the adoption of a plan to create thirty-six divisions, with a total troop strength of approximately 500,000.

Although the army and navy were theoretically under the direct control of Beijing, the 1911 events leading to the Qing collapse showed that they were largely independent. The Wuchang Uprising, led by officers and soldiers of the New Army in Hubei Province, defied Beijing and called for the end of the Qing Dynasty. Many of the Chinese provinces rebelled and joined the revolutionaries. With the Manchus’ ouster in 1912, the real political power fell into the hands of the army, as the Imperial general, Yuan Shikai, took charge of a nominally Republican government based in Beijing.<sup>298</sup>

### **The Qing Dynasty’s military and naval reforms**

According to Edward Dreyer, China adopted modern warfare in 1901.<sup>299</sup> Following China’s failure to oust foreigners in the Boxer Uprising, new reformist officials immediately began to adopt government and social reforms based



on the study of western history, politics, and science and technology. They also encouraged travel and study abroad for Chinese officials, merchants, and intellectuals. Beginning in August 1901, the Manchu Court adopted military reforms. One of the first Imperial edicts eliminated military examinations, formerly based primarily on memorizing the Chinese classics and military texts, and instead began judging new recruits more on their military skills.<sup>300</sup> A second reform significantly reduced the size of the Green Standard Army, while simultaneously establishing military academies to train a modern army. Finally, later reforms created a central bureau to monitor military training throughout China.

By 1904, the “New Army” reforms were promulgated and, during the fall of 1905, Beijing reorganized six divisions in northern China to create the Chinese New Army.<sup>301</sup> Within ten years, the government planned to create a total of thirty-six divisions with a peacetime strength of about 12,500 apiece, or approximately 500,000. In wartime, the government could expand each division to as many as 20,000. Although a General Staff in the new Ministry of War controlled these divisions centrally, local financing meant that they were beholden to the whims of provincial officials. According to one author, by 1908 only four divisions—and these were from the six divisions under Yuan Shikai’s personal control—were really under Beijing’s direct authority.<sup>302</sup>

The New Army differed greatly from traditional Chinese armies.<sup>303</sup> Unlike the earlier Qing Army organization, in which some troops held hereditary posts while others could be conscripted for life against their will, military service was theoretically based on universal military service. Men aged between 20 and 25 with good health and good character would be admitted from the region where the division was to be located. Terms of service were for three years, with two additional three-year terms in the reserves after that; once the army was at full strength, the reserves would add about 150,000 new troops per year. A soldier’s pay was relatively high, and a portion could be paid directly to his family, which also received tax breaks from the local authorities. Finally, the family of the soldier would receive a pension in case of death, injury, or lengthy service.

Officers received more intensive training, which—in theory at least—included a three-year course at a regional military primary school, followed by two more years at one of four national middle schools, and culminating in six months’ duty with an actual army division. Many military instructors were from Japan, and on 4 February 1903 the governor of Zhejiang sent a memorandum to the Emperor: “The Japanese military is now so advanced as to be on par with Europe. Our two countries moreover share a common writing system and culture (*tongwen*), facilitating instruction while saving us money on salaries.”<sup>304</sup> Once an officer succeeded in passing through these three levels, he would be eligible to attend a special military “high school.” In 1905, Yuan Shikai also ordered the establishment of a short-term officers’ school at the



military camp at Baoding in Zhili Province. In 1912, another such school was opened in Baoding with a staff of German instructors. Finally, a preparatory staff college was established, which offered advanced officer training.

The New Army's biggest problem was the acquisition of armaments. Following the Boxer Uprising, the importation of foreign arms was halted for two years. The Qing reforms sought to build an infrastructure throughout China so that Beijing could manufacture its own weapons and ammunition. This included building three large arsenals, one to serve the north in Hanyang near Wuhan, one in central China near Shanghai, and a third in the south near Guangzhou. When completed, these arsenals would produce uniform weapons for all of China. Although the weapons were initially rather backward and of poor quality, by 1910 China was producing serviceable "mountain guns and ammunition, magazine rifles, [and] carbines and machine guns."<sup>305</sup>

The Manchu Court also planned a modern navy. In 1907, the Ministry of War added a naval department and decided to build four squadrons in the Gulf of Zhili, the Yellow Sea, the Chusan Archipelago, and the South China Sea. The first step was to send twenty-eight sailors to Great Britain for training. They also made plans to reopen the naval college in Tianjin and establish other naval schools throughout China. In September 1909, the Ministry of War lost direct control over the navy to a newly created special Navy Bureau. Later, on 4 December 1910, an Imperial edict expanded this bureau into a separate Ministry of the Navy. Ships were purchased, but did little more than combat smuggling.

The original date for completing the New Army reforms was 1916, but Beijing later optimistically pushed it forward to 1912. In fact, by 1909, only nine divisions were completed, and during the following year this number increased to twelve. By 1911, the year before the plan was to be completed, fourteen divisions were actually finished. Only by adding another twenty mixed and understaffed brigades did China's fighting strength approach 190,000, less than half of the target number.

The Manchus knew that the "New Army" reforms could easily threaten the dynasty, since the vast majority of recruits were Han Chinese.<sup>306</sup> To insure that the throne's most important Manchu and Han officials were fully skilled in modern warfare, on 19 October 1905 the Qing Court "ordered the creation of a school for the sons of princes, imperial clansmen, and senior Manchu and Chinese officials."<sup>307</sup> In addition, it established one division of Manchu Imperial Guards; during November 1910 it allowed Han Chinese to serve in this elite division for the first time.

Although all the divisions in the New Army were theoretically under the direct control of the Qing Court, these armies had largely become independent of Beijing by the outbreak of the 1911 Revolution. The New Army in Hubei Province was the most important, since it was the Wuchang Uprising on 10 October 1911 that led to the collapse of the Qing Dynasty. According to Joseph Esherick, Hubei was distinctive for three reasons: "the size and level

of literacy of its New Army, the concentration of that army in a major treaty port, and the inability of the provincial school system to absorb all the partially educated and potentially revolutionary youth of the province.”<sup>308</sup>

As a result of these three characteristics, the one full division and one mixed brigade stationed in the three adjoining Wuhan cities was the “largest, best-educated, and best-trained New Army outside of north China.” Unlike the northern divisions of the New Army, which the Boxer Protocol prohibited from occupying Tianjin and so were stationed either in Beijing or in rural areas, the Hubei Army was located in a major port city with an active anti-Manchu press, radical student groups, and the “galling presence of imperialist powers in the concession areas.” These special characteristics, concludes Esherick, provided the conditions under which the disaffection of the literate officers—faced with rising expectations and the sharp social tensions between officers and their troops—could be “politicized into revolutionary opposition” to the Qing.<sup>309</sup>

Edmund Fung has pointed to other notable differences between the Hubei’s 8th Division and the other divisions stationed throughout China. Not only was the Hubei Division one of the first to be created after the New Army reforms, it was well organized, and it was cohesive, but all of its officer corps had also either “studied abroad or had graduated from the military schools.” These officers proved willing to join a large number of anti-Manchu study groups and societies. Two of these, the “Literary Society” and the “Society for Common Advancement,” agreed to cooperate with each other. Accordingly, when these two groups merged on 14 September 1911, the source of their unity proved to be their common provincial “environment” and “outlook,” which promoted a “common desire for unity and action.”<sup>310</sup>

China’s 1911 Revolution included many students, intellectuals, and professional revolutionaries, but the actual overthrow of the Qing government was led by the anti-Manchu revolutionary activities of the newly modernized military, especially the Hubei New Army. While the Qing intended the military reforms to strengthen and unify China against the foreign imperialists, they had a subsidiary effect of strengthening the Han Chinese in their opposition to the Manchus; to many Han, the Manchus were as equally foreign as the Europeans, Americans, and Japanese. Therefore, the creation of the New Army ultimately proved to be a double-edged sword, a sword that all too soon contributed to the demise of its creator, the Qing Dynasty.

### **The New Army and the 1911 Revolution**

There were many underlying factors that led to the 1911 Revolution. The most commonly cited reasons include the proposed nationalization of China’s railways—a plan funded by foreigners to strengthen state control at the expense of provincial investors—and the increase in anti-Manchu parties, such as Sun Zhongshan’s Tongmenghui. While these influences were undoubtedly

important, the revolution itself began as a military revolt of the Hubei New Army on 10 October 1911. This military force included fewer than 2,000 troops, but when the Manchu governor-general fled, the revolutionaries quickly took control over Wuchang; within two days they had taken the neighboring towns of Hanyang and Hankou as well. The success of the revolt quickly spread throughout China—especially in the southern provinces—and within two months over two-thirds of the provinces had declared independence from Beijing. Eighty-three days after the military revolt, on 1 January 1912, the revolutionaries founded the Republic of China.

Many western and Chinese historians have overlooked the importance of the Wuchang Uprising, preferring instead to give credit to revolutionaries like Sun Zhongshan—who was in fact visiting the United States at the time—or to Chinese intellectuals and reformers. However, as Fung has accurately observed, if the Hubei New Army had not revolted when they did, at “a time when the constitutionalists were frustrated and estranged, there probably would not have been a revolution in 1911.” Fung does not suggest that the New Army could have single-handedly overthrown the Qing Dynasty, but only after it became clear that sections of the “New Army had unmistakably deserted the Throne,” did the other alienated sections of Chinese society dare to “act decisively.”<sup>311</sup>

The revolutionaries poorly planned and badly executed the Wuchang Uprising; only the Manchu officials’ ineffective response allowed it to succeed at all. Following the merging of the Literary Society and the Society for Common Advancement, the leaders planned the uprising at a meeting on 24 September 1911. Originally scheduled for 6 October, which was the Chinese mid-fall festival, the signal for attack would be transmitted from the military camp outside Wuchang. Once the signal appeared, the artillery battalion would seize the city forts, while the engineer battalion would take the ammunition depot. Infantry units would join them for a final attack on the governor-general’s yamen.

Rumors of a possible uprising on 6 October circulated in the Wuchang press, so the leaders postponed the uprising until late October. However, when a bomb accidentally exploded on 9 October at the revolutionaries’ headquarters in the Russian concession in Hankou, the police confiscated a list of members. Alarmed at the large number of New Army soldiers on the list, the police began rounding up all possible suspects. Faced with almost certain arrest, the New Army officers had little choice but to strike immediately.

With most of the coup leaders traveling outside of Wuchang, hiding from the police, or injured from the bomb blast, the battalion representatives decided to begin the uprising themselves during the night of 10 October 1911. Xiong Bingkun, the chief representative of the Eighth Engineers Battalion, is normally given most of the credit for leading the Wuchang Uprising.<sup>312</sup> During the early evening, Sergeant Xiong led a mutiny against his company commanders Yuan Rongfa, Huang Kunrong, and Zhang Wentao,

who were killed, along with other officers who refused to support the revolutionaries.

Under Xiong's command, the engineering unit seized the Chuwangtai Arsenal in Wuchang. This facility not only contained weapons produced by the Hanyang factories, but also had foreign-made arms, so taking control of these weapons was a primary goal of the uprising. Wu Zhaolin, a company commander in the Engineers Battalion, was in charge of guarding the Arsenal that night. When the revolutionaries arrived, Wu reluctantly joined them and the revolutionaries elected him the provisional commander.

Wu Zhaolin's actual contributions to the uprising are debatable.<sup>313</sup> His first orders included sending troops against the 30th Battalion, which included many Manchu Bannermen, and the Military Police Battalion. With these two pro-Qing groups neutralized, the revolutionaries could focus on attacking the yamen of Governor-General Rui Zheng. The 8th Artillery Regiment arrived fortuitously at this time, and the revolutionary movement soon included the 21st Transport Battery and a number of students from the Institute of Cartography. The total size of the revolutionary force was only about 2,000 men, and they faced the equally large 8th Transport and Supply Battalion, the governor-general's personal bodyguard, and a number of loyal troops from the 8th Battalion.

Making effective use of their artillery, the revolutionaries broke through the yamen's defenses. Fighting was intense, and given sufficient time to bring up additional loyal reinforcements, the government troops would have most likely defeated the revolutionaries. Most accounts suggest that if only Governor-General Rui Zheng had held his ground the Qing forces would have prevailed. Dreyer goes even further, stating that the Wuchang Uprising "should not have succeeded," and that similar outbreaks in Guangzhou and Sichuan were easily suppressed by "prompt action on the part of the authorities."<sup>314</sup>

When shells began to fall within the yamen compound, Rui Zheng decided he would be safer on board a warship anchored outside the city gates. Rui Zheng left the local Qing commander, Zhang Biao, in charge of defending the yamen, while he ordered his troops to retreat to the neighboring city of Hankou. Due mainly to the lack of government resistance, therefore, the New Army was able to take control of the city of Wuchang by noon on 11 October 1911.

The success of the Wuchang Uprising was as important symbolically as it was militarily. For the first time in half a century, a predominantly Han Chinese military force had defeated troops loyal to the Manchu Court. Word of this victory spread quickly. During the evening of 11 October, the revolutionaries seized the city of Hanyang and, during the morning of 12 October, secured control of Hankou. Outnumbered, General Zhang Biao retreated with his loyal troops outside the city to wait for reinforcements.

The revolutionaries quickly formed a military government with Tang Hualong as civil governor. They drafted Li Yuanhong as military governor,

apparently against his will, although scholars have discredited the story that he was pulled out by his boots from under his wife's bed.<sup>315</sup> According to one account, the leaders selected Li to "call forth a nationwide response," because he was the former commander of the 21st Mixed Brigade, and so could not easily be labeled by the Manchu Court as a "rebel" or "bandit."<sup>316</sup>

In addition to making all of Hubei Province an independent republic, a further declaration proclaimed that Hubei had overthrown the "despotic rule" of the Manchus. The revolutionaries sent telegrams bearing Li Yuanhong's name to other provincial governments calling upon them to revolt against Beijing. These telegrams warned that the Manchus were in the process of further centralizing their power and that the Han Chinese might never get another chance to overthrow them.<sup>317</sup> Tang Hualong also persuaded the foreign consuls in Hankou to remain neutral; when Rui Zheng requested that foreign gunboats support the Qing by bombarding the revolutionaries, the foreign consuls refused.

The national response to the Wuchang Uprising was rapid. According to Hsü, within "a month and a half, fifteen provinces, or two-thirds of all China, seceded from the Qing dynasty." The anti-Manchu groups soon controlled many of the southern regions—including Guangdong, Yunnan, and Sichuan—and the cities of Changsha and Shanghai. This geographic division reflected strong north-south tensions that had been largely repressed and kept underground ever since the failed Taiping Rebellion. Although Beijing retaliated, and eventually recovered Hankou on 2 November, and Hanyang on 27 November, the loss of Shanghai in early November, and of Nanjing in early December, more than offset these small victories.<sup>318</sup>

Only after the impact of the Wuchang Uprising had spread throughout most of China did the constitutionalists step in to take over. Sun Zhongshan returned to China in late December, arriving in Shanghai just in time to belatedly join the revolutionary movement and to be elected provisional president of the Republic of China. Li Yuanhong, who had his own power base separate from Sun's, was selected as the provisional vice-president, thus showing the overwhelming importance of the Hubei New Army. Based in Nanjing, the constitutionalists formally founded the Republic of China on 1 January 1912.

## Conclusions

China's military and naval reforms followed closely upon the Boxer Uprising. The reforms involved extensive changes that included eliminating the old-fashioned examinations, establishing army academies throughout China, and forming a government bureau to monitor training. These reforms transferred more power to Han Chinese and by 1904 the Qing had created the "New Army." However, before the Qing could consolidate its modernized army, the 1911 Wuchang Uprising, led by officers and soldiers of the New Army in

Hubei Province, undermined Beijing's authority. That led to the collapse of the Qing Dynasty.

In order to avoid a civil war, the constitutional government agreed to hand over power to Yuan Shikai, who immediately moved the capital back to Beijing. Not surprisingly, considering its crucial role in overthrowing the Manchus, when Yuan took control of the new Republican government he quickly recentralized control over the New Army and transferred military power to generals personally loyal to him. This was the beginning of the third phase in China's modern dynastic cycle, a chaotic period characterized by domestic unrest, international invasion, and almost constant civil war.

Upon Yuan's death in 1916, China split into northern and southern governments, with Beijing controlled by a series of warlords while one of the many southern governments located in Guangzhou was under the leadership of Sun Zhongshan and his Nationalist Party. This division of China into north and south was perhaps inevitable, especially considering that early signs of regional tensions could be found during the Taiping Rebellion, when much of southern China was independent of Beijing. More recently, during the Boxer Uprising, many southern provinces declared their neutrality. Finally, the Wuchang Uprising owed much to its geographic location in the south.

In fact, the origins of China's warlord era can be found in the domestic unrest in the last decades of the Manchu Dynasty, when China's regional military units gradually gained greater independence from Beijing.<sup>319</sup> With the abdication of the Qing Dynasty in early 1912, China's regional military leaders pledged their allegiance to Yuan Shikai. However, they continued to assert a great deal of independence from Beijing and, following Yuan's death in 1916, the warlords openly vied to take power for themselves.

The resulting turmoil led to decades of civil war and domestic strife. In the north, a series of warlords vied for power in Beijing, and this first period of civil war lasted until 1927. With his base in the south, Jiang Jieshi, the Nationalist Party's successor to Sun Zhongshan, reunited China under one central government in 1928; but, as Chapter 10 will show in greater detail, Jiang's new government differed very little from the other warlord governments, since his personal power base also remained within the military. In particular, the Nationalist Party's power throughout northern China largely depended on its alliances with local warlords, and the underlying north-south divide and the strong regional tensions remained. Therefore, the Republic of China's true foundation was the military, and the unification of China was merely a temporary alliance of warlords. Throughout the twenty-year term of the Nationalist government, until it was forced to flee to Taiwan in 1949, it was constantly forced to resort to military power to oppose regional autonomy, repress domestic unrest, and counter Communist uprisings, all in order to ensure the continued "unification" of China.



## Part 3

# IMPERIAL INTERREGNUM



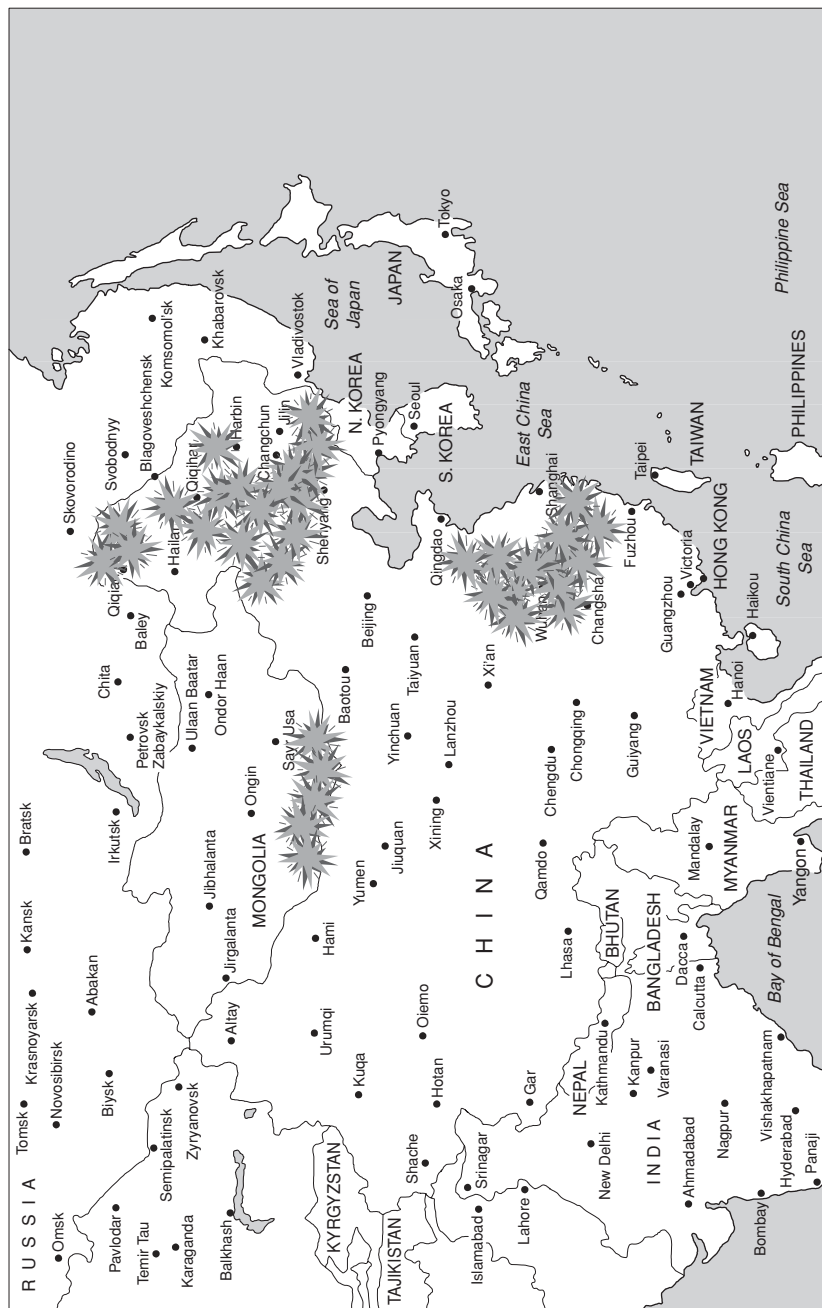


Figure 3. Imperial interregnum: Chinese civil war in the center and in the colonies.

## THE WARLORD ERA AND THE NATIONALISTS' NORTHERN EXPEDITION TO UNITE CHINA

The Nationalists' 1928 victory over the northern warlords temporarily ended almost fifteen years of civil wars following the Qing Dynasty's collapse. This chapter will begin by reviewing the post-revolutionary division of China into competing northern and southern governments. It will provide a concise history of the warlord period, with a special focus on the military alliances and conflicts that surrounded the northern warlords. It will also outline Sun Zhongshan's early history, his years as an anti-Manchu revolutionary, his efforts to establish the Republic of China, and his disaffection with Yuan Shikai. After discussing Sun's formation of an opposition government in Guangzhou, it will examine his decision to ally with the Soviet Union. Following the arrival of Soviet military advisers to train the Nationalists' army, Sun's eventual successor—Jiang Jieshi—launched the 1926–27 Northern Expedition. When Jiang appeared able to achieve victory without outside assistance from Moscow, he broke with the USSR and purged his Communist allies. After completing the Northern Expedition, Jiang unified China in 1928 under a Nationalist government in Nanjing. The Guomindang thereafter ruled China until 1949, when they fled to Taiwan before the advancing Chinese Communists.

Sun Zhongshan was born in southern China in 1866. Trained both in the Chinese classics and western learning, Sun established the Tongmenghui Party in 1905. Following the Wuchang Uprising, Sun returned to China and became the provisional president of the Republic of China, established in Nanjing on 1 January 1912. Reportedly to bring about China's peaceful reunification, Sun resigned and handed over power to Yuan Shikai. Yuan's first action was to move the capital back to Beijing.

Yuan and Sun soon parted company, and during July 1913 six southern provinces declared their independence. When Yuan's forces put down this so-called "second revolution," Sun fled to Japan, where he reorganized the Tongmenghui, first as the "Chinese Revolutionary Party" and later the "Chinese Nationalist Party" or Guomindang. After Yuan's death, Sun returned to China. In 1917, Sun founded his own government in Guangzhou. Competing

warlords ousted him twice—in 1918 and 1922—but each time he returned to Guangzhou and re-established his government.

Sun's goal of creating a military force capable of reuniting China became possible only after he allied with the Soviet Union in January 1923. Sun received funding, advisers, and military equipment from the Soviet-funded Communist International (Comintern) to create a modern Nationalist Army. Sun established the Whampoa Military Academy in June 1924, and Jiang Jieshi was the first commandant of this academy. In October 1924, the first Soviet shipment of modern weapons also reached Whampoa. Soon afterward, the newly created "Party Army" defeated the warlord army of Chen Jiongming.

After Sun's death on 12 March 1925, Jiang's personal power increased when he became commanding officer of the Nationalist Army. Following an outbreak of tensions with the Chinese Communists and the GMD's Soviet advisers on 20 March 1926, Jiang pushed to start the Northern Expedition early, and it officially began on 27 July 1926. The Nationalist Army moved northward, and after taking the cities of Wuhan, Nanchang, and Fuzhou, it attacked Nanjing and Shanghai, which fell in March 1927. With the rapid success of the Northern Expedition, the Soviet-supported Left GMD and the Communists tried to take control. On 12 April 1927, Jiang broke with his Soviet advisers and led a coup in Shanghai against the Communists. Soon afterward, Jiang ordered a party-wide purge to take full control over the Guomindang, the Nationalist Army, and the Northern Expedition.

Jiang formally established a new Nationalist government in the southern Chinese city of Nanjing during 1927. By early 1928, Jiang Jieshi was ready to continue the Northern Expedition. With the help of warlords Feng Yuxiang, Yan Xishan, and Li Zongren he ousted the Manchurian warlord Zhang Zuolin from Beijing. Following Zhang Zuolin's death, Jiang reached a settlement with Zhang's son, Zhang Xueliang. On 31 December 1928, the Nationalist government in Nanjing officially declared a unified China.

### **Yuan Shikai and the beginning of the warlord era, 1911–20**

What began in Hankou as a local military coup developed into a national revolution and resulted in the formation of the Republic of China. Sun's Tongmenghui had a negligible impact on this event, since "no one really knows how much the revolutionaries hastened a process of decline that had been going on and intensifying for about a century."<sup>320</sup> In actual fact, all real power now resided in the military and the navy. Whoever controlled these two institutions was the real leader of China. Following the Wuchang Uprising, that man was Yuan Shikai, the Qing general and official who was best known for his role in Korea and for refusing to follow Beijing's orders in 1900 to aid the Boxers. From 1911 until his death in 1916, Yuan was the

closest thing China had to a new monarch, albeit a weak and largely ineffectual one. Upon his death, China once again divided along regional lines. A number of competing warlords took control of China's central government in Beijing, while Sun Zhongshan and other southern leaders opposed them from their opposition government in Guangzhou.

Faced with the Wuchang Uprising and the rapid spread of the anti-Manchu movement, the Qing Court called on Yuan Shikai to save the dynasty.<sup>321</sup> They appointed Yuan governor-general of Hunan and Hubei and ordered him to put down the uprising in Wuchang. Yuan refused on the pretext that he was ill; this illness was the same illusionary malady that Beijing had used to retire Yuan in 1908. Only when the Manchus promised Yuan full power over the army and navy, plus unlimited military funds, did he agree to assist them. On 27 October 1911, the Manchus made Yuan an Imperial commissioner, and then, on 1 November, they made him China's premier. With the help of two military aides, Feng Guozhang as the commander of China's First Army, and Duan Qirui as the commander of the Second Army, Yuan assumed control over the military.

Out of money and with no effective military force of their own, the Nanjing revolutionaries asked Yuan to use his influence to convince the Manchus to abdicate. Yuan agreed on the condition that he become president of the Republic of China. On 12 February 1912, the Qing abdicated, and on 13 February 1912, Sun Zhongshan had little choice but to resign as president. As they agreed, in March 1912, Yuan was inaugurated as the new provisional president. According to Ernest Young, this compromise appeared to promote the revolutionaries' goals, since Yuan "undertook to honor the republic and a constitution written by the revolutionaries."<sup>322</sup>

One of Yuan's first actions was to make Beijing the national capital once again. This decision meant that the former Qing bureaucracy continued more or less unchanged. When units of the New Army protested Yuan's efforts to recentralize power, Yuan undermined the independence of the New Army by placing military control directly in the hands of local generals under his personal command. This process of demobilizing unruly New Army units proved to be especially important in southern China: for example, in the Hunanese city of Changsha, which supported one of the most pro-revolutionary divisions of the New Army, Yuan sent gunboats during 1912 to support his efforts to demobilize. This left the local military general, Zhao Hengti, in full control. From this position, Zhao later became Hunan's most important warlord, and he remained the military governor of Hunan from 1920 to 1926.

Yuan successfully centralized full power in his own hands and during the rest of his rule he governed China through his hand-picked "military mandarins."<sup>323</sup> As Escherick has stated about Yuan's decision to recentralize the New Army: "It was the end of the army's role as a popular opposition to elitist

government, and a key step along the road to warlord rule.”<sup>324</sup> In January 1913, a presidential order placed all of the military governors directly under Yuan’s authority. He also planned a new National Army of fifty divisions, with an estimated strength of 500,000.

During summer 1913, the so-called “second revolution” broke out among the New Army in the south. Yuan’s loyal Beiyang troops helped put down this second uprising, but their poor showing proved that the efficiency and morale of China’s military had suffered greatly since the revolution. With the outbreak of World War I, Japanese troops invaded Shandong province, successfully ousting Germany and taking control over Qingdao and the Shandong railway. Beijing’s weakness *vis-à-vis* Japan was highlighted when it signed the so-called twenty-one demands during 1915, which gave Japan extensive rights throughout Shandong and Manchuria. Meanwhile, Russia expanded into Outer Mongolia.

During civil unrest in 1913, Yuan’s forces had easily crushed the renegade provinces—including Jiangsu, Anhui, Guangdong, Fujian, Hunan, and Sichuan—but beginning in late 1915 opposition to Yuan’s plans to declare himself Emperor erupted, leading to Yunnan’s declaration of independence on 25 December and Guizhou’s on 27 December. The rest of the provinces waited to see what would happen, but when Yuan’s supporters were unable to put these movements down by force, Guangxi declared its independence on 15 March 1916, followed by Guangdong on 6 April, Zhejiang on 12 April, Shaanxi on 9 May, Sichuan on 22 May, and Hunan on 27 May. Although Yuan refused to resign, he died suddenly on 6 June 1916 of uremia at the age of 56.

Near the end of his short rule, Yuan sought outside warlord support to declare himself Emperor. Ernest Young called Yuan the “father of the warlords” both for attempting to rebuild the monarchy and placing the military directly under the authority of generals loyal only to Yuan.<sup>325</sup> Yuan’s attempt to form a new dynasty failed, however, and with his death China fell into a ten-year period of civil war and chaos. Without a strong leader to unify them, Yuan’s military generals vied with each other for “power and self-aggrandizement without any sense, logic, or reason, rendering this period the darkest in the republican history.”<sup>326</sup>

Domestic tensions continued to fester even while Yuan Shikai had attempted to centralize monarchical power in Beijing. The first outbreak appeared in southern China during 1913, but Yuan’s loyal military quickly put it down. The second outbreak took place between 1915 and 1916, and this time—without a strong leader like Yuan—China quickly divided into regional governments under individual military leaders, or warlords. This division was primarily north versus south, as Beijing was ruled by a series of warlord governments, while Sun Zhongshan founded his own republican government, albeit heavily dependent on the warlord Chen Jiongming, in the southern city of Guangzhou.

### The warlord government in Beijing

With Yuan's death, it appeared that China's provinces might once again unite behind a real Republican government. Vice President Li Yuanhong succeeded to the presidency on 7 June 1916, and he named Duan Qirui, Yuan's aide and powerful Beijing warlord, as his premier. After a period of dispute over which constitution should prevail—the original 1912 constitution or Yuan's rewritten 1914 document—President Li agreed to return to the 1912 document in exchange for the southern provinces' promise to reunify.

This compromise kept China nominally unified during late 1916 and early 1917, but the Republican government did not have any real power. Clearly, all power rested with the warlords. According to Fung, the political chaos surrounding the 1911 Revolution and Yuan's rule brought about this notable change in the "traditional civil-military relationship," since the political power wielded by the warlords was never returned to the "state bureaucracy," thus inaugurating an era marked by the "ascendancy of the military."<sup>327</sup>

The Beijing government stumbled badly in 1917 when it entered World War I against Germany without parliamentary approval.<sup>328</sup> The parliament demanded Premier Duan's removal, but when President Li agreed to support this recall, a number of mainly northern provinces that supported Duan declared their independence from the republic and threatened to attack Beijing. In an effort to unify China again under the Manchus, a short restoration to power of the last Manchu Emperor, Puyi, began on 1 July 1917, but was terminated almost immediately by Duan's forces on 12 July. During this military encounter, "a few rounds of artillery shells were fired, causing negligible damage."<sup>329</sup>

With Duan once again the premier in Beijing, Sun Zhongshan and his Nationalist Party re-established an opposition government in Guangzhou. After Duan failed to subdue Sun's southern government, Duan resigned in late 1918. A peace conference was called to work out the differences between north and south, but Duan was still a major warlord, controlling the War Participation Army—the name of his army later changed to the "Frontier Defense Army" and then even later to the Nation-Securing Army (*dingguojun*)<sup>330</sup>—and so he was able to block any chance of an agreement.

China's north-south division and increasing tensions among the northern warlords best characterized the 1911–20 period. During the warlord era, the constant civil wars made the unification of China impossible. According to Jonathan Spence: "No matter whether individual warlords were cruel or generous, sophisticated or muddleheaded, the fragmentation of China . . . [made] any further attempts to unify the country even harder."<sup>331</sup> It was becoming increasingly clear that the unification of China could only happen by a combination of political power and force, and in the words of Edward A. McCord: "By the end of this decade of civil war, the possession of armed force had become an essential determinant of political power."<sup>332</sup>

### Sun Zhongshan's early revolutionary history

Sun Zhongshan was born on 12 November 1866 near Guangzhou, in the southern province of Guangdong.<sup>333</sup> Initially educated in the Chinese classics, when Sun turned 13 he lived with his brother in Honolulu, Hawaii, and so learned English as well. Entering a missionary school, Sun later graduated from Oahu College in 1883. After graduation Sun returned to China, entered medical school in Guangzhou, and then transferred to the College of Medicine in Hong Kong. Graduating in 1892 with a medical degree, Sun began his professional career in Macao. He then moved to Guangzhou in 1893, where he began his new career as an anti-Manchu revolutionary.

In Guangzhou, Sun Zhongshan first came into contact with anti-Manchu secret societies. Although he supported their cause, Sun soon realized that his western upbringing and education barred him from playing an important role in the secret societies. In fall 1894 Sun returned to Honolulu. On 24 November 1894, he organized the Revive China Society. The society's charter was highly patriotic. According to Marie-Claire Bergere, the charter "began by stressing the danger China faced, threatened as it was by foreign ambitions and the weakness and incompetence of the Manchu government, and went on to invite courageous men to 'give new life' to the country."<sup>334</sup> After enlisting a hundred overseas members, Sun returned to China in early 1895. Sun founded a Chinese office in Hong Kong and worked hard to expand its operations into China. Prospective members of the society had to promise to "expel the Manchus, restore the Chinese rule, and establish a federal republic."<sup>335</sup>

Following an abortive uprising in Guangzhou during 1895, Sun fled China. Concerned that the British might turn him over to the Chinese authorities, Sun moved to Yokohama, Japan, and organized a local branch of his society there. In fall 1896, Sun visited London to promote Han Chinese nationalism. There, representatives of the Manchu government kidnapped Sun and detained him on the third floor of the Chinese legation. After eleven days in captivity, the British Foreign Office pressured the Chinese to release him, and Sun re-emerged from the Chinese legation a hero. Instantly famous, Sun remained in England for another nine months, an experience that later led him to base his political views of republican governments partly on the British model. He also carefully studied the United States and apparently attributed his Three People's Principles—People's Nationalism, People's Democracy, and People's Livelihood—to Lincoln's statement "of the people, by the people, and for the people."

For the next ten years, Sun worked diligently to overthrow the Manchu Dynasty. He took a major step on 20 August 1905 when he started the Tongmenghui Party while in Tokyo, Japan, and became its first leader. Beginning with a membership of seventy people, most of them Chinese students studying in Japan, Sun's party had grown to almost 1,000 by 1906. The



Tongmenghui helped support anti-Manchu literature by publishing, first, the *Twentieth Century China*, and later, the *People's Tribune*. These newspapers provided a forum for Chinese intellectuals to discuss how to overthrow the Manchus and return China to Han rule.

Sun's party also promoted Han Nationalism by staging active revolutions against the Qing. From 1906 through April 1911, there was a total of ten unsuccessful uprisings in southern China. According to Michael Gasster, however, the revolutionary movement was clearly declining by 1908, as one uprising after another erupted "without any visible success."<sup>336</sup> While most of China's revolution activity was in southern China, on 13 July 1911 Sun established a Tongmenghui bureau in Shanghai. Later, it forged links with the New Army secret societies in Wuchang that played the leading role in the 1911 Revolution.

Following the success of the Wuchang Uprising in early October 1911, Sun's many years as a well-known anti-Manchu revolutionary held him in good stead. Although he was fund-raising at the time in Denver, Colorado, he immediately traveled to London and Paris to attempt to secure promises of diplomatic recognition should a republican government be founded in China. Sun failed, but when he returned to China he arrived just days before a provisional parliament met in Shanghai to form a new government. On 29 December 1911, the delegates elected Sun to be provisional president of the Republic of China, and the military leader of the Wuchang Uprising, Li Yuanhong, became provisional vice-president. The new government was founded on 1 January 1912. Like the Han Chinese Taipings before them, it was based in the southern city of Nanjing, not in Beijing.

In order to promote the peaceful abdication of the Qing Dynasty, Sun resigned his position as provisional president of the Republic of China on 12 February 1912. He handed over power to Yuan Shikai, who immediately moved the capital back to Beijing. This decision was not welcomed by the southern Chinese but, on 5 April 1912, a parliamentary vote confirmed Beijing as the national capital. International reaction was positive, and the United States became one of the first countries to recognize the Republic of China.

The Beijing government immediately continued former plans to adopt western-style reforms to try to strengthen China. One of its first decisions renamed the old-fashioned Zongli Yamen as the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. This ministry soon formed a commission to study China's former treaties with other countries, with the eventual goal of renegotiating these treaties to eliminate inequalities.<sup>337</sup>

Yuan Shikai and Sun Zhongshan could not agree on how the Republic of China should be governed however, and during July 1913 six southern provinces broke away and declared independence from Beijing. Yuan's forces quickly retook control, and Sun Zhongshan fled once again to Japan. While in Tokyo, Sun reorganized his party. On 8 July 1914 it was renamed the



Chinese Revolutionary Party, or the *Zhongguo Gemingdang*. This split Sun's followers, since many members of this former party objected to a required pledge of allegiance strictly to Sun. He also held the position of generalissimo of the Chinese Revolutionary Army, much like other Chinese warlords.

In the aftermath of the failed "second revolution," Yuan forced the parliament to reappoint him president, and in May 1914 the term of president was set at ten years. Later, during 1915, Yuan tried to make himself China's new monarch. To gain foreign support, Yuan signed several agreements with both Russia and Japan, which gave these countries new concessions and privileges within China's borders. In Tsarist Russia's case, these treaties gave the Russians extensive rights and privileges in Outer Mongolia, which was turned into a Russian protectorate. Sun quickly denounced Russia's imperialist policies. Furthermore, the southern provinces refused to support Yuan's efforts to declare himself China's new Emperor, and a number of provinces declared their independence from Beijing beginning in late 1915 and continuing throughout spring 1916. Yuan's death during July 1916 quickly led to the Republic of China's division into small, contentious warlord governments constantly battling for power.

Following Yuan's death, Sun returned to China. In late 1917, he founded an opposition government in Guangzhou. He called his government the Constitution Protection Movement, and his military force the Constitution Protection Army. Although Premier Duan Qirui sent troops to destroy the Guangzhou government, constant turmoil and infighting among the northern warlords stymied this campaign. This situation assisted the weak Guangzhou government, and after Premier Duan failed to destroy the southern government, he resigned on 22 November 1918.

In southern China, Sun Zhongshan soon ran into warlord troubles of his own. The real power in Guangzhou was held by various groups, including a number of warlords, members of the disbanded old parliament, and the naval minister of the southern Chinese Navy, which had relocated to Guangzhou. According to Andrew Nathan, Sun's primary goal was to use the southern coalition "as a path to substantial power in the North," by opening negotiations with Beijing or "through the establishment of a viable alternate government that could defeat the northern government militarily and diplomatically."<sup>338</sup> Following a power struggle, Sun left Guangzhou and moved to Shanghai in May 1918. While in Shanghai, Sun reorganized his political party yet again, and on 10 October 1919 it became the Chinese Nationalist Party, or *Zhongguo Guomindang* (in most sources this name later became simply Guomindang or GMD).<sup>339</sup> Instead of opposing the Beijing warlords immediately, Sun first decided to return to Guangzhou, where he established a second republican government with himself as president on 2 April 1921.

During most of these years, Sun's Guangzhou government did not have a specific domestic and foreign policy program, or a clear plan to reunite China. It also lacked a well-organized army capable of opposing the northern

warlords. Sun soon realized that it would be impossible to reunite China without a strong military force. He needed military advisers and modern armaments to build an army. Achieving his goal of unifying China became possible only after Sun allied with the Soviet Union in January 1923 and began to receive military aid from the Soviet-funded Comintern.

### **The first Bolshevik contacts with Sun Zhongshan**

Sun Zhongshan publicly praised Russia's Bolshevik Revolution in 1917, and he received a letter from the Bolshevik's Foreign Minister, Gregori Chicherin, during the summer of 1918. The Soviet press also made it clear that the Bolsheviks wanted to form an alliance with Sun as early as 1919. What the Moscow government wanted most was good relations with the Guangzhou government so as to exert diplomatic pressure on Beijing, the internationally recognized capital of China. A political alliance with Soviet Russia did not initially conform with Sun's main goal of organizing a military force in Guangzhou that was capable of destroying the northern warlords and reuniting China. Only when early Bolshevik representatives suggested that allying with Moscow could provide Sun with funding, military advisers, and arms, therefore, did Sun agree to establish a formal alliance.

Bolshevik leaders swiftly recognized the importance of the Guangzhou government in Chinese politics. For example, the Soviet Asian specialist, Vladimir Vilenskii, first predicted during the summer of 1919 that southern China would inevitably win in its campaign to unite China. During 1920, Vilenskii discussed the growing political importance of the Guomindang and Sun's leadership.<sup>340</sup> Soviet interest in China increased further with reports of worker unrest, which suggested the possibility of a Soviet-style revolution. The spring 1922 edition of the Soviet journal *The New East* contained an article discussing China that listed it among the five colonial countries most likely to sponsor successful national liberation revolutions. Although China ranked fifth behind Turkey, India, Persia, and Egypt, the Bolsheviks clearly considered China a possible site for revolution.<sup>341</sup>

While the Bolsheviks promoted worldwide revolution, Sun's main goal was power: "From 1920 to 1925, Sun Zhongshan was driven by one overriding ambition: to reconquer political power in Beijing and, as president, to unify and pacify China."<sup>342</sup> To accomplish this goal, Sun hoped to build a Nationalist Army to reunite China. On 28 August 1921, Sun even sent a letter to Foreign Minister Gregori Chicherin, expressing his interest in Soviet Russia and asking how the Guomindang could pattern its military organization after the Red Army. Sun stated: "I am extremely interested in your affairs, and especially in the organization of your Soviets, your army and education."<sup>343</sup> Meanwhile, Sun also tried to gain support for his Guangzhou government from the United States, Canada, and Britain. Only when these countries rejected his advances did Sun turn to Soviet Russia as a last

resort.<sup>344</sup> Even so, he continued his efforts to woo the United States and Britain.

In early 1921 the Comintern sent Henk Sneevliet—whose revolutionary name was Maring—to China. Maring's first discussion with Sun took place in Guilin on 23 December 1921. Although Sun expressed some interest in Russia, his first priority was the Northern Expedition to reunify China. Sun expressed concern that a political alliance with the Soviet Union might actually *interfere* with this military campaign:

These political matters were not given high priority by Sun, because he was in Guilin to prepare for a northern expedition and had met strong resistance from Wu Peifu. If he intended to defeat Wu militarily, he noted that it would be necessary to seize the Yangzi River valley, still a "sphere of influence" of the British. If England should become aware that he was forming an alliance with Russia, Sun feared, the British would hold him in contempt and try to stop him by assisting the Zhili clique. At that point, Sun knew that his plan for a northern expedition would end. "I can only keep in touch with the Soviet Union," he explained, "spiritually and morally." After his troops would march successfully into northern China, Sun believed it would then be appropriate to develop a plan of cooperation.<sup>345</sup>

Although Sun's lack of interest in allying with Moscow disappointed Maring, he took time to lecture Sun's officers about the military successes of the October Revolution.

Beginning on 3 February 1922, Sun Zhongshan personally led what many have characterized as his first Northern Expedition. Before his Constitution Protection Army had made any notable headway—Sun's supporters advanced only as far north as Guilin—they ran out of funds. When Sun requested that the Guangzhou government raise more money, the warlord Chen Jiongming refused to send him any more aid. Sun's campaign ground to a halt, and this financial dispute quickly evolved into a political dispute over who really controlled Guangzhou.

Stymied, during March 1922, Sun and his troops moved back toward Guangdong. Meanwhile, during spring 1922, the USSR's Communist Youth League sent a representative named Sergei Dalin to China. Dalin met with Sun on 27 April 1922. Their conversation included the Soviet military. Sun showed particular interest in the "size of the Red Army, its organization and its political training." Sun also told Dalin about his plan to organize a Northern Expedition to reunite China and about "the inevitability of its quick success."<sup>346</sup>

After all attempts to compromise with Chen Jiongming failed, Sun ordered Chen's expulsion from the governorship of Guangdong and as leader of the army. Chen invited Sun to Guangzhou to discuss a settlement and he agreed.

On 15 June, Chen's followers bombarded the presidential palace, forcing Sun to flee to a nearby gunboat. On the verge of a political disaster, Sun sent his legal adviser, Robert Norman, to petition the American consul in Guangzhou, R. P. Tenny, for an American naval vessel to evacuate him to safety. Tenny refused, as did the British government, although the British representative did offer Sun safe passage from Hong Kong to Shanghai.

Infighting with Chen Jiongming, coupled with the American and British refusals to assist him, undoubtedly made Sun more receptive to Soviet offers to aid his cause. Sun even sent a message to Dalin from Shanghai, warning that he would carry on the struggle in China, but that "in case of failure here I will leave for Soviet Russia." There was a heavy political price for Soviet aid, however, and Dalin had suggested to Sun during their meeting in spring 1922 that Sun would gain an "ally to the north" if he recognized the new Soviet status quo in Outer Mongolia.

Sun had formerly condemned Russia's expansionist policies in China, but, following his ouster from Guangzhou, Sun apparently agreed to the Soviet Union's terms. Soon after Sun arrived in Shanghai, Dalin reported that Sun "published a declaration, in which he recognized Mongolia's right of self-determination."<sup>347</sup> Sun's decision to support the Red Army's occupation of Outer Mongolia benefitted Moscow's ongoing negotiations with Beijing, especially since Beijing wanted the Red Army to withdraw prior to opening Sino-Soviet diplomatic relations.

The Bolsheviks were also eager to form a United Front alliance between Sun Zhongshan's Guomindang and the Chinese Communist Party (CCP), which had been founded with Soviet help in June 1921. When Maring approached Sun about an alliance with the Chinese Communists, however, Sun maintained that he would only allow Communists to join the Guomindang as individuals, and that he would never agree to an equal alliance. Maring had to persuade the Chinese Communists to agree to enter the Guomindang under these terms.

During August 1922, Maring called a special Plenum of the Central Committee of the CCP. Over the protests of many of the CCP's top leaders, Maring ordered the Chinese Communists to join the Guomindang as individuals. The Comintern backed Moscow's decision to form a United Front between the Nationalists and Communists; a Comintern telegram sent to Maring in August 1922 supported this plan by ordering the CCP to work closely with the Guomindang.<sup>348</sup> Ultimately the Bolsheviks hoped to use the Guomindang to promote a socialist revolution in China.

What interested Sun the most was receiving Soviet help in building up the Nationalist Army. Sun wanted to pattern it on Soviet Russia's Red Army. In fact, during his early meetings with various Bolshevik representatives, Sun intimated that he hoped to obtain Russian military advisers, funding, and military equipment in order to lead a second Northern Expedition northward to reunite China. To Sun, therefore, the United Front policy between the

Soviet Union and China included a military modernization program. His ultimate goal was to reform the Guomintang's party organization and create a modern Nationalist Army.

### **Sun Zhongshan, the Chinese Communists, and the United Front policy**

The creation and progress of the United Front between Moscow and Guangzhou was greatly facilitated by a third group, the CCP. With the Comintern's backing, the Chinese Communists organized their party in July 1921. By August 1922, its major leaders, such as Chen Duxiu, supported a policy of alliance between the Communists and the Guomintang. Once they adopted this policy, members of the CCP then helped form the United Front during January 1923, when Sun Zhongshan met and signed a four-point agreement with the Bolshevik representative, Adolf Joffe. As soon as Sun and Joffe established the United Front alliance, Sun returned to Guangzhou to form a new government, while Moscow began to send military advisers, weapons, and funds to help create a new Nationalist Army.

Adolf Joffe arrived in China from Moscow in mid-1922 to conduct diplomatic negotiations with Beijing. These talks quickly deadlocked over the status of Outer Mongolia—Beijing wanted the Red Army to withdraw prior to negotiations—and over the Chinese Eastern Railway—Beijing insisted that Moscow honor its promise in the 1919 Karakhan Manifesto to return the railway to China without compensation. Refusing to back down and honor Soviet propaganda declaring equality between Russia and China, Joffe turned his attention instead to improving relations with Sun Zhongshan. Soon after arriving in Beijing, Joffe sent a personal envoy to meet with Sun. After regular communications were established, Joffe explained that rapid normalization of relations between China and Soviet Russia was of prime importance to Moscow. When his negotiations with Beijing reached deadlock, Joffe turned to Sun to inaugurate the United Front policy between Moscow and the Guomintang.

During the middle of January 1923, Joffe left Beijing and traveled to Shanghai, where he met with Sun. On 26 January, the two men signed a four-point agreement that formally established the United Front alliance. To reassure those Guomintang members who were suspicious of the Soviet government's intentions, Joffe agreed that "the Communistic order or even the Soviet system cannot actually be introduced into China, because there do not exist here the conditions for the successful establishment of either Communism or Sovietism."<sup>349</sup> There were other points that had direct bearing on the Soviet government's ongoing negotiations with Beijing. In particular, point three advocated joint management of the Chinese Eastern Railway by Russia and China, and called for decisions to be made on the basis of "actual rights and interests" on both sides. This meant that Sun Zhongshan acknowledged that

no matter what the Soviet government had previously promised, the Chinese Eastern Railway could now be jointly managed; privately, Sun even agreed to help Moscow regain majority control.<sup>350</sup>

In addition, in point four, Joffe reassured Sun that Soviet Russia had no “imperialistic” designs on Outer Mongolia and implicitly agreed that it was part of China by agreeing not to make it “secede from China.” In exchange, Sun gave what Moscow wanted by agreeing to allow the status quo to continue: “Dr. Sun Yat-sen, therefore, does not view an immediate evacuation of Russian troops from Outer Mongolia as either imperative or in the real interest of China.” By means of this agreement with Sun Zhongshan, Joffe gained important territorial concessions from Sun that Moscow had spent years fruitlessly trying to negotiate with the Beijing Foreign Ministry.<sup>351</sup>

The signing of the Sun–Joffe pact formally inaugurated the CCP–GMD United Front. This United Front was really an alliance between Guangzhou and Moscow. Sun Zhongshan readily admitted that what he wanted was Moscow’s support in the form of military and political advisers, weapons and ammunition, and then also direct financial support. In mid-1923, the first Soviet military advisers to Guangzhou were sent by way of Beijing under the dubious disguise of “students.” In addition to two million gold rubles in funding, the Soviet Union provided an estimated 8,000 rifles, fifteen machine-guns, four heavy guns, and even “two armored cars.”<sup>352</sup>

There can be little doubt that practical military considerations were an important motivation for Sun, perhaps even greater than his philosophical or ideological concerns. Soon after the two sides signed the Sun–Joffe agreement, work on reorganizing the Nationalist Army began. According to Lydia Holubnychy:

As a result of Sun Yat-sen’s request for aid early in 1923 and Soviet government’s decision to honor it in the spring of that year, the first practical steps were taken by both Sun Yat-sen and Soviet Russia–Comintern to translate the united front agreement into practice. On Sun’s side, a military mission headed by Chiang Kai-shek started making preparations for the departure to Moscow; on Soviet side, military and political advisers were being selected for service in China.

When Jiang Jieshi arrived in Moscow during September 1923, he reportedly carried with him “Sun’s letter to Lenin, Trotsky, and Chicherin requesting military weapons for his army.” This has led Holubnychy to conclude: “Indeed, as revealed by Soviet archives, the question of Soviet military assistance to Sun . . . was perhaps the main purpose of the Chinese mission to Moscow.”<sup>353</sup>

Jiang Jieshi himself has confirmed this interpretation. After arriving in Moscow in 1923, he met with various Bolshevik leaders and Red Army generals so as to “study its postrevolution party system, and its political and

military organization.” Although Jiang seems to have been marginally attracted to the Soviet political system—for example, in 1925 he sent his son Jiang Jingguo to study in Moscow—he felt mistreated by the Bolsheviks.<sup>354</sup> Later, he defended his trip as necessary to obtain military assistance: “In military affairs we inspected the Red Army, military schools of various services at different levels and army party organizations in Moscow. In Petrograd we inspected the Naval Academy and other service schools as well as the Kronstadt naval base and the Russian fleet there.” Jiang also personally met with Trotsky, and claims that Trotsky promised him that: “Except [for] direct participation by Soviet troops, Soviet Russia will do her best to help China in her National Revolution by giving her positive assistance in the form of weapons and economic aid.”<sup>355</sup> As a result of this visit, the Soviet Union reportedly allocated as much as \$40 million for use in funding Sun and the Guomindang.<sup>356</sup>

During September 1923, the Comintern sent Mikhail Markovich Borodin to China to head the team of Soviet advisers assigned to reorganize the Guomindang. Almost immediately, Borodin and the other Russian advisers began to strengthen the GMD’s party structure in order to further centralize power. The First Congress of the Guomindang, held in January 1924, passed a declaration that called for “strict party discipline, an intense propaganda offensive . . . and the forging of an army to attack both domestic and foreign ‘imperialism.’”<sup>357</sup> According to Harold Isaacs:

The Guomindang was transformed into a rough copy of the Russian Bolshevik party. Bolshevik methods of agitation and propaganda were introduced. To create the basis of an army imbued with Guomindang ideas and to put an end to the previous dependence on old-style militarists, the Russians in May 1924 founded the Whampoa Military Academy. The academy was supplied and operated with Russian funds, staffed by Russian military advisers. Before long, shiploads of Russian arms were coming into Canton harbor to supply the armies which rallied to the new banner as soon as the Guomindang began to display the new strength with which all these activities endowed it.<sup>358</sup>

With Soviet help, the Whampoa Military Academy was officially opened on 16 June 1924. Soon, it “supplied the officer corps for a new and well-motivated Guomindang army.”<sup>359</sup> The head of the Soviet military delegation, General Vasili K. Blyuker—also known by his revolutionary name V. Galen—diligently worked to form a modern army. Under his direction, an estimated 1,000 Soviet political advisers and military instructors arrived in China during the following year alone.<sup>360</sup>

With Sun Zhongshan’s adoption of the United Front policy, the USSR’s military influence in China increased dramatically. To build Sun’s Nationalist Army, the USSR armed and helped staff the Guomindang military academy at



Whampoa Island near Guangzhou. The goal of the Nationalists' new army was to reunite China by means of a "Northern Expedition" to conquer northern China. However, the Soviet Union clearly had its own revolutionary agenda as well, an agenda that included the Chinese Communists eventually taking control of the military force that the Russian advisers had worked so hard to create for the Guomindang.

### **The warlord conflicts in northern China, 1920–27**

From 1920 until 1927, northern China fell into almost constant civil war as three main warlord groups battled for power.<sup>361</sup> According to James Sheridan: "There were literally hundreds of armed conflicts, short and long, on local, regional and national scales."<sup>362</sup> Duan Qirui led the first of these factions. His faction was called the Anhui Clique, after the province of his birth and the main base of his support. Feng Guozhang, who became China's president after Li Yuanhong, led the second. His group was called the Zhili Clique; Feng soon died in late 1919, however, but the Zhili Clique continued under Cao Kun and Wu Peifu. Finally, Zhang Zuolin, a northern warlord who had his base in Manchuria, led the Fengtian Army.

The primary motivation behind the warlord wars was to take control of Beijing. This proved to be a difficult task, since "when one clique gave promise of becoming so powerful as to restrain the other militarists, and create a genuine centralized control, the other leading warlords temporarily combined their strength to bring it down."<sup>363</sup> For example, during April 1920, the Zhili Clique allied with the Fengtian Army to demand that Duan appoint a more satisfactory delegate to the peace conference trying to reunite China. They also insisted that Duan return the leadership of the National Pacification Army to the Ministry of War. When Duan refused, his army engaged the Zhili and Fengtian forces during 14–19 July 1920 in what became known as the "An–Zhi War." After only five days of fighting, Zhili and Fengtian defeated Duan and he was forced to flee for safety to the Japanese concession in Tianjin. Since the victors' "sole unifying principle was hostility to Duan Qirui," their "victory did not produce stability in either north or south."<sup>364</sup>

The Zhili Clique's domination over Beijing was short-lived, and fighting soon broke out again on 28 April 1922. This time Zhili opposed Fengtian, which had concluded an alliance with Anhui and the GMD's Guangzhou government. This civil war's name is the "First Zhi–Feng War." Wu Peifu personally commanded the Zhili forces, and once again he was victorious. According to one account of the 1920–22 wars:

Each of these cases demonstrated Wu's remarkable ability to combine military efficiency with sound political calculation, so that a minimum but decisive application of force produced a substantial political benefit. Neither war had bogged down in attrition; rather, Wu had in



each case literally routed his opponents by surprise, maneuver, and strategic originality.<sup>365</sup>

The conflict lasted only a week and was already over by 4 May, but the fighting was heavy; in one day the Fengtian artillery reportedly fired thousands of rounds at its Zhili target.<sup>366</sup>

Defeated, Zhang Zuolin, the so-called “Tiger of Manchuria,” withdrew from Beijing. Showing his continued opposition to Wu Peifu, he declared Manchuria to be an independent state and returned to Manchuria to rebuild his army. During October 1923, Cao Kun, a senior official with connections to the Beiyang military, became president of the Republic of China, reportedly by bribing members of parliament.

A year later, in 1924, Fengtian allied with Anhui and once again attacked Zhili. This civil war is called the “Second Zhi–Feng War.”<sup>367</sup> Spurred on by a war between Jiangsu and Zhejiang that threatened to strengthen Wu Peifu even more, Zhang Zuolin attacked through the pass at Shanhaiguan, where the Great Wall meets the sea. In response, Beijing quickly declared Zhang a rebel, and Wu Peifu prepared to fight. His army numbered 170,000, and appeared invincible.

The Chinese armies during the 1920s were remarkably well armed and equipped. Wu Peifu, for example, mainly purchased his supplies from Italy, and had enormous quantities of rifles, field-guns, machine-guns, and even airplanes. Zhang bought his military equipment from France, and bragged that he had twenty top-of-the-line aircraft—including two bombers—and artillery so advanced that a team of thirty foreign experts was required to man them. In Shanghai, the warlord Lu Yongxiang was famous for showing off his fleet of twenty armor-plated cars, equipped with three machine-guns apiece.

Zhang’s ultimate goal was to use his base in “Manchuria as a stepping-stone to power in China proper.” According to Arthur Waldron:

To put it another way, China has had two military states or phases: one is coalescence into unity, spurred by military victory and the expectation of more; the other is withdrawal into local base areas, the result of failed attempts at unity. Stated in its most basic form, the challenge facing the various generals who took to the field in the period of disunion in the 1920s was to create the momentum of victory—to shock the military situation from the second phase into the first. Even more than in Europe, then, warfare in China was—and is—a matter of psychology.<sup>368</sup>

This psychological factor was best shown by one of China’s most famous defections. On 30 October 1924, when Wu’s forces were already engaged in fighting, the commander of Zhili’s Third Army, Feng Yuxiang, mutinied and joined forces with Zhang Zuolin.

Leading his troops to Beijing, Feng occupied Beijing on 23 October 1924. After renaming his army the “National People’s Army” (*Guominjun*), and encouraging Guomindang followers to join him in Beijing, Feng removed Cao Kun from the presidency on 2 November 1924. He also finally ousted the last Manchu Emperor—Puyi—from the Forbidden City. Zhang Zuolin was clearly in charge of the new government, and Feng eventually retreated from Beijing, establishing his new military headquarters in Kalgan, Inner Mongolia.

The big winner of the Second Zhi–Feng War was Zhang Zuolin. Under his direction, the three victorious factions—Fengtian, Anhui, and Guominjun—invited Duan Qirui to return to Beijing and take charge of a new government. His new title was to be “Chief Executive,” but he did not control an army of his own. In return, Zhang’s price for assisting the creation of this new government was that Manchuria would become largely independent of Beijing, and thus under his direct control.

For a time it looked as if China might unify peacefully. Duan called a “reunification conference” that included representatives from many of the most important groups in China, including the Guomindang. Sun Zhongshan even traveled from Guangzhou to Beijing to meet with the warlord leaders. However, Sun died unexpectedly of liver cancer on 12 March 1925; as a result, the plan to reunite China failed.

In the last major warlord conflict in northern China prior to the Nationalists’ Northern Expedition to reunify China, the Guominjun attacked Fengtian and, later, its new ally the Zhili Clique. This conflict began on 22 November 1925, as one of Zhang Zuolin’s generals, Guo Songling, mutinied and allied with Feng. Although Feng and Guo did well for the first two to three weeks, the Japanese assisted Zhang by blocking Guo’s direct path to Mukden. As a result, Guo’s army was outflanked and surprised by Zhang’s troops on 23 December 1925, “by a force of cavalry from northern Manchuria, led and stiffened by Japanese soldiers.”<sup>369</sup> Zhang eventually killed Guo and destroyed his army.

At this juncture, Wu Peifu returned and retook control over Hubei Province. He then allied once again with Zhang Zuolin. Overpowered, Feng Yuxiang retreated to his base in northwest China. To end the conflict, Feng even agreed to retire from politics and soon afterward left China to visit his main supporter, the Soviet Union. However, Zhang was not satisfied. In January 1926 he allied with Wu, the commander of the Zhili Clique, and the two attacked the Guominjun. Feng returned from the USSR, and in 1926 he once again forged an alliance with the Guomindang. Following the success of the Guomindang’s “Northern Expedition,” these two groups became the eventual winners of the warlord civil wars.<sup>370</sup>

The wars fought during the warlord period did not directly affect most civilians. However, they were associated with widespread destruction. According to Jack Gray:

These wars were labor-intensive, involving at their height a total of two million men, mostly living off the country. They also involved the arbitrary conscription of just as many civilians, mostly peasants; and passing armies might thus sweep an area clean of able-bodied men. Draught animals and carts too were requisitioned on a vast scale. The increasing use of artillery left ever more widespread devastation. China's simple defenses against flood, needing annual repair and renewal, deteriorated rapidly from neglect and destruction. The period culminated in the famines of 1929, in which the consequences of war played a major role. . . . Finally it was inevitable that militarization of the countryside overturned normal social relationships and inflicted irreversible damage on the structure of traditional society.<sup>371</sup>

In 1926, the Nationalist Army left its southern base and began the task of reunifying China. Although this task was not an easy one, the Guomindang's success was partially attributable to the fact that the northern warlords had gravely weakened their forces and emptied their treasuries with their constant infighting and civil wars. Thus an exhausted China now appeared primed and ready for political reunification.

### **The Guomindang preparations for the Northern Expedition**

The success of the Guomindang's efforts to reunite China was largely due to the Whampoa Military Academy. From its organization in 1924 to the beginning of the Northern Expedition in 1926, Whampoa was the focus of the United Front's military efforts. It was there where many of the Soviet advisers worked, and it was there where many of the future officers of the Nationalist Army were trained. Jiang Jieshi, the first commandant of the academy, was also able to use this power base to take charge of the Nationalist Army. Later, he catapulted himself into supreme power over the Guomindang. Finally, the USSR distributed arms and ammunition mainly through the auspices of the Whampoa Military Academy to the Nationalist Army.

Once the Whampoa Military Academy opened its doors in June 1924, its first cadet corps of about 500 students began to study modern military techniques. The faculty included the Japanese-trained Jiang Jieshi as commandant, Liao Zhongkai as the chief party representative, while Chinese instructors were mainly trained either in Japan, at the Shikan Gakko, or at one of China's elite military schools. According to Edward Dreyer, this Japanese influence had an enormous impact on the Whampoa graduates:

Whampoa was created to produce officers quickly, and the military education given there was a diluted form of the Japanese-derived

curricula of the Yunnan and Paoting Military Academies. . . . This explains the elements of the bushido mentality that found their way into the elite units of the GMD—defending untenable positions to the last man, attacking regardless of losses, obeying orders without question—as the leaders of the Whampoa clique had absorbed the values appropriate to Japanese lieutenants and captains, without the staff procedures and trained staff officers at higher levels that might have directed such spirits more usefully.<sup>372</sup>

While at Whampoa, the students received a rigorous six-month course—later expanded to a year—that included technical training mixed with political indoctrination. Discipline was harsh, and Jiang insisted on the death penalty for officers who ordered a retreat without orders. Of equal importance to the training was the arrival of modern weaponry. On 7 October 1924, the first shipment of 8,000 rifles and 500 rounds of ammunition for each gun arrived at Whampoa.<sup>373</sup> According to one controversial source, Moscow even advanced 3,000,000 rubles for the Whampoa academy's initial operating expenses.<sup>374</sup>

The USSR was crucial to Whampoa's success. The Soviet instructors were under the authority of Galen and included many well-known Bolshevik military experts. Although they were unable to teach the classes themselves because of the language difficulties, the senior Soviet advisers helped develop the course material, while junior Soviet advisers were responsible for "drills, weapon firing, and tactical preparations." One military historian has therefore concluded that "the able advisers and advanced teaching material provided by the Soviet Union together made Whampoa into the best [Chinese] military school of the 1920's."<sup>375</sup>

The first class of 490 officers trained at the Whampoa Military Academy graduated in late 1924. They became the commanding officers of a 3,000-man force called the "Party Army" and later as the "National Revolutionary Army" (*Guomin Geming Jun*). This army soon saw action against the warlord Chen Jiongming and handily defeated his larger but less well-organized army known as the "Merchants' Volunteer Corps." As new officers graduated from Whampoa, the army expanded quickly. On 13 May 1925, the Guomindang's Central Executive Committee made Jiang Jieshi commander of the Nationalist Army. Profiting from the national movement following the 30 May 1925 Sino-British confrontation in Guangzhou—known as the May Thirtieth Incident—the Nationalist Army continued to expand until, by early 1926, it had become "the best-known, best-led, best-trained, and best-equipped fighting force in South China."<sup>376</sup> However, because of its small size, other GMD allies—such as Li Jishen's Guangdong Army, Tan Yankai's Hunan Army, and Li Zongren's Guangxi Army—also played major roles during the upcoming Northern Expedition.

In addition to forming a new army, Sun Zhongshan played an important political role during 1924. In November 1924, the northern warlords Feng

Yuxiang and Zhang Zuolin met in Tianjin and agreed that the Chinese central government should be reorganized under Duan Qirui. Prior to this meeting, the two warlords invited Sun to leave Guangzhou and travel to Beijing to discuss the unification of China. Sun gladly accepted. Sun's visit offered the hope of reunifying China under the Soviet Union's auspices. Moscow considered this mission to the north to be so important that Sun was even reportedly escorted by a Soviet battleship on the Guangzhou–Shanghai leg of his journey.<sup>377</sup>

While in Beijing, Sun fell ill, and he died on 12 March 1925. Sun's death threatened either to end the GMD–CCP alliance or to give the Comintern its long-awaited opportunity to take control of the party it had helped to form. Until 1925, the Guomindang's unity was based mainly on its members' personal loyalty to Sun. Much as had happened with the other warlord cliques, the Guomindang began to collapse following Sun's death. One historian has described the resulting turmoil within the Guomindang in these terms: "It left the Party without authority, a collection of diverse groups seeking power in the state for diverse reasons; a party that continued to function, haltingly, under the banner of Sun Yat-senism—an ideology that meant, not nothing, but almost anything."<sup>378</sup>

Even before Sun's death, however, Wang Jingwei had helped draft Sun Zhongshan's so-called "will" advising the Guomindang to continue cooperation with the Soviet Union. Wang had also taken nominal political control of the Guomindang into his own hands, and with the Comintern's backing he began to purge the Guomindang of anti-Soviet members. In line with this purge, the leader of the CCP, Chen Duxiu, supported a "weeding out" process to eliminate all those who were not "true" Guomindang members. Once these people left the Guomindang, Chen Duxiu predicted that the party would increase in size and that the prestige of the Guomindang within Chinese society would become even greater.<sup>379</sup>

Sun's death dashed the Soviet Union's hopes of immediately reuniting China. However, Moscow did not hesitate at the idea of forming alliances with the warlords, and during March 1925 Borodin opened negotiations with the northern warlord, Feng Yuxiang, in part to counter the growing power of Zhang Zuolin. Lev Karakhan, the Soviet ambassador to China, publicly announced that the Soviet government supported Feng and proclaimed that Feng would become a "pillar of the liberation movement in China." This new alliance threatened Zhang and exerted even greater pressure on him to let the USSR increase its sphere of influence in northern Manchuria unhindered. Thereafter, from the end of April through May 1925, Feng reportedly accepted the help of twenty-nine Soviet military advisers and a total of six million rubles'—worth of munitions from Moscow.<sup>380</sup> Another report lists these munitions as including 15,000 infantry rifles, 9,000 pistols, and 30,000 hand grenades, as well as several Soviet-made armored cars and armored trains.<sup>381</sup>

By the summer of 1925, the Soviet Union had recovered from Sun's death by solidifying the Guomindang's leadership under its pro-Soviet members, and by forging firm contacts with the northern warlord Feng Yuxiang, thought to be a main supporter behind Duan Qirui's government in Beijing. Strategically, the Soviet government had also used Sun's support to negotiate treaties with Beijing that enabled it not only to retain its military position in Outer Mongolia, but also to retake majority control over the Chinese Eastern Railway and to regain many of Imperial Russia's special rights and privileges. Finally, the Whampoa Military Academy had already produced what was arguably the strongest army in southern China.

The USSR's goal was to direct the Guomindang's military and political assets to oppose the other foreign powers in China. During March 1925, Stalin even called for the "marshaling" of proletarian forces in the capitalist countries and the intensification of the struggle in the colonies for "liberation from imperialism."<sup>382</sup> Moscow also portrayed the Guomindang's military and political preparations for a Northern Expedition to unify China as a crucial step in the ongoing Soviet-style Chinese revolution. Jiang Jieshi had other plans however, and soon made his own bid for power.

### **Jiang Jieshi and the Northern Expedition, 1926–27**

The period from Sun Zhongshan's death in 1925 to the beginning of the Northern Expedition in 1926 was characterized by conflict between the Communists and the old-time Guomindang members. Faced with a possible Communist victory, Jiang Jieshi used his position as commander of the Nationalist Army to consolidate his own personal power base. In many ways, Jiang's actions paralleled the other warlords. Most importantly, during spring 1926 Jiang carried out a coup against the Chinese Communists and his Soviet advisers, even placing the Soviets temporarily under house arrest. He tried to reduce the Communists' influence to ensure that China would be reunited under the Guomindang's—as versus the Communists'—power.

Following Sun's death, the Comintern attempted to eliminate the ultra-conservatives from the Nationalist Party. It hoped to gain full control of the national liberation movement. Tensions increased rapidly within the Guomindang, and during March 1926 a misunderstanding over suspicious movements by a Nationalist ship—called the *Zhongshan*—persuaded Jiang to carry out a political coup in Guangzhou that effectively limited the power of the Communists and the Comintern representatives.<sup>383</sup>

On 15 May 1926, the Central Committee of the Guomindang issued new guidelines which the Communists within the Guomindang would have to agree to if they wished to remain within the party. The first of these guidelines demanded that the Communists turn in a roster of their members in the Guomindang and prohibited them from serving in great numbers in governing positions. Point three of these guidelines, in particular, stopped the

unchecked spread of the Communists. It stated: "Without the permission of the Guomindang, members of other parties do not have the right to create their own organizations of any kind."<sup>384</sup>

When the Guomindang adopted these guidelines, it removed many CCP members from important positions. Soviet advisers who opposed Jiang's plans for an immediate Northern Expedition to reunite China, such as Kuybyshev, were also forced to return to the USSR. As a result, the Communists lost much of their influence within the United Front. Certain CCP leaders proposed the complete elimination of the United Front. For example, the leader of the CCP, Chen Duxiu, suggested that the Communists withdraw from the Guomindang. The Comintern rebuked Chen however, and later criticized him for his repeated requests to withdraw from the Guomindang. The Comintern adviser, Voitinsky, also ordered the Communists not to arm themselves, so as not to make Jiang Jieshi more suspicious of the CCP.<sup>385</sup>

On 9 June 1926, the Guomindang government in Guangzhou appointed Jiang Jieshi commander-in-chief over all of the Nationalist forces. Under Jiang's leadership, the Northern Expedition began on 7 July 1926.<sup>386</sup> One author has compared this movement to the Taipings: "The Northern Expedition, reminiscent of the Taiping offensive seventy-five years earlier, set out from Canton in July 1926."<sup>387</sup> The first stage of the Northern Expedition was hugely successful. Within a matter of months the Guomindang controlled most of southern China.

Although the Soviet advisers deserve much credit for the Guomindang's rapid success, F. F. Liu has argued persuasively that: "What actually happened was that the Chinese had begun to apply for themselves the political and military strategies they had assimilated from the Russians." Therefore, although Jiang Jieshi valued highly the advice of his top Soviet military adviser, Liu concludes that "Galen seldom, however, formulated or made any attempt to direct the expedition's course himself."<sup>388</sup>

Jiang's first goal was to defeat Wu Peifu, the chief warlord of the Zhili Clique. With Soviet supplies and the assistance of the Chinese Communists, the Nationalist Army moved northward along three different routes. Two of these later combined to take the city of Changsha. Splitting again into two groups, in September 1926 the westernmost wing reached Wuhan, with Hankou-Wuchang falling dramatically on 10 October 1926, the fifteenth anniversary of the 1911 Wuchang Uprising.

Meanwhile, during the Jiangxi campaign the GMD took Nanchang in November 1926, and the eastern wing took Fuzhou in December 1926. The capture of Nanchang was especially important. According to Edward Dreyer:

The Jiangxi campaign is the high water mark of Chiang Kai-shek's career as a military commander and certainly was decisive for the success of the Northern Expedition. Chiang correctly identified De'an, whose capture cut off the Jiangxi provincial capital of Nanchang from



rail access to the Yangzi, as the key to the campaign and spent lives to take it—some 20,000 casualties in that phase of the campaign alone, and some 100,000 in the rest of the Jiangxi campaign.<sup>389</sup>

For a time, it looked as if the Comintern and its supporters might reap the benefit of Jiang's military success, since the crucial Hanyang Arsenal fell to leftist forces. However, Jiang's victory in Nanchang provided him with his own supplies. From these forward positions the Nationalist Army could assault Nanjing and Shanghai, and they successfully secured these two cities in March 1927. By spring 1927, all of southern China was under the Guomindang's military control.

The Guomindang's political prestige also increased dramatically during March 1927, when the British government agreed to evacuate its Hankou concession and return it to China. When this news spread to Moscow, the students at the Sun Zhongshan University reportedly cried with happiness and "embraced one another with joy and excitement." The students also celebrated the capture of Shanghai, and the Chinese students led thousands of Russian workers in a demonstration through the streets of Moscow to the Comintern building near Red Square. There, Karl Radek addressed the crowd:

Shanghai is now in the hands of the Chinese, but when the revolutionary army marched into Shanghai they could still see the barbed wire set up by the British soldiers! The revolution in China is still in its embryonic stage; the counterrevolutionary forces have not been driven out.<sup>390</sup>

The March 1927 massacre of foreigners (including several Japanese) in Nanjing, however, prompted intervention by British, American, French, Italian, and Japanese warships.<sup>391</sup> On 24 March 1927, naval warships bombarded Nanjing in retaliation. Moscow, ignoring its own aid program to the Guomindang, accused the foreigners of supporting Beijing and called the bombardment of Nanjing "intervention in the internal struggle in China and cannot be considered otherwise than active assistance for the Northerners with a view to giving them the possibility of forcing their way through the encircling Nationalist troops."<sup>392</sup>

With the success of the Northern Expedition, tensions increased between the Communists and the Nationalists. On 7 March, Jiang sent a clear warning to the USSR that it should not try to exert control over the Chinese Revolution. Referring to Sun's pro-Soviet policy, Jiang said: "Our President wanted freedom and equality, and as Soviet Russia was willing to treat us on equal footing, it is natural that we should make her our ally. So long as Russia deals with us in the same spirit, we shall not forsake the pro-Soviet policy."<sup>393</sup> Soon after Jiang made this speech, the so-called "Left" GMD and the Communists consolidated control over the Central Committee. On 13 March



1927, the Central Committee stripped Jiang of his chairmanships of the Political Committee, the Standing Committee, and the Military Council. Jiang's only remaining official post was as military commander of the Expeditionary Forces.

Jiang's dismissal appeared to be a victory for Moscow, as many Chinese Communist members took over top positions within the Guomindang Party. Influential Left Guomindang leaders, such as Sun Fo, Eugene Chen, and T. V. Soong, also gained more power. These actions brought an immediate response, as the Right Guomindang denounced the Central Committee and agitated for discharging Borodin. Meanwhile, Borodin was under strict orders from Stalin not to dissolve the United Front.<sup>394</sup>

Jiang Jieshi's personal power had also rapidly increased during the Northern Expedition. Not only had his troops taken all of southern China, but foreign governments opened negotiations with the Guomindang and had even started to return important concessions to China. Jiang readily accepted the challenge posed by the Comintern and the Communists. Beginning in early April 1927, Jiang Jieshi broke with his Soviet advisers and initiated a purge against the Chinese Communists. Control over the Guomindang and the Northern Expedition was soon completely in Jiang's hands.

### **Jiang Jieshi's anti-Communist coup**

The capture of Shanghai by the Guomindang's National Army on 21 March 1927 was a major victory for the Northern Expedition. On the one hand, the Comintern claimed that its United Front policy was on the verge of creating a new socialist revolution in China. On the other hand, the foreigners'—and especially Great Britain's—position in China seemed to be on the verge of crumbling. Even the prestigious *Westminster Gazette* advised the British government to come to an agreement with the Nationalists at the earliest possible moment. Following the Guomindang occupation of Shanghai, the ever-present tensions between the Left GMD, located in the urban area of Wuhan, and the Right GMD, now stationed in Shanghai, increased. Intraparty conflict seemed inevitable.

The March massacre in Nanjing provoked foreign intervention. This foreign action, in turn, helped precipitate a break between Jiang Jieshi's so-called Right GMD and the coalition of the Left GMD, Soviet advisers, and Communist leaders. Foreign intervention also drove a major wedge between Jiang and the Wuhan government because, as commander of the Nationalist Army, Jiang had promised the western governments that he would punish the Guomindang soldiers who had initiated the massacre in Nanjing. Meanwhile, the Chinese Communists took the opposite view and called for even more radical action.

First, Jiang demanded that the Comintern recall Borodin. In response, the Political Committee in Wuhan stripped Jiang of his last official title as

commander of the expeditionary forces. Ignoring this decision, Jiang issued an order on 5 April to disarm all militia in Shanghai who were not members of the Nationalist Army. This order included many members of the Shanghai Communists.

The massacre in Nanjing also had an important political dimension. The rapid success of the Northern Expedition worried the Beijing warlords, and so splitting the United Front between the Guomindang and the Chinese Communists became their chief goal. Using the massacre as a timely excuse, therefore, Foreign Minister Wellington Gu ordered the arrest of a Soviet Embassy messenger in late March. Beijing then accused the messenger of carrying over forty letters concerning "secret meetings and alleged conspiracy."<sup>395</sup> In order to find more evidence of Soviet involvement in China's domestic affairs, Gu requested that the foreign diplomatic community give him permission to search the Soviet Embassy in the diplomatic quarter.

Dutch Minister Oudendijk, acting on behalf of the diplomatic corps, promptly gave the Beijing government permission to search the Soviet Embassy. The Beijing Municipal Police raided the Embassy on 6 April. They reported the discovery of Soviet dispatches and propaganda materials showing that the Soviet Union planned to undermine the central government's authority in China. Although the Soviet Embassy denounced the raid and Soviet Foreign Minister Maxim Litvinov sent a protest to the Chinese consul in Moscow on 9 April, the translations of the most incriminating Soviet documents had already been published in the foreign and Chinese press.

Copies of Soviet documents outlining plans to eliminate Jiang Jieshi and take control of the Guomindang found their way to Shanghai. On 6 April, Jiang ordered the 2nd and 6th armies to march northward toward Nanjing. It was his intention to consolidate his control over Nanjing, which controlled all traffic along the Yangzi River, and, in so doing, to cut Wuhan off from its Communist allies in Shanghai. In a meeting in Wuhan on 7 April, Borodin recommended that the Left GMD move quickly to Nanjing in order to beat Jiang there. However, Borodin's warning came too late, and Jiang entered Nanjing on 9 April.

On the same day, reports began to circulate that Jiang's troops had taken action against Communists in Shanghai. One report described these events as the "first definite attack on the Communist Party in the Shanghai area."<sup>396</sup> On 12 April, this increased into a full-blown purge as Jiang ordered a coup in Shanghai that resulted in the massacre of thousands of Communists. The Green Gang secret society reportedly played an important role in these events.<sup>397</sup> On 18 April, Jiang Jieshi formally established a new Nationalist government in Nanjing. Thereafter, a general purge of Communists from the ranks of the Guomindang lasted for many months.

With the end of the United Front, Soviet participation in the Northern Expedition also came to an end. On 13 July, the Left GMD and the Chinese Communists split. Faced with arrest and possible imprisonment, the Soviet

military advisers withdrew to the Soviet Union. Borodin left China in late July. Although the Communists made one last effort and staged an uprising at Nanchang on 1 August, it was put down by the Nationalist Army in only three days. Proclaimed as the birth of the Communist People's Liberation Army (PLA), surviving Communists—such as the future leader of the CCP, Mao Zedong—fled to rural areas in South China to escape arrest and execution.

Meanwhile, the Left GMD's separatist government in Wuhan dissolved itself in February 1928; later, Jiang accepted many of its members back into the Guomindang. In order to sponsor the reunification of the various Guomindang factions, Jiang temporarily stepped down as commander-in-chief of the Nationalist Army. On 6 January 1928, however, Jiang resumed this office at the request of the Guomindang leadership. With the Soviet advisers ousted and his former Chinese Communist allies either killed, imprisoned, or in hiding, Jiang took direct control of the 1st Army and once again began the second Northern Expedition in early 1928.

### **The second Northern Expedition, 1928**

The second phase of the Northern Expedition was in many ways more difficult than the first. Although the Nationalist forces numbered approximately 700,000, they opposed a modern army composed of 400,000 troops under Zhang Zuolin and his northern allies. Jiang Jieshi deployed his four armies along an almost 800-mile front, and by so doing attacked northward from both the south and the southwest. Jiang also allied with the northern warlord, Feng Yuxiang, who betrayed his Soviet colleagues in late June 1927, and joined Jiang, reportedly in exchange for "money, weapons, and recognition as GMD chairman of Henan."<sup>398</sup> Later, in February 1928, Jiang reorganized the Nationalist Army, with the Nationalist units being the "1st Army." Feng's troops became the "2nd Army," General Yan Xishan, warlord of Shanxi, commanded the "3rd Army," and the Guangxi warlord Li Zongren led the "4th Army."

Beginning in March 1928, Feng and Yan led their warlord forces against Zhang Zuolin's forces from the west, while the Nationalist Army fought its way north. By 30 April 1928, Jiang's troops had entered Shandong Province. During mid-May, Zhang's troops launched a massive counter-attack, including some 200,000 troops, and pushed back Feng's 2nd Army. However, units from the 1st and 4th armies turned the tide in the Guomindang's favor. A Nationalist victory seemed assured. Rather than risk everything in a single battle against superior forces, Zhang Zuolin ordered his army to withdraw from Beijing.

With the combined Nationalist–Guominjun military force marching on Beijing, Zhang fled to Manchuria. However, Zhang was killed on 4 June 1928 when his train blew up. Responsibility for his death appears to be linked to the Japanese Kwantung Army, which wanted to create a more pro-Japanese

government in Manchuria. Zhang's replacement, his son Zhang Xueliang, opened negotiations with Jiang Jieshi. Zhang Xueliang agreed to accept a position on the State Council of the new National government, founded on 10 October 1928. On 31 December 1928, when Zhang Xueliang further pledged his personal allegiance to the National government and raised the Nationalist flag, the reunification of China was complete.

The Guomindang's unification was in name only, even though "Jiang Jieshi was in a stronger hegemonial position, and the GMD government in 1928 had more widespread political legitimacy, than any Chinese government since 1912." According to Dreyer: "The Northern Expedition had originally been launched with the objective of destroying the northern warlords; at its end the three major northern warlords had been coopted into the ruling military coalition, even though others had been eliminated." By 1929, American estimates of the number of warlord troops in China topped 1.6 million. Later warlord conflicts extended Jiang's power over Feng and Yan, but "he still had no actual control of the northeast, the extreme west, or the southern provinces."<sup>399</sup> This situation encouraged foreign criticism that the Nationalists were simply not capable of consolidating power throughout all of China.

Jiang Jieshi had succeeded in unifying the country only by negotiating agreements with the three strongest northern warlords—Feng Yuxiang, Yan Xishan, and Zhang Xueliang. These agreements with the northern warlords were subject to change. As later chapters will show in greater detail, it would be in northern China that the Nationalist government would first lose its military and political grip over the countryside.

## Conclusions

The Guomindang's reunification of China—on paper if not in fact—ended the more than fifteen years of civil war that had followed the 1911 Revolution and Yuan Shikai's death. With Soviet assistance, Jiang Jieshi successfully launched the Northern Expedition in 1926. By 1927, soon after Jiang succeeded in pushing the foreigners out of their concessions and consolidating his power in Shanghai and Nanjing, he broke with the Soviet Union and purged his Communist allies. Jiang's strategy had much in common with the Manchus' "barbarian management" in both the Taiping and the Boxer conflicts. Jiang retained his alliance with the USSR and the Chinese Communists just long enough to consolidate his power, at which time he broke the alliance and purged his former allies. Beginning the Northern Expedition once again, only this time without Soviet or CCP assistance, Jiang unified China in 1928.

The Soviet Union played a crucial role in China's reunification. Without Soviet assistance it seems highly unlikely that the Nationalists could have built the Whampoa Military Academy and trained the large number of officers necessary to staff the new Nationalist Army. Jiang's personal power base also revolved around the Whampoa Military Academy, as he gained the allegiance

of many of the Nationalist Army's best officers. Finally, Soviet shipments of weapons and ammunition were crucial to the success of the Nationalist Army in the Northern Expedition.

Although Nationalist authors tend to emphasize the importance of the Guomindang Party organization and its nationalist ideology to the unification of China, it was the Nationalist Army that led the way. To a large degree, Jiang's military success merely copied the tactics of former warlord leaders. For example, by forming alliances with, first, Feng Yuxiang and Yan Xishan, and, second, Zhang Xueliang, Jiang orchestrated a political "short cut" when he declared that China was united on 31 December 1928. In fact, Jiang simply initiated a new phase in the warlord period. As before, Nanjing had little choice but to placate the various regional powers in order to seek their support and active cooperation.

The best example of the lack of national unity was the Nationalist Army. Although Nanjing announced with great fanfare in March 1929 that a single national army would be formed, and insisted that the regional warlords give up command of their troops, the warlords refused to cooperate. There was nothing, short of war, that Nanjing could do to force the warlords to give up their power. As a result, Jiang failed to achieve his goal of forming a single national army.

Nanjing's military weakness also allowed the continued growth and expansion of the CCP, which later became an important regional power and a major competitor for power in China. Without a strong central army, the Nanjing government proved to be too weak to resolve China's other international and domestic problems. Most important among these, of course, were the continued imperialist expansion of the USSR and Japan into northern China.

Sun Zhongshan's military and political legacy is a profound one. On the one hand, his creation of an opposition government in Guangzhou helped to divide China along north-south lines. On the other hand, his 1923 alliance with the Soviet Union—and the timely arrival of Soviet funds, munitions, and military advisers to train the Nationalist Army—were essential elements in the Guomindang's successful campaign to reunite China. In the end, Jiang Jieshi carried out Sun's dream of creating a Nationalist Army capable of reunifying most of China.

Sun's 1923 alliance with the USSR was also to have grave political repercussions. With Sun's help, Soviet diplomats in Beijing consolidated Moscow's control over Outer Mongolia, and over the Chinese Eastern Railway and Russian territorial concessions throughout Manchuria.<sup>400</sup> Chapter 11 will discuss how the Guomindang government later tried, and failed, to undo the harm caused by Sun's pro-Soviet actions. In May 1929, China even went to war with the USSR in order to regain control over the Chinese Eastern Railway. The USSR's victory prompted Japan to intervene actively in Manchuria to oppose further Soviet expansion. Thereafter, both the ongoing

Soviet–Japanese struggle, and the continuing threat posed by the CCP to central China, became crucial factors underlying Japan’s decision to invade China during the 1937 to 1945 Sino–Japanese conflict.

Finally, although the warlord period officially ended in 1928 when Jiang claimed that he had achieved China’s unification, the underlying north–south division and the strong regional tensions remained, which made unification tenuous at best. As later chapters will show in greater detail, domestic opposition, warlordism, and the quest for regional autonomy continued to prevail throughout the entire twentieth century. To a large degree, one of the primary duties of China’s modern army was to fight these ever-present domestic tensions so as to ensure China’s continued union. The PLA’s 1989 crushing of the student protesters in Tiananmen Square was simply the most recent example of this Imperial policy.

## THE SINO-SOVIET CONFLICT IN MANCHURIA

The 1929 Sino-Soviet conflict is perhaps China's least studied and understood war. For China it was an anti-imperialist war, during which both sides—the Soviet Union and the Republic of China—utilized modern weapons, strategy, and tactics. The war began over the ownership of the Chinese Eastern Railway (CER), which the Soviet government had regained control over, first, through its secret diplomacy with Beijing in May 1924, second, by signing an agreement with the Manchurian warlord Zhang Zuolin in September 1924, and third, by concluding, on 20 January 1925, a convention with Japan that renewed Russo-Japanese political and economic relations.

Early Soviet attempts to open official diplomatic relations with Japan had all failed, but with the USSR's success in reclaiming control over the CER, Japan agreed to reinstate the status quo that had existed in Manchuria before World War I. While the 1925 Soviet-Japanese convention promised that all treaties signed before 7 November 1917 should be reviewed by a special joint conference, the revisions were never completed. In addition, it openly reaffirmed the validity of the Portsmouth Peace Treaty of 5 September 1905. Therefore, the Soviet Union and Japan once again tacitly adopted the diplomatic relationship formerly maintained by Tsarist Russia and Japan.

What this meant for China was that Tokyo tacitly acknowledged the USSR's control over northern Manchuria and the CER, while Moscow likewise reaffirmed Japan's control over southern Manchuria and the South Manchurian Railway. Even more dangerous for China was the fact that the Portsmouth Treaty had been part of the turn-of-the-century process of dividing Manchuria into Russian and Japanese spheres of influence, with Russia predominant in northern Manchuria and Japan predominant in southern Manchuria. The two countries had even signed secret treaties in 1907, 1910, 1912, and 1916 clarifying their spheres. The two sides never abolished these former treaties, and so Japan and the Soviet Union in reality agreed to continue respecting their terms.<sup>401</sup> Thus the new Soviet-Japanese convention once again redivided Manchuria into Japanese and Soviet spheres of influence.

Following the Guomindang's 1927 split with the USSR and the Chinese Communist Party, as well as after the 1928 reunification of China under the auspices of the Nationalists, the Nanjing government began the task of renegotiating China's unequal treaties with other nations. The Guomindang quickly signed new treaties with the United States, Great Britain, and Japan. Meanwhile, the Soviet Union ignored numerous Chinese requests to renegotiate the former Sino-Russian treaties. According to one Nationalist account, Jiang Jieshi viewed the Soviet position as "imperialism, a Red imperialism more dangerous than White imperialism because it was more difficult to cope with. . . . the Soviets had no sincere intention of handing over the Chinese Eastern Railway to China; they were even attempting to tighten their hold on the railway."<sup>402</sup>

In May 1929, the Nationalist government took matters into its own hands and tried to limit Soviet control over the Chinese Eastern Railway. When the USSR resisted, the Nanjing government authorized a raid on the Soviet Consulate in Harbin in order to exert pressure on Moscow to come to the negotiating table. This tactic failed, and instead of returning the CER to China, the Soviet government increased its military preparedness along the Sino-Soviet border. The number of border incidents increased in frequency, and during fall 1929, fighting broke out between Soviet and Chinese forces.

Although the Chinese troops greatly outnumbered the Red Army, the Chinese were quickly routed. The Manchurian government in Mukden, and later the Nanjing government, sued for peace. Instead of resulting in the abolition of the unequal Sino-Soviet treaties, therefore, the Chinese defeat in the 1929 Sino-Soviet War strengthened the USSR's standing throughout Manchuria. This situation, in turn, forced the Japanese military to adopt a more active policy in Manchuria to oppose the threat of continued Soviet expansion.

### **The origins of the Sino-Soviet War**

Beginning in March 1929, China tried to open negotiations with the Soviet Union to revise the joint management of the Chinese Eastern Railway to make it more equal. After Moscow refused, during May 1929, Nanjing threatened to use force to regain control over the Chinese Eastern Railway, even demanding that Moscow sell the railway to China as it had promised to do in 1924. Moscow still would not agree, thus spurring Nanjing into authorizing a raid on the Soviet Consulate in Harbin. This was almost an exact repeat of a similar raid on the Soviet Embassy in Beijing during 1927 that had led to the end of the United Front and the break in diplomatic relations between China and the USSR. Similarly, using captured documents from the Soviet Consulate, the Chinese accused the Soviet Union of sponsoring Communist propaganda and revolutionary actions in China. Worsening Sino-Soviet tensions quickly led to an undeclared state of war.



Soon after founding the Nationalist government in Nanjing in 1928, China began to demand treaty revisions from the Soviet Union. Although Nanjing's actions seemed to take Moscow by surprise, from spring 1929 the Politburo began receiving ominous reports from Harbin indicating that Zhang Xueliang was threatening to seize the CER.<sup>403</sup> Moscow generally discounted these reports however, and was apparently convinced that its 1925 agreement with Japan would guarantee the immunity of the Soviet sphere of interest in Manchuria. In fact, according to one controversial source, Foreign Minister Maxim Litvinov thought that while Zhang Xueliang might require a "sharp rap over the knuckles" to keep him from being unruly, or else "military action would become unavoidable," the Soviet government did not have to worry about Japan siding with China, since the "Japanese will [not] interfere. . . . We have divided Manchuria into spheres of influence since the days of the Motono-Izvolsky Convention."<sup>404</sup>

The Nanjing government based its demand that the USSR return the Chinese Eastern Railway directly on the Sino-Soviet treaty of 31 May 1924, which stated that negotiations would be opened leading to its return. Article Six in this treaty allowed Nanjing to use force, since it stated that neither party could resort to propaganda. On 27 May 1929, Chinese police raided the Soviet Consulate in Harbin, in response to "reliable reports that a propaganda conference of the Third International (Comintern) was to be held at the local Soviet Consulate between 12 noon and 3 P.M. that day." As a result, thirty-nine suspects were arrested and taken to the local police headquarters for interrogation. The head of the Soviet Consulate in Harbin, Melnikoff, and forty-two members of his staff remained in the consulate building under house arrest. Meanwhile, Kuznetzoff, the Soviet consul-general in Manchuria, was escorted back to the main consulate in Mukden.<sup>405</sup>

A Chinese declaration, based on interrogations of the arrested suspects and documents seized at the Soviet consulate, stated that the Chinese government had proof that the USSR intended to carry out "its secret plans to nullify China's unification, to overthrow the Chinese Government, to organize secret forces for destroying the Chinese Eastern Railway and to carry out a policy of wholesale assassinations and thereby bring about a world wide revolution." According to the declaration, these Soviet actions were not new, but had been going on for some time:

The documents and evidence[s] found recently in the Soviet consulate at Harbin establish the further fact that important Soviet officials of the Chinese Eastern Railway are important . . . for conduction of such propaganda. Under the umbrage of their special status as railway employees and relying upon the support of the labor unions to tighten their hold upon the said railway, they have conspired to obstruct the smooth working of the Chinese Eastern Railway and sacrifice its true interests, as well as endanger the safety of China.

The Chinese also claimed that these documents showed that the Chinese Eastern Railway and the other Soviet state enterprises in Manchuria “were being utilized as the base for carrying out the nefarious schemes of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics.”<sup>406</sup>

The Chinese accusations were based solely on the Soviet documents. The Soviet government quickly denied responsibility and claimed that the documents were forgeries. However, according to Robert North:

To contrive this vast quantity of doctrinaire and highly specialized material would have constituted a project of considerable intricacy and magnitude, however, and it is doubtful whether staffs capable of such an undertaking were available in China at this time. It is conceivable, of course, that individual documents have been altered here and there to make the Communist position look worse than it actually was, but the vast bulk of material seems to bear the imprint of Communist authenticity.

If one takes for granted that these documents were valid, then they did in fact suggest that the Soviet Union conducted policies aimed “against the Nanjing government.”<sup>407</sup>

On 10 July 1929, Nanjing took direct action against the administrative offices of the Chinese Eastern Railway by dissolving its labor union and closing the associated offices of the Soviet Far Eastern National Trading Bureau, the Soviet Far Eastern Petroleum Bureau, the Soviet Mercantile Shipping Bureau, and the Soviet Central Commercial Federation. Both the Soviet manager and assistant manager of the railway, in addition to sixty Communist leaders of the labor union, were dismissed from their posts and escorted to the Sino-Soviet border to be expelled from Manchuria.<sup>408</sup> In their place, the formerly token Chinese assistant manager, Wan Jiguang, became acting manager and took control of all aspects of the railway management.

The Soviet government protested China’s action on 13 July, and gave the Mukden government and the National government of the Chinese Republic three days to respond. If they did not do so, Moscow would “be compelled to resort to other means to defend the legal rights of the USSR.” Thereafter, on 17 July, the Soviet government effectively broke off relations with Nanjing by recalling from China “all Soviet diplomatic, consular, and commercial representatives” and “all persons appointed by the Soviet government to the CER.” They also suspended “all railway communication between China and the USSR” and invited the “diplomatic and consular representatives of the Chinese government in the USSR to leave Soviet territory immediately.”<sup>409</sup> China followed suit on 20 July 1929.

Soon afterward, on 6 August, Moscow authorized funds to organize a Special Far Eastern Army to oppose China’s action. This force was commanded by General Vasili K. Blyuker—Galen—the Comintern adviser largely

responsible for organizing and training the Nationalist Army. Finally, in preparation for conducting military operations in Manchuria, the Central Executive Committee and the Council of People's Commissars officially broke diplomatic relations with the Republic of China on 16 August 1929.

Concern over the possibility of war with China grew rapidly inside Russia. The resulting "war scare" meant that internal security concerns intensified, especially in areas near the Sino-Soviet border. For example, it was announced that sixteen people were executed in the Far East during July for being "White guards." Later, on 11 September 1929, *Pravda* reported that a group of women protesting against agricultural collectivization yelled: "The Chinese have seized half of Siberia, the Bolsheviks will soon be finished, the Soviet government is bringing back serfdom."<sup>410</sup>

The Comintern also reacted to the Sino-Soviet crisis over the Chinese Eastern Railway. The stage was soon set for open military conflict between the Soviet Union and China. When the Tenth Plenum of the Comintern's executive committee met in July 1929, Molotov predicted that the entire world was in the midst of a growing international crisis. The intensification of the class struggle would result in a new revolutionary wave, he stated, but in the short term the Soviet Union once again faced the daunting prospect of international war.<sup>411</sup>

On 26 October, the Comintern began to demand a more active policy from the Chinese Communists. They even called for increased CCP preparations to take advantage of China's "national crisis," and to forestall "adventurous anti-Soviet policy regarding the Chinese Eastern Railway affair." The Comintern further informed the Chinese Communists that:

It is necessary to utilize in every way the warlord war which has already begun in order to develop further the independent mass revolutionary movement. . . . The slogans "transform militarist war into class, civil war" and "overthrow the power of the bourgeois landlord bloc" should become the basic current slogans of the Party . . . [and the Party must] strengthen and extend guerrilla warfare, especially in . . . Manchuria. . . . Avoiding a recurrence of the *putschist* mistakes, which on the whole have already been overcome, the Party must encourage and accentuate class conflicts in every way . . . transforming the revolutionary struggle to an even higher stage of development.

The Chinese Communists' resolutions supported the Soviet Union's position in the conflict in Manchuria. The CCP's leading slogan became "defend the Soviet Union."<sup>412</sup>

### The 1929 Sino-Soviet War

The Sino-Soviet War was short, but intense. On the Soviet side, the Special Far Eastern Red Army consisted of 100,000 troops, supported by tanks and

aircraft. On the Chinese side, Zhang Xueliang could deploy 60,000 men—including several White Russian detachments—and the Nationalist Army stood ready to support him. Although the Chinese had the advantage when it came to an in-depth knowledge of the terrain, short supply lines, and potentially an inexhaustible source of manpower, the Soviet troops had better training, more advanced weaponry, and could more efficiently use their tank corps and air cover. For these reasons, the fighting in Manchuria was largely one-sided, and the Chinese sustained huge territorial losses and enormous casualties.

As tensions increased in Manchuria, the Politburo met to discuss their military options. Blyuker's forces were stationed in the Siberian city of Chita, not far from the Sino-Soviet border. He reassured the Soviet leadership that the Red Army could easily destroy the Chinese troops. Molotov and Stalin cautioned against open conflict, however, for fear that Japan would oppose any movement of Soviet troops into Manchuria. Evidently they changed their minds when the Soviet consul-general in Tokyo spoke with a Japanese industrialist, Suzuki, who promised that Japan would not interfere as long as the Soviet troops did not move further than fifty miles east of the town of Hailar.

With Japan's continued neutrality assured, the USSR made the first military move. On 12 August, the Red Army attacked Chinese territory and took control of several strategic towns along the Sino-Soviet border. The fighting was particularly fierce near Manzhouli, Blagoveschensk, Pogranichnaya, Suifengho, and Chailainor. On 17 August, a reported "10,000 Soviet troops with thirty field pieces and machine guns crossed the border and attacked the Chinese positions."<sup>413</sup>

Faced with this Soviet incursion, Zhang Xueliang mobilized his troops on 15 August. General Zhang Zuoxiang did not arrive at Harbin to direct defensive measures until 22 August, and so the Soviets had ample time to occupy the town of Mishan on 23 August and Wangjing on 28 August. During September, the number of border incidents increased. On 7 September, Soviet aircraft crossed the Sino-Soviet border and bombed the railway town of Suifengho. The Soviet government claimed that this attack was in retaliation for China harassing Soviet shipping along the Amur River.

On 10 October, the anniversaries of both the 1911 Chinese Revolution and the founding of the Nanjing government, mines that the Chinese had set afloat in the Sungari River appeared on the Amur River, threatening Soviet shipping. The following day, Chinese forces near Lahasusu—close to where the Sungari joins the Amur—fired at Soviet ships and military emplacements north of the river.

On 12 October, the Red Army counter-attacked by invading the Amur town of Dongjiang. According to one source, the Soviet forces that occupied this town included "nine gunboats, eighteen planes, and more than 3000 infantry and calvarymen."<sup>414</sup> On 13 October, Soviet troops routed the Chinese

garrison at Lahasusu. They forced the Chinese to retreat about thirty miles up the Sungari, to the town of Fujin, which subsequently fell to Soviet troops on 1 November.<sup>415</sup>

In mid-November, General Blyuker led a Red Army force into western Manchuria and attacked approximately 40,000 Chinese troops defending the Chinese Eastern Railway. Fighting began far to the west on 17 November as the Soviet troops attacked Chalainor, a railway town about twenty miles southeast of Manzhouli. About 7,000 Chinese defenders faced three divisions of infantry equipped with modern tanks, airplanes, and guns, but only about 1,000 Chinese escaped unharmed from this encounter.

After taking Chalainor, the Soviet forces, which now surrounded Manzhouli, took this strategic town. In the process they killed General Liang Zhongjia, the commander of the Chinese defensive forces. They also took 8,000 prisoners from the 17th Heilongjiang Brigade, widely considered to be one of China's best units.<sup>416</sup> Civilian losses, in terms of lives and property, were also considerable.<sup>417</sup> Taking advantage of their speed, tactical superiority, and use of air power to shatter Chinese morale, the Soviet troops rapidly occupied the town of Hailar on 27 November.

There were also very important domestic components to the Sino-Soviet War. After Zhang Xueliang seized control over the Chinese Eastern Railway, the Chinese Communists were forced to make a decision whether or not to support the USSR. As a result of this international crisis, the Comintern began to demand a more active revolutionary policy from the Chinese Communists. In essence, the CCP was being ordered to create a diversion that would force Jiang to withdraw his troops from Manchuria. As mentioned above, the Comintern furthermore called for increased preparations to take advantage of China's deep national crisis, and to halt adventurous anti-Soviet policy regarding the Chinese Eastern Railway.<sup>418</sup>

Continued conflict between the Nationalists' government and the Soviet Union seemed likely, and the leader of the CCP, Li Lisan, began to formulate a new, more active line during December 1929. On 7 December, Li Lisan called for stepped-up activities in both urban and rural areas and for the organization of Red Army units to use force to take the cities: "The former strategy of avoiding to take important cities must be changed . . . we must attack important cities and even occupy them. . . . The Red Army's execution of this strategy must be coordinated with the nationwide workers', peasants', and soldiers' struggle to bring closer the great revolutionary tide."<sup>419</sup> These tactics were later called the Li Lisan line, and represented a sharp departure from the CCP's former policies because it advocated a period of increased revolutionary militancy in China's urban areas.

Chen Duxiu, the former head of the CCP, attacked the CCP's revolutionary policies. Chen realized that the CCP was being asked to sacrifice itself to support the USSR's imperialist policies in Manchuria. He even accused Li Lisan and the Central Committee of adding weight to the Guomindang's

accusations that the Communists were merely tools of Moscow. Chen's resistance to the new Comintern line was supported by many of the Chinese Communists and caused a rift within the party. The CCP leadership attempted to purge the Trotskyites. However, in May 1930, an article in *Communist International* admitted about the anti-Chen Duxiu's movement: "It is necessary to say, that if the struggle against Chen Duxiu and Trotskyism has met with success in the higher and middle party organs, that within the cells they still have not been carried through."<sup>420</sup>

The domestic impact of the war in the USSR was also great, as the government attempted to secure Siberia and the Far East from attack by increasing the speed of agricultural collectivization. For example, in June 1929, the target for collectivization was a total of 8 million hectares of collectivized land by 1930. By August, however, Mikoyan spoke of 10 million hectares, in September Gosplan estimated 13 million, and then it later revised this number to 15.2 million in October and November. Finally, in December 1929 *Sovnarkom* decided to collectivize 30 million hectares of peasant land and to create state farms on 3.7 million hectares of state land, much of this in the Far East.<sup>421</sup>

However, by late December 1929, the movement to collectivize surpassed even these target figures, as the Politburo called for a "great leap forward." To help solidify Soviet power throughout rural areas in the Far East, authorities in the eastern regions reported enormous increases: in the second half of 1929, collectivization in Buryat Mongolia had risen from 1.2 percent the year before to 5.7 percent, in Bashkiria it went from 1.4 percent to 5.5 percent, while in Kazakhstan the increase was from 1.8 percent in 1928 to 5.3 percent in 1929.<sup>422</sup>

On 4 December 1929, Soviet Foreign Minister Litvinov reported to the Central Executive Committee that the ongoing conflict with China was one of the most important problems in the Soviet Union's foreign policy. He called the USSR's diplomatic relations with China over the previous "few years" one of "unilateral and systematic violation of agreements entered into voluntarily, or raids, of arbitrary expropriations" and of brutal treatment of Soviet officials in China. The Nanjing government could take such actions only because of widespread anti-Soviet hostility internationally. In Manchuria, the Special Far Eastern Army had repeatedly resisted Chinese provocations, which had led the army into taking action, but only of a "purely defensive character" to defend and guarantee "the security of the population living on the border."<sup>423</sup>

### Sino-Soviet wartime negotiations

From the end of August through November 1929, the Soviet government tried to negotiate a return to the status quo in its relations with the Nationalist government. Nanjing originally proposed a four-point joint declaration to end

hostilities that not only called for the USSR to sell the CER to China, but also to select a new temporary manager and a new assistant manager. Nanjing also proposed the immediate release of all prisoners arrested by either party during or after 1 May 1929. On 29 August 1929 the Soviet government officially responded to China's proposal. Moscow agreed to hold an official Sino-Soviet conference to "settle the conditions for the redemption of the CER in accordance with article 9 of the (1924) Beijing Agreement." However, instead of agreeing to China's proposal to appoint new managers jointly, the Soviet version called for China to accept "immediately" those candidates that the Soviet government proposed.<sup>424</sup>

Sino-Soviet negotiations remained stalled during the first period of military conflict. On 9 September, the Nanjing government sent a declaration through the German Consulate informing the USSR that it wanted to convene a conference to discuss ways to resolve the Sino-Soviet conflict. The Chinese now agreed to allow the Soviet government to recommend an assistant manager for the Chinese Eastern Railway, who would then be "immediately" appointed by the railway's board of directors. But they refused to consider appointing either a new manager or assistant manager as a prerequisite to this conference. Nanjing was not eager to hold talks in Moscow, and instead suggested that Berlin was a more appropriate venue.<sup>425</sup>

Although both sides agreed to hold a conference, they reached deadlock over which country had the power to appoint a new Soviet manager and assistant manager. The Chinese insisted that new officials replace the two former Soviet candidates, while the Soviet government was equally insistent that the previous officials be allowed to return to their posts. The real conflict was over "face," and neither government wanted to be the first to back down.

With Nanjing unconvinced, Moscow turned its attention to the regional government in Mukden, Manchuria, and attempted to open negotiations directly with it. On 22 November 1929, the Soviet government transmitted the following three conditions to Mukden:

1. Official consent by Chinese side to restoration of situation on Chinese Eastern Railway existing prior to conflict on the basis of the 1924 Beijing and Mukden Agreements.
2. Immediate reinstatement of the manager and assistant manager of the Railway recommended by the Soviet side in accordance with the 1924 Beijing and Mukden Agreements.
3. Immediate release of all Soviet citizens arrested in connection with the conflict.<sup>426</sup>

Most notable among these three conditions was that it did not mention the possible sale of the railway to China, which was Nanjing's main objective in



the war. Instead, the Soviet proposals specified that conditions should be restored to the former status quo.

On 26 November 1929, the Mukden government broke with Nanjing and independently agreed to the procedure set forward by the Soviet government; not only was this a return to the Soviet Union's 'divide and conquer' diplomatic tactics of 1924, but it reconfirmed the internal weakness of the Nationalist government. Foreign Minister Litvinov telegraphed Mukden on November 29, expressing his expectation that the manager and assistant manager be reinstated immediately and that the Nanjing government transmit its "official confirmation" of this fact.<sup>427</sup> Only after the Soviet managers were already reinstated, therefore, did Litvinov propose that a Chinese representative meet with Simanovsky at Khabarovsk in order to discuss the technical questions relating to points one and three, as well as to settle the question of when and where an official Sino-Soviet conference should take place.

Nanjing opposed the USSR's direct negotiations with Manchuria. On 3 December 1929 Nanjing's Foreign Minister, C. T. Wang, even sent a note to the Japanese Charge d'Affaires asking for Japan's assistance.<sup>428</sup> He accused Moscow of using force to resolve the dispute, a clear violation of the Kellogg-Briand Pact renouncing war. Wang described the Soviet policy as "waging undeclared but actual war on China," and went on to describe how the Soviet "armed invasion" of Manchuria had resulted in the occupation of the cities of Manzhouli and Chailainor. The Soviet victory had even pushed Mukden into breaking with Nanjing, which divided China once more.<sup>429</sup>

Clearly, the Nanjing government now hoped to use Japan to retaliate against the USSR. The dangers inherent in this official invitation were extreme, since it would soon prove easier to invite Japan to intervene in Manchuria against the USSR than to force Japan to return Chinese territory once the USSR was defeated. Although Nanjing turned next to the League of Nations and to the United States to pressure Japan to withdraw, this policy proved to be ineffectual. As a result, the argument can be made that the origins of the so-called Manchurian Incident and the later Sino-Japanese War lie largely with Nanjing's failed diplomatic policy of playing Japan and the Soviet Union off against each other.

A new round of negotiations soon began between Moscow and Mukden. In mid-December 1929, the *Japan Advertiser* claimed that a draft agreement had been reached. In a pattern that exactly followed the 1924 Beijing and Mukden treaties, this reported treaty agreed that a formal Sino-Soviet conference would meet within a month after the agreement was signed and that within six months all outstanding points would be decided. Later resolutions agreed that while the Soviet government would pick new men to fill the posts of manager and assistant manager, Emshanov and Eismont could still be reappointed by the Soviet government to fill other vacant posts on the railway. Finally, both governments promised to run the railway on the "principle of reciprocity and equality," to release their prisoners, not permit political



activities, restore consulates and commerce, and withdraw their troops back to their original positions along the Sino–Soviet border. In addition, a joint committee would investigate and determine losses claimed by each party.<sup>430</sup>

When the final version of this treaty was announced a week later, even the pretense of fixing a six-month time limit was dropped, although an official Sino–Soviet conference was scheduled to convene in Moscow on 25 January 1930; this was almost the fifth anniversary of the 1925 Soviet–Japanese convention, perhaps a warning from Moscow that Tokyo should not attempt to interfere. Unlike the draft treaty of the week before, the new treaty eliminated all reassurances that the railway would be run as an equal joint venture, specifying instead: “Restoration of the former proportion of offices held by Soviet and Chinese citizens,” including the reinstatement of “Soviet citizens, officers, chiefs and assistant chiefs of departments.” Since Soviet citizens had formerly filled 70 percent of the top positions with the railway, this agreement merely returned to this unequal relationship. Furthermore, although the Soviet Union had formally agreed to abolish extraterritoriality rights in 1924, this new treaty reasserted that its consulates in Manchuria would enjoy “full inviolability and all privileges to which international law and custom entitled them.”<sup>431</sup>

With its back to the wall, on 22 December 1929 the Nanjing government signed a similarly worded protocol at Khabarovsk. This protocol stipulated the following nine conditions:

1. Restoration of the situation existing before the conflict.
2. Release of Chinese citizens and Soviet citizens arrested in connection with the conflict.
3. Granting to the dismissed Soviet employees of the railway the right and opportunity to return to their former posts.
4. Chinese authorities to disarm and deport the Russian White Guard detachments.
5. Immediate restoration of Soviet consulates in Manchuria and of Chinese consulates in the Soviet Far East, with all due privileges under international law and custom.
6. Resumption of normal operations of all Soviet economic institutions in Manchuria, and of Chinese commercial enterprises in the USSR under preconflict conditions.
7. The Sino–Soviet conference for the settlement of all disputed questions to open in Moscow on January 25, 1930.
8. Immediate restoration of peace along the frontiers of China and of the USSR, to be followed by withdrawal of troops by both sides.
9. The present protocol to be effective at the moment of its signature.

Later, the Sino-Soviet conference was delayed until October 1930. After twenty meetings, nothing was resolved prior to the Japanese invasion of Manchuria in September 1931.<sup>432</sup>

The Sino-Soviet Khabarovsk agreement acknowledged that the USSR had won the war, and thereby enhanced "Russian prestige and influence in Manchuria."<sup>433</sup> It immediately released all Soviet citizens arrested by the Chinese authorities after 1 May 1929, and also released all Chinese soldiers, officers, and nationals held by the USSR.<sup>434</sup> However, eight months of Sino-Soviet negotiations in Moscow proved fruitless, since China insisted on discussing only the sale of the Chinese Eastern Railway while the Soviet Union insisted on a wider agenda.<sup>435</sup> As a result, negotiations quickly reached deadlock.

### **The aftermath of the Sino-Soviet War**

Outgunned and outflanked, the Nationalist government had little choice but to sign the Khabarovsk Protocol. For all practical purposes, this agreement guaranteed the Soviet Union the right to retain its sphere of interest in northern Manchuria. The possibility of future conflict between the Nationalist government and the Soviet Union seemed likely, and the Comintern continued to urge the leaders of the Chinese Communist Party to formulate a new, more active, revolutionary policy in December 1929. The Soviet government also stressed the development of Siberia in the next five-year plan in order to build up the Soviet infrastructure in the Far East. Finally, Japan, concerned that it might lose its economic holdings in southern Manchuria, was pressured into challenging the Soviet government for control of all of Manchuria.

The Sino-Soviet War produced unforeseen consequences inside China. Specifically, the Chinese Communist Party adopted a harder line. On 7 December 1929, Li Lisan called for stepped-up activities in both urban and rural areas and ordered the organization of People's Liberation Army units to use force to take power in the cities. Chen Duxiu, the former head of the CCP, attacked Li Lisan's proposal, as well as most of the CCP's other policies since his own demotion in 1927. As a result, Chen was expelled from the party on 15 December 1929.

As tensions in Manchuria increased, the Soviet leaders did all that they could to solidify domestic support. For example, Stalin accelerated the USSR's efforts to rid itself of the New Economic Policy and to collectivize agriculture. Stalin's decisions were not only intended to further his economic policy of "Socialism in One Country," but, what is more important, they were an attempt by the Soviet government to strengthen internal security in the face of a possible expansion of the war in Asia. Therefore, in a speech on 27 December 1929, Stalin announced the newest target of completely "liquidating the kulaks as a class."<sup>436</sup> With this call to action, all kulaks listed under category one—some 52,000 families—were immediately eligible to be deported to Siberia or to other distant regions. Alexander Solzhenitsyn has estimated that

during collectivization the Soviet government sent at least five million peasants to camps in Siberia and the Arctic.<sup>437</sup> Stalin desperately needed these settlers to prop up the USSR's internal security in Siberia.

Meanwhile, although Sino-Soviet negotiations were progressing slowly in Moscow, the Sino-Soviet War completely undermined the trade system that the Soviet Union had spent so long building in the Far East. For example, China's trade with the Soviet Union had continued to increase during the 1920s. Between 1924 and 1930, Soviet exports to China more than tripled, from 31 million rubles to 99 million rubles, while beginning in 1930, China's total trade with the USSR stagnated and began to drop.<sup>438</sup>

The Sino-Soviet conflict also disrupted internal trade in Manchuria and threatened Japan's economic holdings in southern Manchuria. Soviet-Japanese competition to ship grain throughout Manchuria was particularly intense, because the Soviet-managed Chinese Eastern Railway slashed its freight charges and gave "secret rebates" to large customers in an attempt to put the Japanese-managed South Manchurian Railway out of business.

As a result of these practices, during January 1928 thousands of railway cars full of grain stood unattended at the Ussuri docks, because the Soviet export company—Dalgostorg—suddenly raised prices and tried to force international shippers to buy the Soviet grain at a loss. As reported by the *Japan Advertiser* on 28 January 1928: "Competition for the supremacy of the Dairen and Vladivostok routes for export of Manchurian grain and produce has been one of long standing between the South Manchuria and the Chinese Eastern Railway."<sup>439</sup>

During Soviet-Japanese negotiations, which lasted from 1927 to 1929, the two sides reached several agreements. One of these stated that 45 percent of the grain in Manchuria would be shipped by the Soviet concerns, while Japanese companies would ship 55 percent. This agreement in fact clarified the USSR's and Japan's mutual economic spheres of influence in Manchuria.

All former Soviet-Japanese agreements were threatened by the Sino-Soviet negotiations. A possible breakthrough in the Sino-Soviet talks was announced during June 1931, when it was reported that Soviet and Chinese diplomats had decided that China would be able to purchase the CER by allowing Soviet goods into Manchuria duty-free. If adopted, this solution would mean that no money would have to change hands in return for China gaining control over the CER. This would be a boon for the cash-strapped Nanjing government, while the Soviets would now be able to undersell the higher quality Japanese goods. As one newspaper noted: "This agreement, if it is completed, will probably arouse protests from the principal trading nations, particularly Japan. But its inventors believe the formula is air-tight, and that protests will be ineffective."<sup>440</sup>

The reported June 1931 Sino-Soviet agreement, assuming that Tokyo had let it go into effect, would have given the USSR an unparalleled opportunity to wipe out its Japanese competitors, since they would still be forced to pay

Chinese duties. The terms of this agreement also threatened to violate all earlier Soviet-Japanese economic agreements, which had divided the grain trade throughout Manchuria largely in Japan's favor. Instead of merely protesting, therefore, the Japanese military proceeded to take control of all of Manchuria. As a result of the Manchurian Incident, Japan consolidated control throughout much of Manchuria during the winter of 1931 to 1932, and later created a Japanese puppet state called Manchukuo.

Nanjing immediately turned to the League of Nations for help against Japan. During March 1932, the head of the League's investigating commission, Lord Lytton, criticized the Chinese for their role in exacerbating the seriousness of the Manchurian crisis. Specifically, he warned them that "it is not possible for any nation to cultivate hatred and hostility toward other countries and then expect the League of Nations to step in and save it from the consequences of that attitude."<sup>441</sup> Although the League later condemned Tokyo for invading China and creating Manchukuo, it could not force Japan to withdraw.

Since the major western nations refused to intervene to help China, Nanjing had little choice but to turn back to the Soviet Union for assistance. Following the resumption of relations between Moscow and Beijing during December 1932, one American newspaper even reported: "By her conquest of Manchuria, Japan has driven China into the arms of Russia." It further warned:

Divided by Civil War, its central provinces in the hands of the Communists, the authority of its government extending weakly only over the northern and central provinces, China is in no condition to prevent gradual spread of Russian influence until she may ultimately be dominated by Russia.<sup>442</sup>

Stanley K. Hornbeck, chief of the Division of Far Eastern Affairs, U.S. Department of State, had warned of the serious dangers inherent in destabilizing Manchuria. During an address to the Williamstown Institute of Politics on 27 August 1929, Hornbeck discussed how the Chinese police raid of the Soviet Consulate, the closing of the Soviet trade organizations, and the discharge of all Russian heads of departments on the railway had precipitated a situation full of "gravity and potential danger." Reflecting back on the Russo-Japanese War of 1904 to 1905, Hornbeck aptly warned:

Concerning the Chinese Eastern Railway it needs to be remembered that physically and economically it is not an independent railway unit: it is a link in the one and only direct railway route from Europe, across Siberia, to the Asiatic ports of the Pacific Ocean. . . . One war has already been fought because of [the railway]—a war very expensive to the two belligerents [Russia and Japan] and to the country upon whose soil it was fought.<sup>443</sup>

Hornbeck's warning was little short of prophetic, and once China proved too weak to defend the CER in the 1929 Sino-Soviet war, Japan felt justified in stepping in to take China's place. After pushing the USSR out of northern Manchuria and forming its puppet state of Manchukuo, Tokyo and Moscow opened negotiations on selling the Chinese Eastern Railway. Negotiations were completed on 23 March 1935, and Manchukuo agreed to pay 140 million yen for the railway. Moscow's decision to sell the CER to Tokyo proved crucial to Japan's efforts to consolidate control throughout Manchuria. By the middle of the 1930s, therefore, the Soviet Union and Japan once again delimited their spheres of influence in China, only this time with Japan gaining virtually full control throughout Manchuria.

### Conclusions

The Soviet government regained control over the Chinese Eastern Railway in 1924 to 1925 by signing a series of secret treaties with Beijing, Mukden, and Japan. Thereafter, the USSR proved willing to go to war with China in 1929 to retain control over the CER. Japan was careful to remain neutral during this conflict—in 1925, Tokyo had tacitly acknowledged the USSR's control over northern Manchuria and the CER in return for Moscow reaffirming Japan's control over southern Manchuria and the South Manchurian Railway. Outmaneuvered and outgunned, the Nationalist government in Nanjing was forced to back down and sign the Khabarovsk Protocol on 22 December 1929, which guaranteed the Soviet Union's continuing rights over its sphere of interest in northern Manchuria.

Instead of abolishing the unequal Sino-Soviet treaties, as Nanjing had hoped to do, the Chinese defeat in 1929 greatly strengthened the USSR's position in Manchuria. This, in turn, forced Nanjing to appeal to Tokyo to increase its efforts to oppose Moscow's expansion into China. Nanjing's request was granted, but with consequences that were not altogether to China's liking. For example, when it looked as if Sino-Soviet negotiations might allow China to purchase the CER in return for allowing Soviet goods into Manchuria duty-free, Japan's army took control of all of Manchuria and created the puppet state of Manchukuo.

As will be discussed in greater detail in Chapter 12, throughout the rest of the 1930s the Soviet-Japanese struggle to divide and conquer China continued unabated. Perhaps unwittingly, Nanjing helped precipitate this struggle when it requested in 1929 that Tokyo provide assistance in ousting Moscow. When Tokyo did not immediately respond, Nanjing turned back to Moscow and appeared to be engaged in exploiting classic "barbarian management" techniques by actively helping the Soviet Union to undermine Japan's position in Manchuria even further. At this stage Tokyo was forced to intervene.

Later, following its 1937 invasion of central China, Tokyo publicly stated that its actions were necessary to oppose similar Soviet expansion into Xinjiang

and northwestern China. In fact, Tokyo portrayed this entire era as if it were an early Cold War confrontation of the West versus communism. Of particular value to the post-World War II spread of communism throughout Asia, which the United States failed to halt, Japan was already claiming in the mid-1930s that its military invasion of China was Asia's final defense against the onslaught of Soviet-style communism.

Although the Nationalists denounced as propaganda all such Japanese claims during the 1930s, it is important to note that they changed their tune after they fled to Taiwan in 1949. In fact, the Nationalist government adopted Japan's explanation almost verbatim and claimed it as its own. In particular, Hu Shih, the Nationalist Ambassador to the United States from 1945 to 1949, acknowledged in 1950 that unlike in Europe the Cold War conflict in Asia had already lasted well over twenty years. Repeating Tokyo's arguments almost word for word, Hu Shih accused the Soviet Union of resorting "to the most cunning forms of secret diplomacy in order to overcome the resistance that Nationalist China had been able to summon for over two decades."<sup>44</sup>

## THE SINO-JAPANESE CONFLICT

It would take many volumes to cover in detail the 1937–45 Sino-Japanese conflict, so at best this chapter can only outline some of the most basic military and diplomatic factors.<sup>445</sup> This war was really three conflicts in one.<sup>446</sup> The first phase was an anti-imperialist war, as the Nationalists temporarily ended their repression of the Chinese Communists in order to unite in opposition to Japan. The second phase was a civil war, as the 1941 entry of the U.S. into World War II allowed the Nationalists to turn their attention once again to opposing the CCP. Finally, the third phase was similar to earlier examples of barbarian management, as the Nationalists manipulated their diplomatic policies with the U.S.A., and later the USSR, to defeat Japan. In the aftermath of this victory, the Nationalist-Communist civil war erupted anew over control of the resource-rich Manchuria.

This chapter will first examine the increasing Soviet-Japanese tensions unleashed by the USSR's 1929 victory in the Sino-Soviet War. China's defeat led to Japan's invasion of Manchuria in 1931–32, which Tokyo claimed was necessary to halt further Soviet expansion in northern and western China. By the mid-1930s, the USSR and Japan once again delimited their respective spheres of influence in China, with Moscow retaining control over Outer Mongolia and Tokyo gaining Manchuria; the USSR's 1935 sale of the Chinese Eastern Railway helped Japan consolidate control over all of Manchuria.

During the early 1930s, Jiang half-heartedly opposed Japan's encroachments. He concentrated mainly on a total of five unsuccessful campaigns to exterminate the Communists. Jiang's reasoning was that whereas communism was a "disease of the heart," Japan's aggression was a less dangerous "disease of the skin." That Jiang was basically correct in his analysis was shown in 1941, when Zhou Enlai told Soviet General Chuikov that "the CCP and its armed strength, rather than Japan, was Chiang Kai-shek's major enemy."<sup>447</sup> However, in December 1936, the warlord Zhang Xueliang kidnapped Jiang outside Xi'an and pressured him into allying with the Communists. This event, known as the "Xi'an Incident," led to the 1937 creation of the so-called "second" GMD-CCP United Front directed against Japan.

The Sino-Soviet United Front exacerbated Sino-Japanese tensions. The first phase of the Sino-Japanese conflict was the Nationalists' retreat following the Marco Polo Bridge Incident of 7 July 1937, as tensions escalated into war and Japanese troops occupied most of northern China. Beginning on 14 August 1937, fighting also erupted in Shanghai. Although Jiang's best troops, the German-trained 87th and 88th divisions, held off the Japanese for three months, the Japanese conducted an amphibious landing south of Shanghai in early November and outflanked the Nationalist Army. With the road westward open, the Japanese occupied Nanjing in mid-December 1937, forcing Jiang to flee to Chongqing, and on 21 October 1938 Japanese troops took Guangzhou. On 25 October 1938 they took Wuhan, completing Japan's domination of eastern and central China.

The second phase of the Sino-Japanese conflict includes the Nationalists' and Communists' resistance movements against Japan, as well as their own civil conflict. After Jiang retreated to Chongqing his troops opposed the Japanese invasion, but fear of the Chinese Communists tempered Jiang's offensive. Increasing GMD-CCP friction culminated in the "New 4th Army Incident" in January 1941, when the Communist-led Fourth Army refused to obey orders from Chongqing. During a week of fighting, an estimated 3,000 Communist troops perished. By the end of 1943, Jiang diverted his best troops away from fighting Japan to blockade the Communists in northwest China.

The third phase of the Sino-Japanese conflict examines the United States' and the Soviet Union's entry into World War II. Only after the U.S. joined the war in 1941, followed by the USSR in 1945, did the Nationalist resistance begin to have a significant impact against Japan. Following Japan's surrender in August 1945, the Soviet Union moved into China. By means of the February 1945 Yalta Treaty and August 1945 Sino-Soviet Treaty, Stalin took full control over Outer Mongolia and much of Manchuria, in return for his soon forgotten promise not to support the CCP against the GMD. Jiang's policy of "barbarian management" failed, since after the end of the war Soviet-controlled Manchuria was the base from which the Chinese Communists fought their way to power.

### **The origins of the Sino-Japanese War, 1931-36**

The origins of the Sino-Japanese War can be traced to China's own military weakness. Following the success of the 1926-27 Northern Expedition, and the 1928 reunification of China under the Nanjing government, Jiang Jieshi tried and failed to regain control over the remaining Soviet concessions in Manchuria and, most importantly, the Chinese Eastern Railway.<sup>448</sup> China's defeat in the 1929 Sino-Soviet War subsequently led to negotiations in Moscow that appeared to be giving the Soviet Union even greater power throughout northern Manchuria. At the same time a series of Nationalist campaigns to



destroy the Chinese Communists failed, which made the Japanese concerned that the Communists might eventually win political power in China. These events spurred Japan into invading Manchuria in 1931 and creating the puppet state of Manchukuo.<sup>449</sup>

On 18 September 1931, in the so-called Mukden Incident, Japanese troops used an explosion on the South Manchuria Railway south of Mukden as a pretext to invade.<sup>450</sup> Within a matter of days, Japanese troops took Mukden and Changchun.<sup>451</sup> According to Japan, the background to this conflict was China's ongoing attempt to reclaim lands in Manchuria under Japanese control: "To the end of nullifying the agreement as to the question of land lease in Manchuria, the Chinese authorities have issued laws whereby any one leasing land to a Japanese may be declared as punishable by death, and no mortgage held by a Japanese subject is to receive official recognition." Japan also claimed these Chinese efforts included suppressing trade, and stated that in "open violation of the [Sino-Japanese] treaties, the governors of provinces have been ordered to stop trading in Japanese goods."<sup>452</sup> Warming Sino-Soviet relations was also a major factor.

Meanwhile, the Nanjing government had other pressing domestic problems to deal with. Following its 1927 break with the Soviet Union and its anti-Communist purge, the Guomindang continued its efforts to destroy the Chinese Communists, who had concentrated their forces under the rebel leaders Mao Zedong and Zhu De in the southern province of Jiangxi. During the course of four major "bandit suppression campaigns," beginning in December 1930 and lasting until 1932, the Guomindang failed to push the Communists from their rural base and exterminate them. The possibility of the Chinese Communists coming to power in China greatly concerned Tokyo.

As mentioned above, during 1929 the Nanjing government requested Japan's help against the USSR. This is significant because on 15 September 1931, three days before the Mukden incident, Jiang Jieshi ordered the bulk of his northeastern forces to leave Mukden. Once the Japanese military action began, Jiang refused to let the Chinese army fight. According to one view, Jiang felt that he could not afford to fight an international war that might weaken his government's opposition to the internal threat of Communist expansion; in fact, at this same time the Chinese Communists orchestrated a series of student demonstrations in Beijing, Nanjing, and Shanghai.<sup>453</sup> A second plausible explanation is that Jiang retreated on purpose, with the hope that Japan would oust the Soviet Union from Manchuria. Once the USSR was gone, then Jiang hoped he could cut a deal with Japan.

During the next five months, Japanese Kwantung Army troops quickly overran and occupied Manchuria, meeting only sporadic resistance from the acting governor-general of Heilongjiang Province, General Ma Zhanshan. The first major battle between the Kwantung Army and Ma was over control of the railway bridge spanning the Nonni River in northern Manchuria. The battle of the Nonni took place on 4–6 November 1931. Following Japan's

victory, General Ma retreated and fortified the town of Angangchi, just a few miles to the north, with about 7,000 infantry, 3,000 cavalry, and twenty artillery pieces. The Japanese forces included four battalions on the right wing, four on the left, and artillery.

The Battle of Angangchi began on 17 November and continued through 19 November. The Kwantung Army carefully coordinated its artillery, air force, and infantry:

At six-thirty, our artillery commenced firing to find the range, and at eight started bombardment which was kept up for about an hour, during which time our air forces, in cooperation with the artillery, bombed the enemy's position. As our artillery range was extended, the first line of our infantry started the attack at about nine. Hand to hand fights took place at several points. Unable to stand our furious onslaught any longer, the enemy began to retire along the whole front at about ten-thirty, fleeing along the Taonan-Angangchi railway on both sides of it.

With General Ma routed, the Kwantung Army turned its attention to Zhang Xueliang. By late December, Zhang had ordered his troops south of the Great Wall, thus giving up his hold over Manchuria without a fight. Beginning in January 1932, the Japanese campaign succeeded in taking Harbin, which gave Japan control over the Soviet headquarters of the Chinese Eastern Railway. All told, Japanese casualties in the Manchurian conflict were 253 dead and 761 wounded.<sup>454</sup>

On 28 January 1932, Japanese troops also engaged in fighting with Chinese troops from the Guomindang's 19th Route Army in Shanghai. Both sides blamed the other for initiating this conflict. The Japanese reaction was to authorize bombing of the Chinese district of Chapei, where the incident had occurred. Committing three divisions to the battle, the Japanese met stiff resistance from the 19th Route Army, as well as later from Nanjing's modern 5th Army.

After a month of fighting, the Chinese forces retreated. Nanjing, fearing a Japanese advance on the capital city, quickly retreated to the inland city of Loyang. Fighting ended in March and, prompted by a League of Nations resolution calling for a cease-fire, the two sides signed an armistice on 5 May 1932. According to the terms of this agreement, Chinese troops withdrew from Shanghai and they agreed to create a neutral zone around the city, while the Japanese returned to their pre-28 January positions.

Most historians have accepted Jiang's 1928 reunification of China as real, and so have portrayed Japan's invasion of China as a simple policy of anti-Chinese aggression. This interpretation ignores, however, that Nanjing's power in northern Manchuria was virtually non-existent, and that the Soviet Union's authority was unchallenged. Therefore, Tokyo's invasion of

Manchuria really opposed Moscow more than Nanjing. In fact, Japan succeeded where China had failed, successfully pushing the USSR out of northern Manchuria, as well as taking effective control over the Chinese Eastern Railway. On 9 March 1932, Japan created the puppet state of Manchukuo, and placed the last Qing Emperor, Puyi, in charge as the figurehead chief executive. During August 1932, Japan formally recognized Manchukuo as an independent country.

The United States, along with most other European countries, did not recognize Manchukuo. On 7 January 1932, Washington announced the “Nonrecognition Doctrine,” which stated that the U.S. would not recognize any new situation in China created as the result of war.<sup>455</sup> Meanwhile, when the League of Nations convened to discuss the Lytton Report, the Japanese delegate argued that Japan’s “duty” was to “help China,” and he warned that otherwise a Communist-led “Red China” might ally with the Soviet Union against the West.<sup>456</sup> In the end, the League of Nations adopted the Lytton Report in February 1933, condemning Japan’s action. The only tangible effect was that Japan left the League.

Beginning in January 1933, the Japanese advanced into Rehe (Jehol) Province. By April, they had consolidated control over northeast China. Japanese troops next proceeded to clear out all Chinese forces immediately south of the Great Wall, and during May 1933 they moved into Hebei Province. Japanese troops were well organized and equipped, and they sowed confusion among the Chinese by transmitting false radio orders and flying fighter planes low over the cities. The Chinese sued for peace at Tanggu, outside Tianjin.

On 31 May 1933, China and Japan signed a truce that turned all of eastern Hebei into a demilitarized zone, and left Tianjin and Peiping (Beijing) undefended. The link between Japan’s invasion and the USSR was emphasized in the dating of the truce, which was exactly nine years to the day after the signing of the 1924 Sino–Soviet treaty that had returned the CER to Moscow’s control; perhaps this was Tokyo’s not-so-subtle response to Moscow scheduling the 1930 Sino–Soviet conference on 25 January. Thereafter, Puyi was enthroned as Manchukuo’s monarch on 1 March 1934, and the boundaries of Manchukuo incorporated most of China’s four northeastern provinces. Under intense pressure from Japan, but “in the teeth of Chinese opposition,” the USSR sold the CER to Japan and Manchukuo in 1935.<sup>457</sup>

The creation of Manchukuo did not end Japan’s expansion. During 1935, it created three puppet states in northern China opposite Soviet-controlled Mongolia. The first was the East Hebei Autonomous government, the second was the Hebei–Chahar political council, and the third included the Inner Mongolian government under Prince De. As Sheridan has commented: “With such a substantial beginning, the complete severance of north China by Japan seemed just a matter of time.”<sup>458</sup> Nanjing disputed these losses, and on 24 November 1936 successfully ousted Prince De. According to Dreyer, “this victory of Chinese troops over Japanese surrogates provoked demonstrations

of nationalism and created a feeling among many Chinese that China could challenge Japan successfully. This feeling contributed to the Xi'an Incident that began on 7 December 1936."<sup>459</sup>

### **The Xi'an Incident and the second United Front**

Beginning in 1935, the Chinese Communists, after relocating in northwest China in the "Long March," once again proposed forming a "United Front" with the Guomindang. This appeared to many to be an exact repeat of the Communists' unsuccessful tactics during the 1920s. In December 1936, Zhang Xueliang, the former warlord of Manchuria who had been ousted by the Japanese, kidnapped Jiang Jieshi and held him prisoner. He pressured Jiang during his brief captivity to ally with the Communists in exchange for his safe release. Jiang did not sign a formal agreement, but he did give his word that the Guomindang would cooperate with the Communists. On 25 December 1936, Jiang returned to Nanjing with Zhang Xueliang, who was immediately placed under house arrest. Soon after the Xi'an Incident, talks opened between the Communists and the Guomindang, and they established a second United Front aimed at repelling Japanese aggression.

During 1933, the Guomindang began its fifth, and final, anti-Communist campaign. Coordinated with the help of Jiang's German advisers—most notably the military strategist General Hans von Seeckt—the GMD finally forced the Chinese Communists from their base in southern China. With a combined force of sixty divisions—700,000 men—the Nationalist troops began in October 1933 to encircle gradually the Communist-controlled areas, building pillboxes and fortresses as they advanced in order to establish a blockade.

Unable to repeat their former success with guerrilla warfare, the Communists had little choice but to defend their bases using positional warfare; according to one Comintern adviser, Mao vocally advocated guerrilla tactics but "could not explain how mobile warfare was to be achieved in view of the enemy's blockhouse technique."<sup>460</sup> On the point of utter destruction, and with comparatively little manpower left at its disposal, the Revolutionary Military Council ordered the survivors to break out of the siege and flee to China's northwest. Called the "Long March," this movement began on 15 October 1934, as approximately 85,000 troops and 15,000 Communist officials—including a handful of women cadre—broke through the Nationalist lines. By 10 November 1934, the remaining 6,000 Communist defenders—plus some 20,000 wounded—were defeated, and the rebellion in Jiangxi ended.<sup>461</sup>

During 1934 and 1935, the surviving Communist forces fled approximately 6,000 miles westward through Guizhou, Yunnan, and Xizang provinces, and then northward through Sichuan and Gansu provinces, until they reached their new base at Yan'an, in Shaanxi Province. In January 1935, at a Politburo Conference in the town of Zunyi, Mao Zedong became a member of the

Politburo Standing Committee, and by the end of the Long March in October 1935 Mao had become one of the main leaders of the Communists.<sup>462</sup> The Chinese Communists' success in relocating to northwest China not only removed them from close contact with Nationalist forces, but it placed them in closer proximity to the Soviet Union. Safe from attack from the Nationalist Army, the Chinese Communist Party now proposed uniting with Jiang Jieshi to oppose Japan.<sup>463</sup>

At this time, Jiang resisted all offers of an alliance, explaining that while Japan was an "external" disease, the Communists were an "internal" disease; he argued that China must first eradicate the internal disease before it could face the external threat. In addition, beginning in the early 1930s, Jiang had arranged for German military advisers to come to China to train his army.<sup>464</sup> It was his goal to rebuild the Nationalist Army and create a professional army with modern equipment and western strategic training. Striking the Japanese before his army was ready would surely lead to their destruction. To promote his ideas and to open a new and more vigorous campaign against the Communists, Jiang flew to Xi'an, located in the heart of Shaanxi Province not far from the Chinese Communist base in Yan'an. Jiang hoped to convince Zhang Xueliang to fight the Communists. If he refused, Jiang planned to dismantle his forces. Zhang, on his part, had been shifting closer and closer to supporting a new "United Front" with the Communists.

Jiang arrived in Xi'an on 4 December 1936. In a series of meetings with Zhang and the warlord Yang Hucheng, who controlled the heavily pro-United Front Northwest Army, he ordered them to initiate a sixth campaign to destroy the Communists. When it looked as if Zhang was unwilling to comply, Jiang Jieshi relieved him of his post as commander of the "Bandit Suppression Headquarters," and ordered General Jiang Dingwen to replace him. He made this decision on 10 December, and scheduled the announcement of a new order to resume the anti-Communist campaign for 12 December. Devoid of power and with his back to the wall, Zhang kidnapped Jiang—in what some have described as a *coup d'état*—to force Jiang to accept the United Front.<sup>465</sup>

Early during the morning of 12 December 1936, a select group from Zhang Xueliang's personal bodyguard surrounded Jiang Jieshi's temporary residence outside Xi'an. During the resulting skirmish, Jiang was able to crawl out of a window and escape up Lishan mountain, taking refuge in a small cleft in the hillside. Within a matter of hours, Zhang's men found him and brought him back as a prisoner. Although certain parties in China hoped for Jiang's execution, Zhang guaranteed Jiang's safety in return for his agreement to meet with the Communists to discuss ways to end the civil war.

Prior to the Communists' arrival in Xi'an on 14 December, Zhang established a new "United Anti-Japanese Command," including the Northeastern Army, the Northwestern Army, and the Communist forces. Zhang became chairman of the Military Commission, and he presented eight demands to

Jiang, including the reorganization of the Nanjing government to include all parties, an immediate end to the civil war, release of party leaders and all political prisoners, a guarantee protecting the right of assembly, freedom to organize a people's patriotic movement, the convocation of a National Salvation Conference, and the "faithful fulfillment of Dr. Sun's will," which really meant the creation of a new alliance between the Soviet Union and China.<sup>466</sup>

During the next two weeks, Jiang's wife and brother-in-law met with a series of Chinese Communist representatives, including the Communists' chief diplomat Zhou Enlai. Although Jiang refused to sign a formal agreement, he did promise to respect the resulting six-point agreement.<sup>467</sup> Lloyd Eastman has concluded that "Jiang Jieshi did make a verbal promise to cease attacking the Communists and to resist the Japanese." As a result of this promise, Jiang's subsequent treatment of the Communists changed radically:

Despite his asseverations that he had made no concessions to his captors, there were no further attacks against the Communists. Indeed, negotiations between Nanjing and the Communists, leading to the formation of a united front, were soon under way. For the first time in a decade, the Chinese seemed to be putting aside their domestic quarrels in order to resist the foreign aggressor.<sup>468</sup>

Jiang Jieshi was released on Christmas Day, 1936, and he quickly returned with Zhang Xueliang to the capital in Nanjing. Jiang immediately ordered Zhang's arrest. Instead of being imprisoned, however, Zhang was put under house arrest. This comparatively light punishment suggests that Jiang's kidnapping may have simply been a face-saving way of reopening GMD-CCP relations; Sun himself had experienced a similar mishap in London in 1896. The immediate effect of this new alliance was that Jiang called off the sixth anti-Communist campaign, and redirected the Nationalist Army against Japan.

In the months following the Xi'an Incident, Nanjing opened talks with Communists on how to implement the new United Front policy. The Chinese Communists promised to abolish the Red Army and reorganize it as a "National Revolutionary Army" under orders from Nanjing's Military Commission. The creation of the Nationalist-Communist alliance exacerbated Sino-Japanese tensions, however, and following Soviet promises to help Nanjing repel Japan, Tokyo authorized further advances into northern China, the occupation of Shanghai, and a campaign to take control of the Yangtze River and its major political and trading centers, such as Nanjing and Wuhan.

Internationally, Japan defended its aggression not as an attack against the Chinese people but as an attempt to halt Soviet expansion. In effect, Tokyo justified its 1937 invasion of central China as necessary to oppose Moscow's parallel efforts in China's western province of Xinjiang, which constituted a direct continuation of Tsarist Russia's expansionist policies in Ili during the 1880s (see Chapter 5). Therefore, following the 1936 creation of the second

“United Front” between the Nationalists and the Communists, Tokyo authorized a full-scale invasion of central China. The July 1937 Marco Polo Bridge Incident initiated a new period of Sino-Japanese conflict.

### **Phase 1: The Sino-Japanese War, 1937–38**

Although many Chinese welcomed the renewal of the United Front strategy, this policy clearly played into the hands of the USSR, which had consistently lost ground to Japan. Beginning in 1931, Moscow was not only pressured to give up the numerous Russian concessions throughout northern Manchuria, but by 1935 it was forced to sell the Chinese Eastern Railway to the Japanese puppet state of Manchukuo. Tokyo did not take the renewal of Sino-Soviet relations lightly, therefore, and beginning with the so-called “Marco Polo Bridge Incident” in July 1937, Japanese troops invaded northern China, quickly securing control over Peiping (formerly Beijing) and Tianjin. When a second front opened in Shanghai during August 1937, the Nanjing government abandoned the capital and fled to the inland city of Chongqing.

In the months following the Xi'an incident, the Chinese Communists agreed not to overthrow the Nanjing government, and promised to disband all soviets and organize democratic governments instead. In a telegram dated 10 February 1937, the Chinese Communists furthermore promised to abolish the Red Army, and to reorganize their military forces into a “National Revolutionary Army.” Most importantly, the Communists agreed to designate these troops as units of the central army and agreed to take orders from the Nanjing government’s Military Commission.<sup>469</sup>

Japan’s reaction to this new alliance was predictable: Tokyo immediately accused Moscow of orchestrating the Xi'an Incident. O. Edmund Clubb has discussed how Foreign Minister Arita Hachiro even warned the Chinese ambassador in Tokyo that if Nanjing accepted Zhang Xueliang’s demands the Japanese government “could not maintain the position of an unconcerned onlooker.”<sup>470</sup> Perhaps Jiang thought this was a bluff, but as Tokyo had warned, the creation of the second United Front led to new Japanese military advances.

Most historians agree that the Japanese government was eager for a new provocation to begin its invasion of coastal China. The Marco Polo Bridge Incident (in Chinese sources, Lugouqiao) conveniently provided this provocation.<sup>471</sup> During early July 1937, the Japanese garrison near Peiping began to conduct field exercises, a privilege based on the 1901 Boxer Protocol that allowed foreign troops to be stationed between Tianjin and Beijing. On 7 July 1937, after being fired on by Chinese troops, a Japanese unit reported one of its soldiers missing near the vicinity of Marco Polo Bridge, just south and slightly west of Peiping.

Thinking that the missing man might have been captured by the Chinese, Japanese officers demanded that the nearby town of Wanping be searched. When the local Chinese officers of the 29th Army refused, the Japanese began



to bombard the city and attempted to occupy it. The Chinese successfully repulsed them and counter-attacked the following day. Since the entire Japanese garrison numbered only 10,000—against the Chinese 29th Army of 100,000—the Japanese War Ministry quickly mobilized five divisions, and the Japanese troop strength in northern China soon reached 100,000.

The Nanjing government's response to this situation was uncharacteristically aggressive: on 17 July, Jiang Jieshi declared that China had no choice but to "struggle for national survival" and he called for increased resistance on the part of the Chinese people. However, the Nationalist Army was not prepared to face the Japanese. Strategists in Tokyo predicted that the entire campaign in China would last only three months, but this timing proved to be too optimistic, since the Japanese campaign in fact took sixteen months.<sup>472</sup> As Hsü has commented, the Japanese hoped for a quick victory over China, since "Russia was still the principal enemy in the minds of the General Staff."<sup>473</sup> By contrast, the Soviet leadership was fearful of being drawn into the war, and when one of its representatives in Nanjing intimated that the USSR might ally with China, he was recalled and executed.<sup>474</sup>

By late July, the Japanese troop reinforcements gathered outside Peiping and prepared to attack and take the city. On 27 July, more fighting erupted near the Marco Polo Bridge and Japanese troops consolidated control over both the bridge and the left bank of the river. This encounter led to hostilities throughout northern China. Realizing the futility of fighting, Nanjing ordered the 29th Army to evacuate Peiping on 28 July. Two days later Tianjin also fell. The Japanese continued to push westward and southward, taking Taiyuan in November and Jinan in December 1937.

On 14 August 1937, hostilities also erupted in Shanghai, where the Chinese troops outnumbered the Japanese by a factor of ten to one. Jiang Jieshi initiated this confrontation when he ordered the Chinese Air Force to bomb Japanese warships in Shanghai harbor. This aerial attack proved not only to be ineffectual—most of the bombs missed the Japanese ships and hit local civilian areas instead—but it outraged the Japanese. It also prompted Tokyo to expand its campaign into central China. In Shanghai, Jiang had at his disposal his best troops, the German-trained 87th and 88th divisions; they successfully surrounded and contained the Japanese for three months. Zhang Fakui commanded the Eighth Army. However, the Japanese sent a total of fifteen divisions to China and they succeeded in outflanking the Nationalist forces and opening the road to Nanjing. Casualties during this fighting were high, with the Chinese sustaining 250,000 to Japan's 40,000.<sup>475</sup>

Faced with the inevitability of defeat, Jiang moved his government to Chongqing in Sichuan Province, while he himself continued to command the Nationalist troops from his military headquarters in Wuhan. Jiang also turned to the Soviet Union for help. On 21 August 1937, the Japanese Foreign Ministry received word that the Nanjing government had signed a neutrality pact with the Soviet Union. In addition to the four published sections, there



was reportedly a fifth “extremely secret” section that detailed closer political and military links between Moscow and Nanjing.<sup>476</sup> Although Jiang undoubtedly hoped that this treaty with the USSR would force the Japanese to pause and think twice before resuming their offensive, this hope proved to be misplaced. If anything, Japan’s attack intensified after news of this treaty.

In early November 1937, the Japanese used an amphibious landing at Hangzhou Bay, south of Shanghai, to outflank the Nationalist Army. The Chinese troops retreated, and they were in such a panic that they failed to hold the defenses at Wuxi, which left the road to Nanjing unguarded.<sup>477</sup> With the fall of Nanjing in mid-December 1937—ten years after the Nationalists’ massacre of foreigners in Nanjing—the Japanese troops killed over 200,000 fugitive soldiers and civilians in the infamous “Rape of Nanjing.”<sup>478</sup> Following the occupation of Nanjing, the Japanese forces controlled all traffic along the lower Yangzi River.

Japan’s military actions showed that it considered Jiang’s decision to form closer relations with the Soviet Union to be unacceptable. One of Tokyo’s primary conditions for halting the invasion of China was the breaking off of Sino–Soviet relations and a return to Jiang’s former anti-Communist policies. During 1934 to 1936, Foreign Minister Hirota Koki had formulated Three Principles to avoid war: “(1) suppression of anti-Japanese activities; (2) de facto recognition of Manchukuo and the creation of harmonious relations between that country, Japan and China; and (3) cooperation between China and Japan in the eradication of communism.”<sup>479</sup> That Tokyo’s primary concern was really the spread of communism was shown on 28 December 1937, when the German Ambassador in Peiping transmitted the Japanese conditions for stopping the war against China. Point number one demanded that Jiang abandon his “pro-Communist policy” as well as his “anti-Japanese and anti-Manchukuo policies” and instead “co-operate with Japan and Manchukuo in the execution of their anti-Communist policy.”<sup>480</sup>

By late December 1937, Jiang judged that it was too late to halt the hostilities, and so he refused to negotiate with Japan. Moving north toward Xuzhou, the Japanese met heavy Chinese resistance at Tai’erzhuang during the months of March and April 1938. Lured into a trap, the Japanese sustained heavy casualties—to the order of 30,000—and this encounter was perhaps the most notable of China’s victories during this phase of the war. By mid-May, the Chinese retreated from Xuzhou and in June they broke the dikes along the Yellow River to slow the Japanese advance. While temporarily successful, this strategy destroyed thousands of Chinese villages and created incalculable hardship for the Chinese population throughout northern China; the Yellow River was diverted to the south of the Shandong Peninsula, flooding an estimated 5,000 villages and eleven major cities and impacting the lives of millions of people.

The events that marked the end of the first phase of the Sino–Japanese war were the fall of Guangzhou on 21 October and the fall of Wuhan on

25 October 1938. During the summer of 1938, the Japanese assembled an enormous assault force, composed of tanks, airplanes, and artillery, and during five brutal months they pounded the Hankou area (also called Wuhan, the combined cities of Wuchang, Hanyang, and Hankou). This strategic city—an important Taiping base and the site of the 1911 Revolution—controlled the upper Yangzi River trade, and so had enormous domestic and international trade. Although the Chinese received aid from the USSR, and most importantly air cover from a Russian air base built in Gansu Province, it proved insufficient to change the outcome of the battle.

From January through October 1938, “Hankou was the staging and logistics base for massive counter-attacks and defense of the central Yangzi region by two million Chinese troops against the onslaught of Japanese armor units from the north and east.”<sup>481</sup> The Nationalists put up a stiff resistance, but the Japanese “superiority in artillery, tanks and planes finally enabled them to seize the city on 25 October 1938. Only four days earlier, having met virtually no resistance, they had also taken Canton. Surely, Japanese strategists thought, the Chinese would now capitulate.”<sup>482</sup>

After sustaining an estimated 200,000 casualties and the loss of more than a hundred airplanes, the Japanese controlled virtually all of eastern China. Japan’s victory in China was almost exactly two years to the day after Jiang had agreed at Xi’an to form a second United Front with the Communists. However, contrary to Japan’s expectations, the Nationalists did not capitulate and continued resisting the Japanese from their wartime capital in Chongqing.

## **Phase 2: Nationalist and Communist anti-Japanese resistance**

Throughout 1937 to 1945, the Nationalist and Communist anti-Japanese resistance continued, but was undermined by Soviet-Japanese negotiations dividing China into distinct spheres of influence. As a result of secret Soviet-Japanese negotiations, Moscow agreed not to arm and supply Jiang Jieshi and to muzzle the Chinese Communists’ anti-Japanese activities, and Tokyo in turn promised to leave the CCP in control of three provinces in northwest China. In addition, Moscow claimed it would not interfere when Japan invaded southward into Vietnam and Indonesia, and Tokyo promised to stand aside should the Soviet Union later decide to move into Afghanistan. Finally, as a result of the Soviet-Japanese non-aggression pact, signed in April 1941, Moscow recognized Manchukuo in return for Tokyo’s recognition of the Soviet hold over Outer Mongolia.

Clearly, the adoption of the second United Front policy proved to be a disaster for China. During sixteen months of battle following the Marco Polo Bridge Incident, the Japanese consolidated control throughout all of northern China, most of the Yangzi River basin, and as far south as Guangzhou. The Japanese set up three puppet governments to rule these new pro-Japanese areas: on 27 October 1937, they founded the Mongolian autonomous government

to rule Chahar and Suiyuan provinces; on 14 December 1937, they set up a provisional Chinese government in Peiping to rule Hebei, Henan, Shandong, and with firm links with Chahar and Suiyuan. On 28 March 1938, they formed a government in Nanjing that claimed jurisdiction over Jiangsu, Zhejiang, and Anhui.

Although the Nationalists and Communists continued to fight the Japanese, their inland locations severely limited the transport of weapons, ammunition, and other military supplies. As soon as Jiang re-established his capital in Chongqing, he started to reorganize the Nationalist Army. Chongqing's main link with the outside world was the Burma Road, a 715-mile path cut through the steep mountains and gorges of southwest China. Opened in December 1938, this road allowed supplies to be shipped to China from Rangoon, Burma. In addition to remaining commander-in-chief of the army and air force, Jiang became "director-general" of the Guomindang Party during 1938. This action gave him supreme power over the Nationalist government.

Contrary to Japan's wishes, the Nationalists' forced retreat appeared to strengthen the United Front. During 1937, for example, Nanjing agreed to allow the Chinese Communist Army to be called the 8th Route Army, and during the first three years the Communist forces received money and ammunition from the National government. However, little else changed, as the 8th Route Army continued to garrison the northwestern border regions, which included the former Communist areas. However, Zhou Enlai did become a member of the presidium of the Extraordinary National Congress of the Guomindang. In March 1938, he also became vice-minister of the Political Training Board of the National Military Council, a position he held until 1940.

By the late 1930s, relations between the Guomindang and the Chinese Communist Party began to deteriorate. As one scholar has put it, the Nationalists "had borne the brunt of the Japanese offensive" while the "Communists barely felt the loss of things they had never possessed." Since the Nationalists were too weak to undertake a counter-offensive against the Japanese, it began to restrict the political activities of the Chinese Communists instead.<sup>483</sup> For example, the Guomindang outlawed Communist-sponsored mass organizations. It also criticized the Communists for not allowing the National government to retain direct command over the Communist armies in the field.

There are generally poor reports of the People's Liberation Army's (PLA) effectiveness against Japan during World War II. Even sympathetic accounts of the Chinese Communists suggest that they spent as much, or more time trying to outmaneuver the Nationalists as they did fighting Japan. During 1940, however, the PLA did conduct the "Hundred Regiments Campaign" against Japanese strongholds in northern China, during which they fought an estimated 1,824 engagements. On 20 August 1940, the Communist 8th Route Army "launched its largest sustained offensive of the war against Japanese forces in North China." An estimated 400,000 troops participated in

this campaign. The PLA's victories were negligible, however, while Japanese counter-attacks devastated the Communists' base area, and the 8th Route Army, local forces, and the militia forces reportedly sustained a total of 100,000 casualties versus only about 20,000 Japanese casualties and some 25,000 casualties from Japan's Chinese allies.

The Japanese military attempted to destroy the Communist base areas, as General Okamura Yasuji initiated the "three all" campaign in July 1941—"kill all, loot all, burn all"—that decreased the population of the CCP-held areas from 40,000,000 to 25,000,000 and reduced the 8th Route Army from 400,000 to about 300,000. As Lyman Van Slyke has commented:

The Japanese and their Chinese auxiliaries invested even more than before in the construction of moats, ditches, palisades and block-houses. Japanese sources claimed that by 1942 their forces had built 11,860 km of blockade line and 7,700 fortified posts, mostly in the Hopei plains and foothills of the Taihang mountains. A huge trench ran for 500 km along the west side of the P'ing-Han railway line, with a depopulated and constantly patrolled zone on either side. The 250 Japanese outposts established in southern Hopei by December 1940 were more than quadrupled by mid-1942. These were the principal measures for control over the plains areas, and by the end of 1941 all the Communist bases in such terrain had been reduced to guerrilla status.<sup>484</sup>

Certainly, this "was the most difficult [period] of the entire war for the CCP."<sup>485</sup>

Meanwhile, beginning in 1940, Japan consolidated its position in China by setting up a new Chinese government in Nanjing under Wang Jingwei, formerly a major pro-Soviet GMD leader under Sun Zhongshan.<sup>486</sup> This government quickly unified with the other puppet regimes based in Peiping and Nanjing. In exchange for signing agreements recognizing Manchukuo and granting Japan the right to send troops into China to oppose communism, Japan, Manchukuo, and Japan's European allies—including Germany and Italy—recognized Wang Jingwei's regime.

With its base in China now secure, Japan began to penetrate further into southeast Asia under the aegis of advancing the larger Japanese goal of forming a "Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere." After the fall of France, the Vichy government accepted several Japanese demands in August 1940, including that they cut off all aid through French Indochina to the Chinese resistance and that Japan be allowed to use air bases in Indochina. In September, Japanese troops moved into northern Indochina, and Tokyo soon called on the British to close the Burma Road, which had been in constant use shipping military supplies to Jiang's Chongqing regime.

It was during this period that Japan and the Soviet Union opened negotiations to determine once again their respective spheres of interest in Asia.

Military clashes at Zhanggufeng in 1938,<sup>487</sup> and then at Nomonhan in 1939,<sup>488</sup> were considered Soviet victories. Soon afterward, Tokyo and Moscow decided to negotiate a non-aggression treaty. In the midst of these secret negotiations in Moscow, Soviet officials expressed their willingness to forgo support for the Chinese Nationalists. Top secret documents from the Japanese Foreign Ministry archives in Tokyo reveal that on 3 October 1940, Soviet and Japanese diplomats also agreed that: “The USSR will abandon its active support for Jiang [Jieshi’s regime] and will repress the Chinese Communist Party’s anti-Japanese activities; in exchange, Japan recognizes and accepts that the Chinese Communist Party will retain as a base the three [Chinese] northwest provinces (Shaanxi, Gansu, Ningxia).”<sup>489</sup>

These negotiations further guaranteed Japan’s continued advance south into Indochina, in return for Tokyo’s acquiescence to future Soviet actions in Afghanistan. Although these points were not published in the final treaty, they appear to have been tacitly adopted when the USSR and Japan signed a non-aggression treaty on 13 April 1941.<sup>490</sup> In addition to the main text, a secret protocol announced that Outer Mongolia and Manchukuo would continue negotiations on their mutual borders; by means of this protocol the USSR and Japan recognized each other’s puppet states. Backed by these Soviet guarantees, Tokyo authorized continued southward expansion in July 1941, and soon occupied Indochina. From this position, Japanese troops made further advances into southeast Asia, a rich source of rubber, tin, oil, quinine, lumber, foodstuffs, and other raw materials.

Meanwhile, increasing GMD–CCP friction culminated in the “New 4th Army Incident” of January 1941, when Nationalist and Communist armies clashed. The New 4th Army was stationed in Jiangxi Province. During December 1940, Jiang had ordered it to move north and cross the Yangzi River. After the New 4th Army resisted Jiang’s orders, the Nationalist forces attacked. In a week of fighting in early January 1941, there were an estimated 3,000 Communist casualties in addition to many prisoners. Although the Nationalists ordered the New 4th Army to disband and arrested its commander, the Chinese Communists ignored this order and placed a new Communist commander in charge.

The New 4th Army Incident did not terminate the United Front, but it did increase tension. Relations between the GMD and CCP became progressively worse. Talks resumed during March 1943, but soon broke down again. One major reason was the Communist demand that they be allowed to expand their military force to four armies, including twelve divisions. By the end of 1943, Zhou Enlai had left Chongqing, and Jiang soon ordered his best troops to northwest China to blockade the Communists. This uneasy stalemate continued through May 1944, at which time a final series of discussions opened in Xi’an between representatives of the Guomindang and the Chinese Communist Party.

### Phase 3: China and the United States

Following its 1941 non-aggression treaty with Japan, Soviet support for China ended. However, with the United States' entry into the Pacific War in late 1941, American military advisers, weapons, and ammunition became more abundant. Jiang's forces were still hesitant to fight Japan, since any outright defeat might throw the balance of power toward the Communists. This situation created tension between Jiang and his American military adviser, Joseph Stilwell, who argued that Jiang should end his embargo of the Communist areas and allow the Communists to fight the Japanese. At Jiang's insistence, Washington relieved Stilwell of his command in October 1944, and replaced him with Albert Wedemeyer. One of China's most notable successes was the construction of B-29 air bases east of Chongqing. On 15 June 1944, a B-29 raid flying from a base near Guilin signaled a new phase of the war when it struck Japan's southern island of Kyushu.

Japan's full-scale invasion of China led to increased U.S.-Japanese tensions, best exemplified by the December 1937 *Panay* crisis.<sup>491</sup> In September 1940, President Roosevelt imposed an embargo on American exports of scrap iron and steel to Japan, and in March 1941 China began to receive aid through the Lend-Lease program. Thereafter, during July 1941, Roosevelt froze all Japanese assets in the United States, an action that virtually ended American-Japanese trade and deprived Japan of vital oil imports.

Japanese-American tensions were high, but it took the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor to finally put an end to American isolationism. On 6 September 1941, an Imperial conference met in Tokyo to consider Japan's worsening relations with the United States. While Emperor Hirohito and Prime Minister Konoe favored a continuation of negotiations, the War Minister, General Tojo Hideki, believed that the United States' economic policies would eventually throttle Japan. He argued that since war with the United States was inevitable, it would be preferable to begin the conflict sooner rather than later.

On 16 October, Tojo formed a new cabinet, but talks between Secretary of State Cordell Hull and Japanese emissaries remained stalled. American cryptographers had broken Japan's major diplomatic code, and Washington officials suspected that Japan's rejection of their minimum demands could lead to war. Even so, on 26 November, Hull formally reiterated the American position by insisting that Japan must withdraw from China and Indochina, recognize Jiang Jieshi's National government, renounce territorial expansion, and accept the Open Door policy of equal commercial access to China.

Unwilling to accept these conditions, an Imperial conference met on 1 December to set the Japanese war machine in motion. Interestingly, the Japanese attack fleet gathered in the Kuril Islands, right across from Soviet-controlled Sakhalin Island. There is little doubt that Soviet officials observed this fleet assembling, and perhaps even received Japanese assurances that it was

not directed against Siberia. Moscow apparently did not attempt to warn Washington of the impending attack. Considering that the USSR was even then receiving Lend–Lease aid from the United States, this oversight hints of Stalin’s future intentions to use the Pacific War to further Soviet expansionism. It also helps explain why Stalin was so determined at Yalta to obtain the Kuril Islands—the staging ground for Japan’s successful attack against the United States—in return for entering the Pacific War.

Following the surprise attack on Pearl Harbor on 7 December 1941, the Battle of Midway and United States’ “island hopping” campaign beginning in 1943 brought some relief to the Chinese front. In particular, Lend–Lease aid rose from \$26 million before Pearl Harbor to a total of \$1.3 billion by the end of the war; American credit to China was also increased, reaching \$500 million. Although China continued to resist Japan, both the Guomindang and the Chinese Communists conducted mainly defensive actions and awaited American troops to defeat the Japanese military. In accordance with ancient Chinese practices, one “barbarian”—the United States—could be used to defeat another “barbarian”—Japan—while the Chinese forces sat idle on the sidelines.

One of the most controversial American generals of World War II, Joseph Warren Stilwell, also known as “Vinegar Joe,” was appointed chief-of-staff to Generalissimo Jiang and commander of the Chinese Expeditionary Army in the China–Burma–India theater. Following the British defeat throughout south-east Asia, the Japanese also defeated Stilwell’s troops during the First Burma Campaign in 1942. With the remnants of his forces, he made his way through difficult terrain to India; the Allies finally retook Burma in the Second Burma Campaign of 1944–45.<sup>492</sup>

Stilwell’s loss in the Burma Campaign did not endear him to Jiang Jieshi, since the defeat meant either the destruction or abandonment of much of the heavy equipment retained by his German-trained 5th and 6th armies. Not only were these two armies essential to Jiang’s own personal power base in Chongqing, but they included one-third of his strategic reserves.<sup>493</sup> Conflict over military policy between Jiang and Stilwell was sharp. Their differences centered on Stilwell’s belief that Jiang should adopt a more offensive policy and end the embargo of the Communist areas by allowing the PLA to fight the Japanese. At any one time, Jiang had 400,000 of his best troops blockading the Communists instead of fighting the Japanese.

Jiang had other plans and apparently expected the Americans to defeat Japan single-handedly. This policy was perhaps best exemplified in June 1942, when sufficient American aid failed to arrive as promised. Staging a “spectacular explosion,” Jiang delivered “Three Demands” to Stilwell and threatened to sign a separate peace with Japan if they were not fulfilled. In fact, Guomindang officials “were proud of their diplomatic skill in playing on American nerves” and reportedly remained in touch with Japanese officials in Shanghai so as to “excite fears in Washington.” According to Stilwell’s diaries, Jiang’s personal



“antagonism” was in fact based on Jiang’s “annoyance at being pushed into action and goaded to reform.”<sup>494</sup>

With the beginning of a new Japanese offensive in 1944 that threatened Chongqing, Stilwell brought this matter to a head by insisting that he be given unrestricted command over the joint American–Chinese forces. In response, Jiang petitioned Roosevelt directly. Jiang agreed to accept an American commander, but refused to work any further with Stilwell. Roosevelt relieved Stilwell of his command on 19 October 1944, replacing him with Lieutenant General Albert C. Wedemeyer, who proved to be more conciliatory.

Another important American military adviser in China was Claire Lee Chennault, a general in the U.S. Army Air Force, who soon became famous during World War II as the leader of the so-called “Flying Tigers.”<sup>495</sup> Chennault had served in the Army Air Service—later the Army Air Corps—from 1918 to 1937, when he retired to become air adviser to the Nationalists. In August 1941, Chennault organized the American Voluntary Group in China. On 4 July 1942, his Flying Tigers became part of the 14th Air Force. Once the Burma Road was blocked, the Flying Tigers helped provide a vital link with the outside world, ferrying in much needed military supplies and fuel.

Chennault was also in charge of Allied air operations in China. The first China-based American bomber attack against Japan took place during April 1942. Although mainly for show, this action prompted the Japanese to open the East China Campaign. This campaign’s goal was to destroy all airfields in Zhejiang and Jiangxi provinces. Thereafter, during the summer of 1943, the Japanese continued to put pressure on China during the Changde Campaign in Hubei Province. By early June 1944, however, new airfields east of Chongqing were ready and a B-29 raid on Bangkok, Thailand was their first mission.

On 15 June 1944, the Allies carried out a large raid on the southern Japanese island of Kyushu and bombed vital Japanese industries. In response to the bomber attacks, the Japanese began a new offensive, called “Operation Ichigo” (Operation Number One). This campaign besieged and destroyed the city of Changsha, which had successfully fought off Japanese troops since 1941. Although the Nationalist forces resisted valiantly, Changsha fell in August 1944. In November 1944, Japanese troops destroyed the B-29 airfields near Guilin. By the end of the year, however, Japan began withdrawing troops to fight U.S. forces elsewhere in the Pacific.

Realizing that the main deterrent to a strong offensive action in China was mutual GMD–CCP distrust, during spring 1944 President Roosevelt appointed Vice-President Henry A. Wallace to travel to China. Wallace carried out talks with Jiang in Chongqing in late June. Major General Patrick J. Hurley later arrived in Chongqing on 6 September 1944, and he also tried to fortify China’s anti-Japanese opposition. Under pressure from Washington, the Nationalist Army, trained and led by American advisers, finally mounted an offensive in the spring and summer of 1945. General Wedemeyer had headed



the task of training and arming thirty-nine divisions of the Nationalist troops. By early August 1945, the Chinese forces had retaken Guilin and prepared to head southward toward Guangzhou.

### **Sino-Soviet diplomacy and the end of the Sino-Japanese War, 1945**

While Jiang Jieshi used his military alliance with the United States to obtain advisers, arms, and supplies, he negotiated a political alliance with the Soviet Union in order to attempt to undercut his main opponent, the Chinese Communists. Following the February 1945 Yalta Agreement, the Nationalists and the Soviet Union negotiated and signed their own bilateral agreement on 14 August 1945. Although on the surface this agreement seemed to grant independence to Outer Mongolia while guaranteeing Chinese sovereignty in Manchuria, it in fact granted the USSR enormous privileges throughout northern China in return for Stalin's promise that the USSR would not support the CCP. During the war, the Communists had expanded as far south as the Yangzi River. By May 1946 they were well on their way to consolidating control throughout northern China, and it was from Manchuria that the Communists were later to spread throughout China proper.

The very brevity of the thirteen-word Yalta resolution on 11 February 1945 on Outer Mongolia—"the status quo in Outer-Mongolia (the Mongolian People's Republic) shall be preserved"—made it ambiguous. As a result, there was widespread misunderstanding of what the Yalta agreement meant by status quo. Nationalist historians, in particular, have blamed Roosevelt for giving Stalin a powerful pretext for encroaching on Chinese national interests, mistakenly blaming Outer Mongolia's loss on Yalta's direct reference to the "Mongolian People's Republic."<sup>496</sup>

Instead, the Soviet diplomats at Yalta seem to have intentionally suggested the use of the term "status quo", interpreting it together with their Chinese counterparts to mean the independence of Outer Mongolia. Meanwhile, on 13 July 1951, W. Averell Harriman, the former American ambassador to the USSR, explained that Roosevelt endorsed this proposal only because he was led to believe that "status quo" referred to the Sino-Soviet treaty of 31 May 1924, which stated that Outer Mongolia was an integral part of China.<sup>497</sup>

A second misunderstanding was the Yalta Agreement's resolution that the USSR would have "pre-eminent" rights over the Chinese Eastern Railway after the war. The United States apparently interpreted this to mean that the Soviet Union would have greater rights than any other "foreign" power. Later, Stalin was to argue with his Chinese counterparts that this resolution gave the USSR greater power over the railway than even the Nationalist government.

China and the Soviet Union opened bilateral diplomatic talks in June 1945. Instead of offering to return the ill-gotten gains it had received through

negotiations with Tokyo, Moscow insisted on reconfirming the 1941 Soviet–Japanese division of China. Stalin argued that Yalta’s status quo meant that Outer Mongolia should remain under Soviet control. Stalin even explained to T. V. Soong, the head of the Chinese mission, that Outer Mongolia had really been independent from China ever since the Red Army’s 1921 invasion. In addition, Stalin insisted that control of the Chinese Eastern Railway should be returned to Moscow and that the USSR should receive special rights over the port cities of Lüda (Dalian) and Lüshun (Port Arthur).

Soong protested Stalin’s interpretations of the Yalta Agreement. However, when Stalin promised not to assist the Chinese Communists in their fight against the Nationalists, Soong agreed to consider adopting Stalin’s singular definition of Yalta’s terms “status quo” and “pre-eminent.” After consulting with Jiang Jieshi, Soong privately acknowledged that Outer Mongolia was really a part of the USSR, but he suggested holding a mock plebiscite to make it appear that the decision to separate from China was a democratic one.

With Japan’s surrender imminent, the Nationalists wanted to conclude a treaty with the USSR as soon as possible. However, Moscow and Tokyo had earlier renegotiated the existing Sino–Soviet border, and Outer Mongolia now included extensive Manchurian and Inner Mongolian territories. On 13 August 1945, the border issue was quickly decided, as Soong accepted the current borders without change. This hasty decision was to have an enormous impact on later Sino–Soviet border tensions (see Chapter 16).<sup>498</sup>

Although Outer Mongolia has always previously been portrayed by the USSR and China as an independent country, an official English-language copy of the Sino–Soviet negotiating record shows that Stalin agreed not to annex Outer Mongolia outright to protect Chinese “face.” In return, Chinese diplomats secretly acknowledged that Outer Mongolia was really an integral part of the USSR. The Chinese Nationalists also agreed that Outer Mongolia’s borders would remain unchanged, thus ensuring that territory gained earlier from Manchukuo would remain in the Soviet sphere of interest.

In return for this enormous territorial concession, Stalin agreed not to support the Chinese Communists in their civil war against the Nationalists. For example, when discussing the People’s Liberation Army, Soong said: “We want their army to merge with ours.” Stalin responded: “It is legitimate. One Government, one army.” Later, Stalin promised only to send aid and financial support to the Nationalists. Clearly, the major motivation for Jiang Jieshi’s decision to agree to Outer Mongolian independence was to end all Soviet assistance to the CCP.<sup>499</sup>

The Sino–Soviet Friendship Treaty was signed on 14 August 1945. Moscow gained China’s recognition of the USSR’s hold over Outer Mongolia, as well as to the Sino–Mongolian borders that the Soviets had formerly negotiated with Japan. In addition, the Nationalists granted the Soviet government major concessions and special rights and privileges in Manchuria. In this regard, Moscow’s diplomatic victory was an imperialist intrusion into China’s

boundaries. This treaty not only substantially reconfirmed Soviet territorial gains made during secret Soviet–Japanese talks, but also added much of Japan’s sphere of influence to the Soviet sphere.

On 14 August 1945, China and the USSR also exchanged confidential notes that provided for a plebiscite in Outer Mongolia, after which China promised to recognize Outer Mongolia’s independence. Not only did Stalin gain China’s official recognition of the USSR’s sphere of interest in Mongolia, but he also retained Outer Mongolia’s expanded borders, which it had gained from Manchukuo as a result of the 1941 Soviet–Japanese non-aggression pact. By granting Outer Mongolia its independence, therefore, the Nationalists also sanctioned the USSR’s intrusion into traditionally Chinese territories in Manchuria and Inner Mongolia.<sup>500</sup>

In all likelihood, the Nationalists assumed that the Soviet war against Japan would be lengthy and sustained, thus prompting them to grant Stalin extensive rights in Manchuria. Truman’s decision to use Atomic weapons brought an early surrender, and the Red Army’s anti-Japanese war lasted less than a week. This early end to the war proved disastrous for the Nationalists, while it was a boon to the Communists, since as Japanese power waned, the Communist forces could move in to fill the resulting vacuum.

By early 1945, the CCP could claim 1.2 million members, and the 8th Route and New 4th armies claimed to have 900,000 troops. On 9 August 1945, Mao Zedong finally declared that it was time for a major PLA-led anti-Japanese offensive. The following day, Zhu De, the commander of the PLA, ordered the seizure of urban areas. Striking deep into central Manchuria, General Lin Biao quickly expanded the CCP’s control over Japan’s industrial heartland in China. Within two weeks, CCP-controlled territory almost doubled and by late August it was estimated that Communist areas held a population of 100 million.

The Sino–Soviet Friendship Treaty, therefore, had a major impact on the GMD–CCP civil war, since Outer Mongolia’s border with China was also adjacent to the Communist-controlled territories, thus making communications and supplies more accessible. The USSR also helped the Communists establish a base of operations in Manchuria from which the Chinese Communists were later able to expand and conquer all of China. Finally, although Stalin promised Jiang that he would not aid the Communists, there was no way Jiang could hold him to this promise, especially once the Nationalists ratified Outer Mongolia’s independence in January 1946. These Soviet-controlled concessions in Manchuria were to play a pivotal role in the Chinese Communist Party’s 1949 victory over the Nationalists.

## Conclusions

Increasing Soviet–Japanese tensions unleashed by China’s failed attempt in 1929 to retake the Chinese Eastern Railway led to the continued division of

China into Soviet and Japanese spheres of influence. China's plight prompted Japan's invasion of Manchuria in 1931 to 1932, and the creation of the Japanese puppet state of Manchukuo. In response to the "Xi'an Incident" and the formation of the United Front between China and the Soviet Union, on 7 July 1937, Japanese troops began to occupy northern China. Tokyo justified its invasion of China as necessary to oppose Moscow's expansion to the west, in Xinjiang, and to the northwest, in Mongolia. Japanese forces successfully occupied Nanjing in mid-December 1937, forcing Jiang to move his military headquarters to Wuhan and establish his new capital in Chongqing. By October 1938, the Japanese had taken Wuhan, thus consolidating control throughout eastern China. Estimates of Japanese and Chinese casualties between 1937 and 1945 exceed five million.<sup>501</sup>

Meanwhile, the Soviet-Japanese struggle to divide China continued apace, as the two countries held secret negotiations that led to the signing of a non-aggression pact in 1941. Moscow turned its back on its Chinese allies when it agreed not to support Jiang Jieshi and to muzzle the Chinese Communists. In return, Tokyo promised to leave untouched the three CCP-controlled provinces in northwest China. This agreement had tremendous implications for China's future, since Japan went out of its way *not* to destroy the PLA. Immediately after World War II, therefore, the Chinese Communists were primed and ready to move into the power vacuum left behind by the Japanese troops.

Arguably, only the United State's entry into the Pacific War in late 1941 allowed the Nationalists to retain their position in central China. Jiang based his military policies around the traditional Chinese policy of playing the United States and Japan off against each other. However, following the August 1945 use of A-bombs on Japan, the Nationalists failed to take advantage of Japan's surrender to rapidly occupy all of the Japanese-controlled territory. Meanwhile, as a result of the Yalta Conference and the Sino-Soviet negotiations conducted from June to August 1945, Stalin obtained China's agreement to grant Outer Mongolia its independence, as well as obtaining significant military and economic concessions throughout Manchuria and northern China.

Following the end of the war, China was split into competing Nationalist and Communist zones. Jiang Jieshi became increasingly dependent upon Washington, which was beginning to suspect that it had been manipulated, and so began to cut back on aid to China. Meanwhile, with the economy in ruins and the Communists in control of the north, the morale of the Nationalist Army began to decline and corruption became rampant.

After the Japanese surrender in 1945, Nationalist-Communist hostilities soon reignited. As Chapter 13 will show, the Chinese Communists were able to take advantage of the Soviet Union's position of strength in Outer Mongolia and Manchuria to expand southward throughout all of China; once again, this was a classic battle strategy and closely paralleled the Qing domination of China in the seventeenth century and Beijing's destruction of the Taipings in

the 1860s. In this regard, it was during the immediate aftermath of the Pacific War that the Soviet Union not only retained its own sphere of influence in northern China, but expanded and took control over much of Japan's former sphere of influence as well. As will be discussed in later chapters, the USSR's imperialist policies in Asia eventually created new sources of conflict in Korea, along the Sino–Soviet border, and in Vietnam.

## CHINA'S NATIONALIST- COMMUNIST CIVIL WAR

The Nationalist Party and the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) renewed their ongoing civil war during 1946. This conflict ended in 1949 with the creation of the People's Republic of China (PRC) and the removal of the Nationalist government to Taiwan. Unlike other periods of civil war, such as the Taipings, both the Nationalists and the Communists were Han Chinese; but, like the Taipings, there was an important north-south component, as the Communists in northern China defeated the southern-based government of Jiang Jieshi. There was also an important ideological similarity with other Chinese wars, since the Communists' anti-imperialist ideology played on the Han xenophobic hatred of foreigners, much as the Boxers had tried to do forty-five years before.

Tensions between the Nationalists and the CCP were long-standing, and dated back almost from the very day of the CCP's founding in 1921. However, it was not until the first United Front failed during 1927 that the CCP formed its own military force. In August 1927 the CCP created the Red Army (later, after 1946, the People's Liberation Army or PLA) when the 24th Division of the Nationalist 11th Army, stationed outside Nanchang, rebelled. They were soon defeated, but 10,000 troops remained loyal to their leader, Zhu De. They retreated south and joined with Mao Zedong in the mountains of Jiangxi Province. Zhu De soon took charge of the CCP's forces and reorganized them into the 4th Army.

After relocating in 1935 to northwest China during the "Long March," the surviving Communist cadre formed the nucleus of a new army. The Red Army depended mainly on guerrilla warfare, heavily promoted during the 1930s by Mao, to compensate for its poor weapons and limited sources of ammunition and supplies. Even though the CCP and the Nationalists established a second United Front during 1937, tensions remained high and the Communist forces fought hard to retain their independence. In the last months of the Pacific War, the Communists' base of operations in northern China allowed them to take advantage of Japan's surrender to move into Manchuria, which had been developed by Japan during the 1930s and early 1940s into one of China's most highly industrialized areas. From this base, the CCP soon renewed its civil war with the Nationalists.

By some accounts, an early phase of the civil war was already underway during late August 1945, when Mao Zedong agreed to travel to Chongqing to meet with Jiang Jieshi. Although Mao offered substantial concessions, such as cutting the People's Liberation Army down to twenty or twenty-four divisions, he insisted on retaining control over those areas liberated by the CCP; this included most of northern China, Inner Mongolia, and a number of major eastern cities. Jiang refused, and after six weeks the talks ended without results. Later, a joint Political Consultative Conference opened in Nanjing on 11 January 1946, but it quickly reached deadlock and did not resolve any of the outstanding problems.

As tensions began to lead to open hostility, the United States government sponsored a final attempt to bring the Nationalists and the Communists to the bargaining table. President Truman chose General Marshall to bring the two sides together and dispatched him to China in December 1945. Although Marshall succeeded in obtaining several cease-fires in the ongoing civil strife, these lulls in the fighting did not hold, and by January 1947 his mission failed. As a result, Washington called off all further American attempts to bring about a peaceful resolution to China's civil war.

Ousted from China's major cities, the CCP used its base in Manchuria for much-needed food, industrial goods, and supplies to build up the People's Liberation Army. Under the command of General Lin Biao, they took Harbin and its environs, and by May 1948 had pushed most of the Nationalist forces out of Manchuria. Spurred on by this success, Mao announced that the PLA was no longer a guerrilla army and began to employ conventional warfare. Advancing southward, the PLA took Peiping and Tianjin in January 1949. The Nationalist strategy was to hold the Yangzi River and defend South China, but with the fall of Nanjing in April and Shanghai in May, they retreated to Taiwan. On 1 October 1949, Mao Zedong announced the formation of the People's Republic of China.

### **The early history of the Red Army (People's Liberation Army)**

The Chinese Communist Party was founded in July 1921, with the assistance and under the direct observation of representatives from the Soviet-funded Communist International (Comintern). Under orders from Moscow, the CCP became a largely unwilling member of the United Front. After Jiang Jieshi successfully led the 1926–27 Northern Expedition as far as Nanjing and Shanghai, he dismissed his Russian advisers and purged the Chinese Communists. The CCP created the Red Army soon afterward in August 1927. Unable to take control of a major Chinese city for their base, the CCP formed a “Soviet” base area in south Jiangxi Province. The CCP, during the course of five “bandit suppression campaigns,” beginning in December 1930 and lasting until 1934, narrowly avoided being destroyed by the Nationalists. The fifth

and final campaign forced the CCP from its base in southern China. In 1934 to 1935, under the leadership of Mao Zedong among others, the Chinese Communists undertook the 6,000-mile “Long March” and relocated to north-western China.

The PLA’s origins can be dated to the birth of the Red Army on 1 August 1927, when the 24th Division of the Guomindang’s Nationalist 11th Army mutinied against Jiang Jieshi. During August 1927, the 24th Division moved to Nanchang, the capital of Jiangxi Province. Zhu De and Lin Biao, who were both destined to become important Communist leaders, commanded this mutiny. The mutineers quickly took the city and held it for several days, but they failed to retain control. Soon, they were forced to retreat under pressure from other divisions of the 11th Army and the Nationalist 20th Army.

Although the mutiny was a fiasco—many of the common soldiers refused to participate and support the CCP—it continued to play an important role in Communist histories, especially since the PLA’s birth dates back to this event. After the mutiny failed, about 10,000 troops remained loyal to Zhu De and retreated southward. In 1928, they linked up with Mao Zedong in the Chinese Communist Party’s mountain stronghold on the border of Hunan and Jiangxi provinces. Zhu De quickly took charge of all of the CCP’s forces and reorganized them into the Communists’ 4th Army, composed of six regiments.

By 1930, the so-called Jiangxi Soviet controlled fifteen “liberated areas,” and the PLA had grown in size to approximately 60,000 to 65,000 men. During July 1930, the CCP leadership ordered the PLA to attack Changsha, the capital of Hunan Province. It took the city, but after ten days the PLA withdrew and temporarily returned to guerrilla warfare. Mao openly espoused using guerrilla tactics over the opposition of the CCP’s Central Executive Committee, which was under pressure from the Comintern in Moscow to adopt more conventional western-style positional warfare, generally known as the “Li Lisan line.”<sup>502</sup> At this early stage, Mao lost this ideological battle and, in 1932 he gave up his position in the PLA. After a series of CCP defeats at the hands of the Nationalists, Mao regained his standing within the PLA in October 1934. Thereafter, guerrilla warfare once again began to dominate the PLA’s tactics.

During 1930 to 1934, the Nationalist forces launched a total of five campaigns against the CCP. The PLA successfully withstood the first four campaigns, although it sustained enormous casualties because of the Moscow-driven policy to fight pitched battles. Jiang Jieshi changed his tactics for the fifth campaign, which began in April 1934, by ordering the Nationalist Army to build multi-story blockhouses as it consolidated control over territory it took from the Communists; these blockhouses were close enough to allow machine-gun cross-fire that would halt any PLA attempt to break through. The Nationalists’ new tactics allowed them to surround and isolate the PLA. Previously, the PLA was compared to a “fish swimming in the ocean of the people.” According to Edward Dreyer, the GMD’s new blockhouse tactic



successfully “netted the fish” as the Nationalists slowly whittled away the Communist-held territories from all sides.<sup>503</sup>

Mao clearly understood the threat to the CCP and he soon decided to leave the Jiangxi Soviet. On 16 October 1934, the CCP leadership ordered the PLA to break through the GMD’s blockhouses. Approximately 100,000 Communist cadres began a forced march to northwest China. In 1935, the PLA successfully conducted the 6,000-mile “Long March” from the southeastern province of Jiangxi to the northwestern frontier province of Shaanxi.

Midway through the march, at the Guizhou provincial city of Zunyi, the CCP’s leaders met, and Mao denounced the former leaders—especially Li De (Otto Braun) and Bo Gu—for adopting erroneous tactics that had resulted in the loss of the Jiangxi Soviet and the near destruction of the PLA. As a result, Mao became a major leader of the Long March until the PLA arrived in Yan’an. Of the 100,000 men and women who started the journey, only about 10,000 arrived as a coherent unit to the CCP’s new headquarters in Yan’an.

It was during this period—often called the “Yan’an” era—that Mao achieved greater power over the CCP.<sup>504</sup> Mao’s particular brand of revolutionary philosophy known as “Mao’s thought” also permeated the Communist movement during this period. Mao’s guerrilla strategy, which can be dated to the later 1920s, became commonly accepted. It was summarized in the following four rules of engagement: “The enemy advances, we retreat; the enemy camps, we harass; the enemy tires, we attack; the enemy retreats, we pursue.” The PLA’s guerrilla bands succeeded in forcing the Japanese to deploy large numbers of troops to protect their lengthy supply lines. The PLA’s constant harassment of the Japanese rear included “destroying railways, roads, bridges, and telegraph lines, ambushing lightly-protected Japanese supply convoys, and conducting surprise raids on Japanese-held installations of all kinds.”<sup>505</sup>

By May 1938, Mao began advocating the establishment of guerrilla bases in rural—so-called “peripheral”—areas like “mountains, lakes, marshes, and coasts” where there were “limited numbers of Japanese troops.” Mao’s military philosophy presupposed the CCP Army’s rapid growth so that it could “acquire a guerrilla military capability strong enough to repel enemy attacks; and, even while it was militarily securing the base area, the Party should proceed to mobilize and organize the people into mass organizations.”<sup>506</sup> This policy proved highly successful, and by 1943 the CCP controlled about 155,000 of the 345,000 square miles that made up occupied China; by contrast, Japan controlled about 82,000 and the Nationalists only 41,000, while most of the remainder—about 67,000 square miles—was considered to be either barren or guerrilla areas.<sup>507</sup>

Although the establishment of the second United Front in 1937 temporarily ended the civil war, tensions remained high. These tensions escalated into open conflict after the January 1941 “New 4th Army” incident (see Chapter 12). Until this time, the “coalition between the Nationalists and the

Communists, if something less than a model united front, continued to work fairly well."<sup>508</sup> Following this incident, relations between the CCP and the GMD changed dramatically:

The New 4th Army incident drew a line of emotional hysteria across all future relations of government and Communists. All negotiations ceased. Supplies were cut off from Communist armies everywhere. A blockade of picked government troops was thrown about the Communist civilian base in northern Shanxi and sealed airtight. In the beginning it had been a war of all China against the Japanese; now it was a war of two Chinas—a Communist China and a Guomindang China against the Japanese; and there was a subsidiary war smoldering simultaneously with these two great wars—a war between Communist China and Guomindang China.<sup>509</sup>

While CCP losses were relatively small—about 10 percent of the New 4th Army's total strength—the propaganda value of the incident decidedly helped the Communists, as many Chinese expressed sympathy for the slain Communist troops. In addition, American diplomats for the first time began to show signs of support for the CCP.<sup>510</sup>

The New 4th Army Incident did not terminate the United Front, but it meant the CCP no longer had to even appear to be helping the GMD; in fact, in 1944 the Communists used the Japanese "Ichigo" offensive in Henan Province, which destroyed the Nationalist Army there, to move their own troops southward to "restore the Henan-Anhui-Jiangsu base area."<sup>511</sup> GMD-CCP talks to reconcile their differences were opened in March 1943, but collapsed by the end of the year. This break continued until the formal beginning of the GMD-CCP civil war in 1946. Still, as one author has noted, the New 4th Army Incident "caused so much irreparable damage to GMD-CCP relations that it is something of a miracle that an open civil conflict was averted for the balance of the war."<sup>512</sup>

### **The early phase of the civil war**

On several occasions during the Pacific War the United States tried to temper Nationalist-Communist tensions. For example, during spring 1944, President Roosevelt sent Vice-President Henry A. Wallace to talk with Jiang Jieshi about reconciling GMD-CCP differences. Major General Patrick J. Hurley also tried to fortify China's anti-Japanese opposition in 1944 by including the Communists. These efforts largely failed, and when the Nationalist Army, trained and led by American advisers, finally mounted its own offensive in the spring and summer of 1945 it proved to be too little too late. To a large degree, it was the Chinese Communists who filled the power vacuum left by Japan's sudden surrender in August 1945.

As World War II appeared to be drawing to a close, the PLA forces totaled approximately 900,000 against the Nationalists' post-war force of 2.5 million. These numbers were exaggerated, and both the Communists and Nationalists generally counted troops who were sick, and many who did not even possess weapons, as regular troops.<sup>513</sup> Nevertheless, even faced with these odds, Mao declared on 9 August 1945—after Japan was near defeat—that the PLA's anti-Japanese offensive would begin immediately.

The following day, the commander of the PLA, Zhu De, ordered the seizure of urban areas and, striking into Manchuria, General Lin Biao quickly expanded the Communists' control deep into northern China's industrial heartland. Not only did the Communists obtain Japanese weapons when they disarmed the Japanese units in Manchuria, but within two weeks CCP-controlled territory almost doubled. On 4 September, the Communist government announced: "We hold the entire region stretching from Kalgan (Zhangjiakou) to the mouth of the Yangzi, and from Shaanxi to the China Sea, except for the largest cities and some fortified points along the railroads."<sup>514</sup>

Mao Zedong soon afterward agreed to fly to Chongqing to conduct negotiations with the Nationalists.<sup>515</sup> Although Mao offered substantial concessions, such as cutting the People's Liberation Army down to twenty or twenty-four divisions if the Nationalists would cut their forces to 120 divisions, he insisted on retaining control over those areas occupied by Chinese Communist forces. These territories included most of northern China, Inner Mongolia, and several major eastern cities. On 10 October 1945, the anniversary of the fall of the Qing, Mao and Jiang agreed to support a Political Consultative Conference to hammer out their differences. The conference opened on 11 January 1946, but soon reached deadlock and did not resolve the outstanding problems.

The Nationalist–Communist negotiations eventually broke down over several points, perhaps the most important being the Communist wish to retain control over northern China in return for pulling their troops out of the south and the Nationalists' disagreement that the Communists should be able to accept the surrender of Japanese troops. Once these talks failed, on 21 October, Mao ordered that all Communist forces south of the Yangzi should return to northern China. After concentrating their forces, the Communists began to destroy railways and other transportation lines in order to slow down a future Nationalist advance.

Several military historians have described the Communist tactic as using the classical "horizontal plan" versus the Nationalist's "vertical plan." According to Lionel Chassin, these two strategies "were curiously reminiscent of maneuverings in the bygone days of the ancient Zhou and Tang dynasties."<sup>516</sup> The horizontal plan called for conquering a strip along the Yellow River all the way from Shaanxi Province to the sea, while the vertical plan interrupted this action to keep the Communists confined to northwest China. According to C. P. Fitzgerald, "these rival plans embody abiding strategic verities

conditioned by unchanging geographical facts, which will remain true in all ages.<sup>517</sup> These interpretations largely overlook the strategic value of China's railways in Manchuria.

It was the U.S. Army, and not the Nationalist Army, that stopped the Communists from occupying territory all the way to the sea, when 53,000 U.S. Marines quickly moved into northern China. On 30 September 1945, the 1st Marine Division landed at Tianjin to accept the Japanese surrender. According to Odd Arne Westad, the U.S. actions surprised the Communists:

The news about the imminent landings of U.S. Marines along the North China coast took the CCP leadership by surprise. In late September Mao still believed that there was a secret understanding between the Americans and the Soviets about mutual nonintervention in China, and that Truman's unwillingness to risk a rupture with Moscow at this point would prevent him from stepping up aid to Jiang's government. Mao took the withdrawal of U.S. military personnel in South China, which had started in the first week of September, as evidence that the Americans would not intervene further.<sup>518</sup>

Thereafter, on 9 October, American troops occupied Peiping, and the following day they occupied Qingdao. American planes then airlifted 110,000 Nationalist troops to Peiping and Nanjing, blocking Chinese Communist attempts to retake China's traditional capitals first. By the end of October the Nationalists had concentrated near Peiping the 3rd, 84th, and 32nd armies.

The Nationalists' next goal was Manchuria, but the Communist 8th Route Army cut them off. Once again, America provided crucial aid, as the U.S. Navy ferried two complete Chinese armies from southern China. Moscow denied American access to the ports at Lüda and Lüshun, however, and by now other major Manchuria ports were in the hands of the CCP. On 1 November, the Nationalist troops landed at Jinwangdao, which was on the railway line to Tianjin. Although the Nationalists continued to advance along the Tianjin-Mukden railway, Communist opposition slowed their progress.

Faced with the prospect of the Soviet withdrawal during November and December, which would leave all of Manchuria in the hands of the CCP, Jiang found himself in the uncomfortable position of petitioning the Soviet Red Army to remain in Manchuria. Stalin agreed, but by November it was clear Moscow was slowing the Nationalists' takeover. According to one author, during this six-month delay the Russians were able "to carry away with them, as prizes of war, all the heavy machinery, machine tools, railroad ties, and even office furniture—as well as 700,000 Japanese prisoners from the Kwantung Army."<sup>519</sup>

Meanwhile, the Chinese Communists generally stayed out of the major Manchurian cities occupied by Russian troops, but they did attempt to consolidate

control through large swathes of rural Manchuria. Under General Lin Biao, 300,000 Communist troops gathered under the name “Democratic Army of the Northeast” in Rehe Province, thus cutting Manchuria off from the rest of China. They controlled few cities, but were prepared to move into the cities once the USSR withdrew its troops.

On 22 November 1945, the Nationalists succeeded in taking the crucial pass at Nankou and moved into Rehe Province, pushing the Communists further north in the process. With Soviet permission, Nationalist troops flew into Mukden (Shenyang) on 13 December. Finally, throughout early December, the Nationalist troops advanced northward toward Mukden and, by the end of the month had gained control of the crucial Mukden railroad. As the year 1945 drew to a close, therefore, the Nationalists occupied important northern China cities like Peiping, Tianjin, Mukden, and Datong, while the Communists retained power in the city of Zhangjiakou, in Chahar Province, and had large forces in Shanxi, Hebei, and Rehe Provinces, as well as throughout Manchuria itself.

Only American aid made the Nationalist gains in northern China possible. Without the help of the U.S. Navy and Air Force, the Nationalist troops would not have been able to move into northern China so quickly. In addition, the United States continued to assist the Nationalists by training and equipping thirty-nine divisions of ground troops and eight air groups.

The USSR, on the other hand, while not helping the Nationalists militarily, did grant them permission to enter Manchuria and land at Soviet-occupied airfields; meanwhile, the USSR secretly provided the Communists with weapons, food, and medicines. To understand Moscow’s reasoning, it is important to recall that while the Sino–Soviet Friendship Treaty of 14 August 1945 called for a plebiscite to grant Outer Mongolia its independence from China, thus confirming its position as a Soviet puppet state, the Nationalist government did not ratify this agreement and recognize Outer Mongolia’s independence until January 1946. Therefore, Stalin had every reason to placate the Nationalists until they fulfilled their half of the bargain. After ratification, the Soviet government quickly shifted its support to the Chinese Communists.

### **The Marshall Mission to China**

As Japanese power waned, the Nationalists and Communists gradually became embroiled in their own civil struggle. Soon after the Pacific War ended, in December 1945, President Truman appointed General George Marshall as his special envoy to China. The president instructed Marshall to work for a cease-fire between the Nationalists and the Chinese Communists, as well as a reduction in the armed forces. Truman also urged the peaceful reunification of China by convening the Political Consultative Conference, as earlier agreed to by Jiang and Mao. Accordingly, Marshall’s “long-term goal, aimed to establish a united, democratic China to stabilize the balance in the Far East

during the post-war era and, to this end, to terminate all hostilities between Nationalist and Communist Chinese with the formation of a 'coalition government.'<sup>520</sup> Although Marshall succeeded to some extent in all of these endeavors, the division between the Nationalists and Communists remained too great, and his mission ended in failure in early 1947.

Upon his arrival in China, Marshall appeared to produce immediate results as he called a special "Committee of Three," composed of Zhou Enlai representing Yan'an, General Zhang Zhun representing Chongqing, and with Marshall as chairman and arbiter.<sup>521</sup> On 10 January 1946, this committee approved a truce between the Nationalist and Communist forces that stopped hostilities, fixed all forces in place, ended the destruction of transport and communication lines, and set up an executive headquarters in Peiping to carry out the cease-fire agreement. By not including China south of the Yangzi River, or Nationalist movements into Manchuria, this truce in many ways favored the Nationalists. As for the military reduction, all sides agreed that within twelve months the total Chinese Army should be 108 divisions—ninety Nationalist versus eighteen Communist—while by July 1947, this number should drop to sixty divisions—fifty Nationalist and ten Communist. Finally, the distribution of these troops guaranteed that the Nationalists outnumbered the Communists at all points.<sup>522</sup>

Simultaneous with the cease-fire, the Political Consultative Conference (PCC) met in mid-January 1946. From 11 to 31 January, thirty-eight delegates representing the Guomindang, the Chinese Communist Party, the Youth Party, and other Chinese factions, met to decide many outstanding problems. On 25 February, they announced a series of agreements reorganizing the national government along constitutional lines, revising the constitution, and creating one national army under a unified command.

These plans also called for the creation of a State Council, which would have forty members, half nominated by the Guomindang and the rest from all of the other parties. Since it took two-thirds of the delegates to pass any new resolutions, the Communists were confident that they could ally with one or more of the smaller parties to exert veto power. Therefore, this agreement tended to be "more favorable to the Communists than to the Nationalists."<sup>523</sup>

During this lull in the civil war, the United States became identified as the primary supporter of the Nationalists. Throughout 1946, American troops continued to withdraw, quickly dropping from a high of 113,000 in 1945 to only 12,000 by the end of 1946.<sup>524</sup> However, the equipping of Jiang's thirty-nine army divisions continued and was completed by late 1945. In addition, Washington contributed \$500 million to the UN's Relief and Rehabilitation Administration's program on China, and most of this money went to Nationalist areas. Finally, in August 1946, the United States government sold the Nationalists approximately \$900 million-worth of war surplus for a mere \$175 million; this sale included "small ships, vehicles, construction materials, air-force supplies and equipment, and communications equipment."<sup>525</sup>

Meanwhile, in the aftermath of Outer Mongolia's plebiscite—in which the Soviets reported that 98.14 percent of the electorate, or 483,291 voters, cast a ballot and that the vote was unanimous—the Nationalists formally granted Outer Mongolia its independence from China on 1 January 1946. Not surprisingly, the Soviet government was more visibly supportive of the Communists after Outer Mongolia's "independent" status was confirmed. For example, the CCP continued to garrison troops throughout rural Manchuria in 1946, and as the Russian forces withdrew, beginning in mid-March 1946, the Communists quickly took their place. Although Nationalist troops in Mukden defeated the Communist forces within twenty-four hours, in Changchun hostilities continued for three days. The GMD only consolidated full control on 23 May 1946. Elsewhere in northern China, the Communists successfully occupied sections of Shandong and Jiangsu provinces.

The CCP's decision to try to take Changchun was, in the words of General Marshall, a "flagrant violation of the Cessation of Hostilities Order and an act which was to have serious consequences, as shown by subsequent developments." Although Marshall quotes Zhou Enlai as stating that the CCP had no choice but to take Changchun, since the Nationalists refused to end their attacks on the Communists, he himself saw their action in a different light:

One possible explanation is that the Communists were endeavoring to force the National Government to put an end to hostilities in Manchuria, cease the movement of its troops north from Mukden and negotiate for a settlement. . . . But, whatever the reasons for the action, it was clearly a serious tactical blunder on the part of the Communists and an action which was to plague them time and time again.<sup>526</sup>

With the cease-fire broken, Marshall withdrew as mediator, but continued to act as intermediary between the Nationalists and the Chinese Communists. In this capacity, Marshall arranged a two-week truce for Manchuria beginning on 7 June 1946, and he also supported further negotiations with the CCP. Jiang declared that this occasion would be the last time he would negotiate. America's best chance to end China's civil war was the Kalgan Truce Proposal, which Marshall attempted to broker during September and October 1946. Zhou Enlai had already left Nanjing for Shanghai, and so Marshall was forced to travel back and forth to conduct talks with the Nationalists and the Communists.

The differences between the two views were extreme, with Jiang insisting, on 2 October 1946, that the CCP accept fewer seats in the State Council and that the eighteen Communist divisions should divulge their location and agree to "the immediate implementation of the program for the reorganization of the army." Zhou Enlai argued that these conditions were unreasonable, especially since the Nationalists refused to halt their offensive against Kalgan, and



he listed three military and eight political conditions of his own. The most important military condition was that troops in China should return to their 13 January positions and in Manchuria to their 7 June positions, and the most important political condition was that the Chinese Communist Party and the Democratic League, which the Nationalists thought was little better than a wing of the CCP, should jointly control fourteen seats in the State Council, just enough to exert veto power.<sup>527</sup>

These points proved to be unacceptable to the Nationalists. As a result of this outcome, Washington judged the Marshall mission a failure and concluded it on 6 January 1947. Marshall's published statement on China, released on 7 January 1947, stated that while the Nationalists opposed "a genuine coalition government," the Communists "do not hesitate at the most drastic measures to gain their ends . . . [to] facilitate the overthrow or collapse of the Government without any regard to the immediate suffering of the [Chinese] people involved." In his much longer report, published thirty years later, Marshall also criticized the Communists for playing on Chinese xenophobia by turning the people against the United States, and thus the CCP "found it useful and convenient to substitute the United States for the Japanese enemy."<sup>528</sup>

Marshall felt his mission could not succeed under these circumstances. Following Marshall's departure, Washington notified Nanjing on 29 January 1947 that it wished to terminate its connection with the Committee of Three and the executive headquarters in Peiping. During the next couple of years, culminating in the 5 August 1949 publication of the *China White Paper*, Washington sought to disengage itself from its long-time support for Jiang Jieshi and his Nationalist regime. However, Washington's critics charged that the *White Paper*, which tried to show that "if China failed, it would be due to her own fault," was in fact "a 1,054-page white-wash of a wishful, do-nothing policy which had succeeded only in placing Asia in danger of Soviet conquest."<sup>529</sup>

### The 1949 creation of the People's Republic of China

Following the Marshall Mission's failure, economic problems in the Nationalist-controlled areas undermined Jiang Jieshi's political power, right as the Nationalist military campaign in Manchuria began to falter. Meanwhile, the PLA experienced enormous growth, from an estimated 1.2 million in 1945, to 1.5 million in 1946, to 2.7 million in 1947, to a high of 3 million by 1948.<sup>530</sup> Relying on the industrialized north for its base, and with the tacit support of the Soviet Union, the PLA gradually pushed the Nationalist Army southward. Finally, in 1949, Mao gave the order to cross the Yangzi River and the PLA overwhelmed the Nationalists, forcing them to retreat to Taiwan.

Economic turmoil following the end of the war generally benefitted the CCP. Inflation in China was rampant, and wholesale prices in Shanghai increased thirty-fold between September 1945 and February 1947. Accordingly, as the government printed more money to cover its expenditure, the



value of the Chinese currency plummeted: a 171-pound bag of rice that cost only 12 yuan in 1937 “sold for 6.7 million yuan in early June 1948 and 63 million yuan in August.” Although the Nationalist government tried to check inflation by imposing price and wage ceilings, and later by imposing a system of food rationing, the immediate impact of this uncontrolled inflation was to increase unemployment—reaching a high of 30 percent unemployment in Nanjing during 1946—and a rapid rise in the number of industrial strikes. All of the resulting social unrest worked to the advantage of the Chinese Communists, who infiltrated labor unions and turned them against the Nationalist government.<sup>531</sup>

American aid to the Nationalists continued throughout this period, and in May 1947 Washington lifted the arms embargo imposed by Marshall. Despite this fact, Washington’s political support for Jiang Jieshi became progressively weaker. Six months after Marshall’s departure in January 1947, Albert C. Wedemeyer arrived in China on a fact-finding mission. He arrived soon after the State Council formally outlawed the CCP and declared that it was in open rebellion against China’s central government, an action that was in striking contradiction with the American policy of reconciliation.

After spending a month surveying the scene, Wedemeyer optimistically proclaimed that the Nationalists could “win” the war, but the GMD would first have to remove corrupt and incompetent officials within their own ranks. In his report to President Truman of 19 September 1947, Wedemeyer specifically addressed China’s military situation. While he attributed the Communists’ success primarily to “the lightness and efficacy of their hit-and-run guerrilla type forces,” he discussed how the Nationalists’ two-and-a-half million troops were having little effect in “protecting” installations from the Communists “mission of *destruction*.”<sup>532</sup> More importantly, Wedemeyer explained to Truman that the failure of the Nationalists was due to

the ineptitude and incompetence of Nationalist high command, to the shrinkage of Nationalist communications, to the general depreciation and depletion of Nationalist equipment and supplies, both ground and air, to increased friction between military forces from the south and civil administration in the areas under attack [in the north], and to the stigma attached to troops which so often live off the local civil population.<sup>533</sup>

Although Wedemeyer proposed that America increase aid to Jiang, Washington still hoped to achieve national unity through negotiation and compromise, not through war. It was also wary of being drawn into the fray, and Secretary of State Marshall was insistent that “the United States should not intervene in the Chinese civil war with her armed forces.” Therefore, although the U.S. Congress passed a new \$400 million China Aid Act in April

1948, it was substantially less than the \$1.5 billion that the Nationalists had requested, and one-sixth less than the \$570 million Truman had sent to Congress. Still, according to one estimate, total American aid to China exceeded \$3,884,000,000.<sup>534</sup>

Meanwhile, Soviet assistance for the Chinese Communists was increasing. For example, during June 1947, Soviet-supported Outer Mongolian troops invaded Xinjiang on the pretext of fighting anti-Soviet Cossacks. Moscow also used Outer Mongolia as an intermediary to support the CCP expansion in Manchuria. Finally, in violation of the Sino-Soviet Friendship Treaty of 14 August 1945, the USSR continued to refuse to allow Chinese ships to dock at Lüda to land Nationalist troops. In a discussion with the American Ambassador to Nanjing, John Leighton Stuart, President Jiang compared the Soviet-supported Communist strategy in northern China to what had already taken place in Europe: "Their tactics bear a striking resemblance to those used by Russia against Germany."<sup>535</sup>

The Nationalists military problems were arguably even more grim than their economic problems. Although Nationalist troops managed to take Yan'an in March 1947, an estimated 400,000 Nationalist troops quickly became bogged down in the mountainous northwest while pursuing the elusive Communist guerrillas. Jiang assigned many other Nationalist troops in northern China in a futile effort to protect the GMD supply lines into Manchuria. The Communist guerrillas not only continued to disrupt the supply lines, but they also surrounded Mukden and Changchun, which the Nationalists could resupply only by airlift.

By 1948, the Communist 4th Field Army in Manchuria, commanded by Lin Biao, was the most modern and the largest of the CCP's five armies. The PLA's offensive strategy during this period was characterized as "decentralized execution and tactics within the context of a strategy of mobile warfare," and the PLA's tactics "became increasingly conventional as more tanks, aircraft, artillery, and industrial capacity came under CCP control, and as increasing numbers of technically skilled soldiers defected to the PLA."<sup>536</sup> This trend was generally in line with Mao's call, beginning in late 1945, for a change from guerrilla to mobile warfare, and he offered ten basic principles that called for attacking isolated enemy forces first, taking small and medium cities before large cities, and concentrating two to six times the enemy's forces and surrounding them completely before attacking and obliterating them.<sup>537</sup>

Beginning in the middle of 1948, the PLA's 700,000 mobile forces under Lin Biao pushed the Nationalist Army into an ever smaller space centered on Mukden, Changchun, and Jinzhou. After losing 470,000 troops in a futile defense of Manchuria, the Nationalists finally lost Jinzhou on 14 October, Changchun on 18 October, and Mukden on 2 November 1948. Mao could now confidently announce:

The military situation in China has reached a new turning point and the balance of forces between the two sides in the war has undergone a fundamental change. The PLA, long superior in quality, has now become superior in numbers as well. This is a sign that the victory of the Chinese revolution and the realization of peace in China are at hand.<sup>538</sup>

One scholarly account has supported this assessment, stating “the Communist victory in Manchuria—the first region to come under total Communist control—provided the military and psychological momentum for the nation-wide Communist triumph.”<sup>539</sup>

Elsewhere in China, the CCP also made equally impressive gains. For example, by April 1948 the city of Loyang had fallen, which cut the Nationalist Army off from Xi'an. Following a fierce battle at Jinan, Shandong Province fell to the Communists on 26 September 1948. Finally, the Peiping–Tianjin campaign began in November and brought some 890,000 Communists troops out of Manchuria to oppose some 600,000 Nationalist troops. By 24 December the Communists had taken Kalgan, and they encircled Tianjin, which fell on 15 January, and Peiping, which was taken on 31 January. As a result of this campaign, the Nationalist “government had lost close to another half million troops, together with two of China’s most important cities.”<sup>540</sup>

At the same time, in the Battle of Huai Hai over control of the road to Nanjing, two entire Nationalist divisions defected to the Communists. In early November, as this battle continued to rage, over 100,000 Nationalist troops suffered casualties and another 300,000 were taken prisoner. Finally, on 15 December 1948, after a sixty-five-day battle that pitted 600,000 Communist troops against an equal number of Nationalists, the city of Xuzhou fell to PLA artillery, which opened the road to Nanjing: “The defeat removed the last main government defence line north of the Yangzi.”<sup>541</sup>

On 23 April 1949, Communist forces began to cross the Yangzi River and overrun Nanjing. Thereafter, the PLA began the task of consolidating control over all of continental China, taking Shanghai and Wuhan in May, Xi'an and Changsha in August, Guangzhou in October, and Chongqing in November. The PLA's rapid advance forced the last remaining pro-GMD units to retreat to Taiwan. The Nationalists continued their anti-Communist struggle and claimed that their Republican government remained the legitimate government of all of China. Meanwhile, in late September, Mao Zedong assembled a new Political Consultative Conference in Beijing. In addition to electing Mao the chairman of the central government, the conference decided to make Beijing the capital of China, thus emphasizing the new regime's northern roots. On 1 October 1949, Mao officially declared the formation of the People's Republic of China from the Gate of Heavenly Peace in Beijing.

## Conclusions

The GMD-CCP civil war during 1945 to 1949 actually reflected tensions that erupted soon after the CCP was founded in June 1921. After relocating to Yan'an in 1935, the People's Liberation Army depended mainly on guerrilla warfare, heavily promoted by Mao, to compensate for its poor weapons and limited sources of ammunition and supplies. Even after creating a second United Front with the Nationalists during 1937, GMD-CCP tensions remained high. In the final months of World War II, the Communist base of operations in northern China shifted to Manchuria, one of the most highly industrialized sections of China. During late August 1945, Mao and Jiang tried to negotiate a settlement, but failed. As tensions led to open hostility, Truman sponsored a final attempt to bring the Nationalists and the Communists to the bargaining table by sending General Marshall to China. He too failed to bring about a lasting peace. By January 1947, Washington decided that the Marshall Mission was over. As a result, Washington called off all further American attempts to bring about a peaceful resolution to China's civil war, and its continued military and economic support was half-hearted and generally inadequate to counter the Soviet-supported Communist bid for power.

Using its base in Manchuria for much-needed food, industrial goods, and supplies, the CCP began to build up the People's Liberation Army. Under the command of General Lin Biao, the PLA defeated and pushed most of the Nationalist forces out of Manchuria by May 1948. Spurred on by their successes, Mao announced that the PLA was no longer a guerrilla army, but was now ready to employ conventional warfare. Although the Nationalist strategy was to use the Yangzi River to defend southern China, with the fall of Nanjing in April 1949, followed by Shanghai's fall in May, the Nationalists had little choice but to retreat to Taiwan. Mao Zedong's portrait soon replaced Jiang Jieshi's over the gates to the Forbidden City in the PRC's new capital in Beijing.

With the creation of the People's Republic of China, the PLA assumed an important domestic role, as the CCP leadership ordered it to consolidate control throughout most of those areas formerly associated with the traditional Chinese Empire. Most importantly, in 1950, the PLA invaded Tibet and ruthlessly quelled internal opposition. Beijing sought to gain control of its strategic southern border with India, and in 1951 helped pressure Tibet into signing a treaty acknowledging that it was an integral part of China. Anti-Chinese opposition continued, and in 1959 the PLA defeated an ethnic Tibetan uprising.

The PLA also eventually reclaimed Xinjiang from the USSR, and during the mid-1950s Moscow returned the last Soviet concessions in Manchuria to China. The fate of Outer Mongolia remained a major exception, however, because the Soviet government continued to refuse to open negotiations with the PRC on Outer Mongolia's status. This issue, as well as continuing disputes

over the Sino–Soviet border, would come to the surface once again during the late 1960s.

Finally, the PLA played a major role in China's attempt to reassert its traditional influence along China's periphery. As the next chapter will discuss, Communist China clearly hoped to rebuild China's larger sphere of interest throughout Asia when it became embroiled in the battle to win control over Korea. During the Korean War, the PLA suffered an estimated one million casualties, most of them due to the superior firepower of the American-led UN forces. Politically, this conflict pushed the PRC government even further away from the United States. This political shift would have important ramifications in the other military conflicts along China's border.

## Part 4

# IMPERIAL RESURGENCE



Figure 4 Imperial resurgence: reclaiming China's borders and tributary states.

## CHINA'S ROLE IN THE KOREAN WAR

The Korean War was the PRC's first modern imperialist conflict, as the new Communist "dynasty" tried to reassert influence over its former tributary states. Although the PLA had originally emerged as a guerrilla army and adopted standing armies fighting for fixed positions during the civil war period, the 1950 conflict between North Korea and South Korea forced it to assume completely the responsibilities of a conventional military force. In order to fight the technologically superior American-backed United Nations forces, the PLA's commander, Peng Dehuai, hoped to create a more modern, mobile army. This effort required huge investments into heavy artillery, tanks, and aircraft, most of which were purchased from the Soviet Union and paid for with Chinese goods. China's efforts to acquire and use Soviet MiG aircraft for air cover, in particular, was a sharp departure from the PLA's earlier guerrilla practices.

China's decision to get involved in the Korean conflict stems from its diplomacy with the USSR. Mao and Stalin began their talks during December 1949, and they signed a Sino-Soviet Friendship Treaty on 14 February 1950. In this treaty, Russia promised to supply military advisers, while China committed itself to fighting alongside the Soviet Union. These promises became active when, on 25 June 1950, North Korean troops crossed the 38th parallel and marched south toward Seoul. Although Kim Il Sung expected Washington to concede South Korea without a fight, Secretary of State Dean Acheson immediately increased U.S. military aid, air cover, and ground troops to South Korea.

Forced to retreat to Pusan, the UN forces in South Korea quickly increased their military assets. On 15 September, the UN initiated its own counter-offensive. Under the command of General MacArthur, the UN forces successfully landed at Inch'on, behind the North Korean lines, and forced the North Korean Army to retreat. On 19 October, the UN forces occupied North Korea's capital of P'yongyang. As the military push continued northward toward the Yalu River, which separated North Korea from China, the likelihood of Chinese intervention became more and more certain. In early October, the PRC decided that it would send PLA troops into Korea as



volunteers, known as the “Chinese Peoples’ Volunteers.” Between 14 October and 1 November 1950, an estimated 180,000 Communist “volunteers” secretly crossed the Yalu River.

When Chinese forces launched a full attack in late 1950, the PLA forced the American and South Korean troops back to the south. This attack initiated a UN retreat across the 38th parallel. As described by Lanxin Xiang:

The Cold War suddenly turned hot in the Far East where it was not expected, rather than in Europe where it was. The outbreak of the Korean War brought about a direct armed confrontation between Beijing and Washington. For the first time in history, the two continental powers were at war.<sup>542</sup>

By early January 1951, the Chinese took the city of Seoul and pushed the UN troops south to the Han River. The UN soon rallied, retook Seoul, and regained the 38th parallel. China launched three more offensives during spring 1951, but each failed to budge the UN troops.

The Korean conflict quickly turned into a stalemate, with troops poised on each side of the 38th parallel. For the next two years both sides relied on positional warfare, during which time they suffered heavy casualties in failed efforts to break through the lines. The Chinese and North Koreans reinforced their defenses by constructing a complicated network of trenches, tunnels, and bunkers throughout the hills on their side of the line. Further Chinese offensives during the spring of 1952 failed to shift the battle lines.

During July 1951, peace talks began and the two sides negotiated and signed a final truce on 27 July 1953. While Chinese forces in North Korea did succeed in pushing the UN back below the 38th parallel, the cost was heavy. At any one time there were an estimated 700,000 Chinese troops stationed in Korea, and hundreds of thousands died or were wounded in the fighting. These huge Chinese losses showed the PRC leadership that the PLA’s tactics and training were ineffective in conventional warfare. This soon led to increased Chinese efforts to modernize the PLA. The Chinese victory “defending” North Korea once again widened the Chinese imperial horizon to include China’s former tributary states, and Beijing thereafter remained an influential player in managing the so-called “Korean question.”

### **The diplomatic origins of the Korean War**

Following the creation of the People’s Republic of China, Mao Zedong traveled to Moscow in December 1949 to meet with Stalin. After eight weeks of talks, during which time Mao was ignored and even slighted by Stalin, the two leaders signed an agreement granting China U.S.\$300 million in credit over five years, a security treaty aimed at Japan, and the promise that the Soviet Union would return Lüda (Dalian) and Lüshun (Port Arthur) by 1952.

Moscow spurned Mao's goal of re-creating China's Imperial borders, however, when Stalin refused to discuss the political status of Outer Mongolia, which remained a Soviet protectorate. This posed grave security risks to Beijing, only one day's drive from the Sino-Mongolian border. When the USSR tacitly agreed to North Korea's invasion of South Korea on 25 June 1950, CCP leaders discussed whether to join the conflict. They decided to intervene, if for no other reason than it could not live with Soviet troops along its northwest border and American troops potentially on its northeast border, an exact replay of the predicament China had found itself in with Japan during the 1930s.

Soon after arriving in Moscow, Mao conducted his first meeting with Stalin on 16 December 1949. According to recently released transcripts from the Russian archives, Mao began by stating that China needed a three-to-five-year period of peace in order to get its industry and economy back on its feet.<sup>543</sup> Stalin agreed, stating that Japan was "not ready" for an international conflict and that America might "scream war," but was actually "afraid of war more than anything." Stalin even joked that "there is no one to fight with China, not unless Kim Il Sung decides to invade China?" The two leaders agreed on the need for mutual defense, however, and Mao asked for Soviet assistance in building up China's air force and navy.<sup>544</sup>

Both at this and at a later meeting during January 1950, Stalin and Mao talked about whether to retain or renegotiate the terms of the 1945 Yalta Agreement and the subsequent Moscow-Chongqing Sino-Soviet Friendship Treaty of 14 August 1945. For Mao, this question was important not only for Manchuria and Xinjiang, where the Soviet Union had acquired enormous rights and privileges, but especially for Outer Mongolia, which many outsiders mistakenly thought was transferred to the USSR by the Yalta Agreement. In fact, as discussed above, archival documents now show that the transfer of Outer Mongolia was the result of Moscow's negotiations with Jiang Jieshi's Nationalist government, and so was actually a "departure" from the Yalta Agreement. Mao hoped to reverse this situation.

As early as 16 December 1949, Stalin made it clear to Mao that he did not want to alter the Sino-Soviet Friendship Treaty: the USSR "decided not to modify any of the points of this [Yalta] treaty for now, since a change in even one point could give America and England the legal grounds to raise questions about modifying also the treaty's provisions concerning the Kuril Islands, South Sakhalin, etc." Although Mao tentatively agreed that the "treaty should not be modified at the present time," on 22 January 1950, he further suggested to "agree to declare the legal continuation of the current agreement, while, in effect, allowing appropriate changes to take place."<sup>545</sup>

As a result of the wording of this solution, Mao acknowledged that China would continue to respect the terms of the former Sino-Soviet Friendship Treaty—and, in theory at least, also agreed to respect over a century's worth of former Sino-Russian and Sino-Soviet "unequal" treaties—while negotiating

particular changes to these agreements. This solution put enormous diplomatic leverage in Stalin's hands, since simply by refusing to discuss certain changes the USSR could retain the status quo favoring Soviet interests. As a result of this agreement, Stalin successfully avoided discussing Outer Mongolia. This meant that when Mao returned to China he tacitly acquiesced to the continued inclusion of Outer Mongolia in the Soviet Union's Far Eastern sphere of influence.<sup>546</sup>

Once Mao and Stalin reached this stage in the negotiations, they began discussions on the exact content of the Sino-Soviet Treaty. According to Shu Guang Zhang, Mao hoped to use this treaty to deal more effectively with the "imperialist countries of the world" and that its main purpose was to "prevent Japan and its ally [the United States] from invading China." Perhaps bolstered by Stalin's reassurances that a security treaty was also in the USSR's best interests, on 7 January 1950—while Mao was still in Moscow—the PRC and North Korea signed three treaties opening postal, telegraphic, and telephone communications. The two sides also discussed military matters during January 1950, and Beijing agreed to repatriate 14,000 Korean troops being held in Manchuria once they were "organized into a combat-ready army in north-eastern China."<sup>547</sup>

Mao and Stalin completed negotiations for a Sino-Soviet military alliance, and they signed the final agreement on 14 February 1950. The terms included a Sino-Soviet military alliance, \$300 million in credit, and a promise to provide military and industry advisers. Thousands of Soviet advisers later traveled to China during the 1950s. On China's side, however, there was a commitment to fight alongside the USSR, no matter what the cost. This Sino-Soviet Treaty became "the cornerstone of the People's Republic's foreign policy for the greater part of its first decade."<sup>548</sup>

Although the Soviet border with North Korea was only twelve miles long, the USSR expended great effort building up the North Korean Army. When the Soviet troops withdrew in 1948, they left behind the North Korean People's Army (NKPA), a fully equipped force of 135,000 men divided into ten divisions. Not only did the NKPA have its own air force, but one armored division had 150 Russian T-34 tanks, and its artillery included Russian-built 120-mm howitzers. The hand-picked leader of North Korea, Kim Il Sung, was allied closely with Moscow; some reports indicate that he may have even attended "Soviet military schools in Moscow."<sup>549</sup>

During January 1950, Kim sent a message that it was time to "liberate" South Korea. Stalin discussed this issue with Mao, who agreed to aid the North Koreans should they run into trouble. According to John Lewis Gaddis, Kim then met with Mao and Stalin separately, and "exaggerated to both the Russians and the Chinese the degree to which each supported what he himself wanted to do."<sup>550</sup> As a result of Stalin's ploy to leave the final decision to Mao, Stalin was seemingly able to avoid many of the negative consequences of the Korean War:

Stalin here maneuvered himself into the enviable position of having everything to gain and nothing to lose. By forcing Mao to affirm Kim's scheme, Stalin forever after could say that he had left the decision to Mao. Fully aware of Mao's determination to seize Taiwan, Stalin could be reasonably sure of Mao's assent and could be confident that the onus for the attack, whether successful or not and regardless of the U.S. reaction, would rest solely on Mao (and Kim).<sup>551</sup>

The Soviet Union may have won through this maneuver, but China clearly lost. Hsü has estimated that the "cost of Stalin's trust was high: China sent a million 'volunteers' to intervene in the Korean War and had to pay the entire \$1.35 billion for the Soviet equipment and supplies necessary for the venture, and Mao lost a son in the war."<sup>552</sup>

Meanwhile, in South Korea, the United States military command was generally unwilling and unprepared to halt the North Korean Army should it chose to intervene and cross the 38th parallel. Washington had formed and trained the 98,000-man South Korean Army, but did not provide it with modern weapons or airplanes, perhaps fearful that it might use them to attack the north pre-emptively. In addition, the political leader of South Korea, Syngman Rhee, was an American-trained academic with little practical military experience. During a UN sponsored vote in May 1948, which North Korea boycotted, the South Koreans established the Republic of Korea (ROK) with its capital in Seoul.

The United States perhaps unwittingly confirmed Stalin's belief that it would not fight to protect South Korea, by announcing in January 1950 that it would not send any additional aid to the Nationalist government that had retreated to Taiwan. Furthermore, in line with former agreements with the USSR, the last two divisions of U.S. troops in Korea were withdrawn to Japan in 1948. Finally, in January 1950, Secretary of State Dean Acheson appeared to exclude Korea and Taiwan when he announced that the American line of defense would extend from the Aleutians through Japan, Okinawa, and the Philippines.

Kim and the other Communist leaders clearly misunderstood Acheson's comment, incorrectly assuming that Washington would not respond to a North Korean invasion. It was in the aftermath of Acheson's speech that North Korea began to ready itself for battle. Russell Spurr has recounted, therefore, how: "Critics later accused Acheson of signaling world communism that South Korea was there for the taking."<sup>553</sup>

### **The North Korean attack**

Fighting erupted along the 38th parallel on the Ongjin Peninsula in the early hours of 25 June 1950, and throughout the next hour or two moved eastward to Kaesong. South Korean troops had been aware of increased activity north

of the parallel and were not taken completely by surprise, but they were surprised by the North Koreans' determination. According to one account, it was near the town of Chorwon where the 1st Regiment of the ROK Army's 7th Division weakened, and the 3rd and 4th Divisions of the Korean People's Army, with the help of an armored brigade, broke through the line and marched south toward Seoul. Although Kim Il Sung undoubtedly expected the United States to concede South Korea without a fight, Secretary of State Acheson immediately increased U.S. air cover and ground troops for South Korea. To insure that the Korean conflict was not just a ruse to cover a Chinese attack on Taiwan, President Truman decided on 27 June 1950 to station the 7th Fleet between Taiwan and the Chinese mainland. Truman's fears were justified, since the PRC had planned a summer offensive against Taiwan, but Zhou Enlai quickly denounced the American action as "armed aggression" against China.<sup>554</sup> According to David Clayton, between "1950 and 1954, the seizure of Taiwan was one of the most important foreign policy objectives for the Chinese People's Government," and: "Evidence from Soviet and Chinese archives indicates that Mao wanted Taiwan taken by the summer of 1950, and that the People's Liberation Army (PLA) was planning an assault from 1949 onwards."<sup>555</sup>

North Korea's attack came as a surprise to Washington, since the CIA analysts had judged that Kim was bluffing. What also came as a shock was the easy rout of the American-trained ROK forces and the decision of the Rhee government to abandon Seoul and flee to the south. Rhee first relocated to Suwon, and later to Taejon. Over-confident of the ROK's abilities, Washington first sent a fact-finding mission to South Korea under Brigadier General John H. Church. His mission arrived on 27 June, and the very next day he contacted Washington with the news that American troops would be necessary to halt the unchecked NKPA advance.

A final ROK defense was quickly thrown up along the Han River, but there was not enough artillery to hold off an organized attack. In addition, what little American air power was available was directed into strikes at North Korean airfields. This action may have countered any possible threat from the Soviet-backed NKPA Air Force, but it left the Han River without effective air cover. Although this point is debatable, one author, at least, has called MacArthur's decision "foolish," since it diverted American "air power for an attack in the wrong direction," and so "had the effect of diluting the air attacks at the Han, and they were deemed to be of limited importance."<sup>556</sup>

The North Korean Army soon crossed the Han River, and with the ROK in retreat and American forces unprepared to assist them in great numbers, the NKPA continued its advance southward. On 30 June, MacArthur recommended authorization for the American infantry to join the battle. According to his statement to the joint chiefs of staff,

if authorized it was his intention to move immediately a United States regimental combat team to the combat area in Korea as a nucleus of a possible buildup of two divisions from Japan for early offensive action in accordance with his mission of clearing South Korea of North Korean forces.<sup>557</sup>

After receiving permission from the White House, on 2 July 1950, the First Battalion of the 24th Division's 21st Regiment left Japan, and, on 5 July, they engaged the North Korean enemy. After arriving at the South Korean port of Pusan, they began to head north to Taejon. Their primary mission was to slow down, and push back if possible, the North Korean advance.<sup>558</sup>

Although the American troops tried to halt the NKPA advance by defending the Seoul–Pusan highway near the town of Osan, the NKPA's T-34 tanks drove right through them on 5 July. The North Koreans' discipline and training surprised the American military leaders. Instead of fleeing, the NKPA infantry continued to advance, flanked the American position, and eventually surrounded it. In what was later called merely a "delaying action" at Osan, the American 24th Division lost about 185 men, and was in disarray for days.

Following the NKPA's success in crossing the Kum River during 10–12 July, the next major American goal became to defend Taejon. Under the command of Major General William F. Dean, the 24th Division held Taejon for five days beginning on 18 July. Before being reinforced by the 25th Infantry and the 1st Cavalry, however, Dean was captured, and two regiments were all but destroyed. Although the Americans temporarily halted the NKPA's advance, when it appeared they might be outflanked, the American troops had little choice but to order a retreat and begin to pull back toward Taegu, one of the last towns of any size before reaching the port city of Pusan.

The American and South Korean forces finally held firm at Pusan and halted the North Korean advance during heavy fighting during August. Bolstered by American reinforcements from the Army's 2nd Infantry and 5th RCT, as well as from the Marines, the total American force near Pusan soon numbered 45,000. According to some estimates, this contingent was approximately twice the size of the North Korean force that was advancing on Pusan. Throughout August, both sides continued to fight over the so-called "Pusan Perimeter." The Americans scored their first victories, when the 8th Army repulsed the NKPA 6th Division and virtually destroyed the NKPA 3rd Division as it tried to cross the Naktong River. In what was known as the "Bowling Alley" near Taegu, they also defeated the NKPA 1st and 13th Divisions.

By early September 1950, the North Korean Army had pushed the South Korean defenders south into a small defensive perimeter surrounding Pusan. Over 90 percent of Korean territory was now in their hands, but North Korea had failed to achieve its ultimate goal of taking Pusan. In addition, Kim Il

Sung failed to defeat the ROK and push the American troops out of South Korea. The South Korean and American troops still controlled the port and its facilities, and more reinforcements were arriving daily. Their combined forces soon reached 150,000, about half American and half ROK. With his troops finally getting a well-deserved rest, General MacArthur was hard at work preparing a counterstroke aimed at the Inch'on Peninsula, just west of Seoul.

Just as the U.S. Military had acted more firmly than Kim had predicted, the American political response was also stronger than expected. Since the Soviet government was boycotting the United Nations Security Council because the Council refused to give Taiwan's seat to the PRC, the United States succeeded in passing a resolution denouncing the North Korean attack on South Korea. The UN also urged its members to give all possible assistance to South Korea. Therefore, although the United States spearheaded the effort to assist South Korea, troops from fifteen other nations—including Great Britain, France, Australia, New Zealand, Thailand, Canada, Greece, Turkey, and the Philippines—joined the effort, thus putting the onus of breaking the peace squarely on North Korea and its allies, the USSR and, later, the PRC.

In addition to sending troops to South Korea, the United States also authorized the 7th Fleet to patrol the Taiwan Straits. Truman's goal was to neutralize China before it could use the conflict in Korea as either an excuse, or a cover, to invade Taiwan. The PRC quickly denounced the U.S. action as a sign of armed aggression against China, while Jiang unexpectedly regained American support, which had been seriously lacking during the last years of the Chinese civil war. This support proved crucial in the mid-1950s at the time of the Taiwan Straits crisis.<sup>559</sup> In a final unexpected twist, however, with the 7th Fleet blocking any possible attack on Taiwan, the PLA began to shift its troops northward, close to China's border with North Korea. According to one author, some 30,000 troops from China's 3rd Army relocated from Fujian Province to Manchuria, while other PLA units moved from South China to Shandong Province.<sup>560</sup>

Tensions between the U.S. and China continued to increase. Zhou Enlai even warned Washington, through the offices of the Indian ambassador, that China would intervene if American troops invaded North Korea. Under General MacArthur's command, the UN forces prepared for a counterstrike that would not be limited simply to regaining South Korea's original borders. With the support of President Truman, Secretary of State Dean Acheson, and Secretary of Defense George Marshall, General MacArthur's goals eventually included crossing the 38th parallel, defeating the NKPA, overthrowing Kim Il Sung, and then unifying all of Korea under a democratically elected government. All of these goals might have been attained if China had remained out of the war, a possibility that became ever more remote during the fall and early winter of 1950.



### **The invasion at Inch'on and China's entry into the Korean War**

Throughout August and September 1950, the UN forces in South Korea depleted the North Korean Army by bombing its supply lines from the north. Meanwhile, the UN forces quickly built up their artillery, tanks, and air power. On 15 September, the UN counter-offensive began by successfully landing behind the North Korean lines at Inch'on, and forcing the North Koreans to retreat. On 7 October 1950, UN troops crossed the border into North Korea, and on 19 October they occupied North Korea's capital of P'yongyang. As the military push continued northward toward the Yalu River, which separated North Korea from China, the likelihood of Chinese intervention became increasingly apparent. In the fall of 1950, the PLA began to enter North Korea to oppose the American-led UN forces. Between 14 October and 1 November 1950, tens of thousands of Communist "volunteers" secretly crossed the Yalu River. Chinese forces counter-attacked on 25 October 1950, and by 2 November it had become apparent that regular Chinese troops had indeed become involved in the Korean conflict.

General MacArthur himself described his planned invasion of Inch'on as a "5,000-to-1" gamble, but it was a gamble that paid off.<sup>561</sup> Departing from Kobe and Yokohama on 11 September 1950, in over 250 ships, the 1st Marines and the 7th Infantry Division were scheduled to lead the attack at Inch'on, with the 5th and 7th Marine Corps joining them later. Naval bombardment took place on 13–14 September. Although the intensity of the bombardment made the NKPA suspect that Inch'on might be where the main landing would occur, it could not bring in reinforcements from the Pusan Perimeter quickly enough to counter the arrival of the American troops.

The Inch'on landing started on 15 September 1950. The UN forces soon overpowered the estimated 2,000 North Korean troops defending the area, and by midnight an estimated 13,000 Marines had disembarked. Following their successful landing, the American troops struck inland for Seoul. Meeting light resistance, they took Kimpo Airfield on 20 September and were soon on the outskirts of Seoul. By 25 September, there were an estimated 50,000 American troops outside the city, or almost double the size of the NKPA forces inside the city. Although they moved in on 25 September, it took three days of street-fighting to clear the city. The Inch'on invasion proved to be an enormous victory involving a minimum of UN casualties, and was described by Admiral William F. Halsey in the following glowing terms: "The Inch'on landing is the most masterly and audacious strategic stroke in all history."<sup>562</sup>

Meanwhile, at the Pusan Perimeter, a break-out was set for 16 September, the day after the Inch'on invasion. The plan was to attack to the west with four American divisions, and in so doing create four separate offensive lines across South Korea to isolate and trap the NKPA. On the American side were approximately 150,000 American and ROK troops, facing about 70,000 NKPA



troops. The four separate battles along the Pusan Perimeter all got off to a slow start—the biggest concern were the NKPA bunkers located on hilltops along the perimeter—and it took four days of fighting before the NKPA ranks began to show signs of breaking.

On 19 September, the 8th Army finally began to fight its way through the perimeter. After several days of conflict, the line broke and the UN forces began to pursue the retreating NKPA northward. As described by Max Hastings:

All along the front, the enemy was collapsing. North Korean units began to melt away, thousands of fugitives throwing away weapons, equipment, clothing. On the 26th, at Osan, men of the 1st Cavalry driving north from the Perimeter met men of the 7th Infantry, pushing south from Inch'on. ROK units advanced up the east coast, meeting negligible resistance. Everywhere, the North Koreans were breaking in flight, surrendering in hundreds, or taking to the mountains to maintain guerrilla war.<sup>563</sup>

On 29 September, General MacArthur presided over a ceremony in Seoul marking the return of the Syngman Rhee government to its capital.

Although MacArthur apparently thought he had won, and that what remained unfinished was only a “cleaning up” operation, in actuality the height of the Korean War was yet to come. Many statesmen and officials in Washington, including many in the Defense Department, believed that the United Nation’s mandate included more than just pushing the North Korean Army back within its own borders, and lobbied for invading North Korea and ousting Kim Il Sung from power. Since the Soviet Union and China had so far declined to enter the war to aid Kim, it seemed that they might also be willing to stand aside during his ouster. MacArthur clearly believed this as well, and in early October made a radio broadcast to North Korea ordering them to surrender and lay down their arms.

The first ROK troops crossed the 38th parallel on 28 September 1950. Almost two weeks later, on 9 October, the 8th Army advanced across the border in full force. Encountering heavy North Korean resistance during the first week, the 8th Army progressed slowly. Then suddenly the resistance broke, and the NKPA initiated a full-scale retreat. What has been called a “race” began between the 1st Cavalry and the 24th Infantry to see who could first reach the Yalu River. MacArthur reassured President Truman during a private meeting on Wake Island on 16 October that the Chinese would not attack, and he later announced that the war would be over by Thanksgiving.

Most commentators agree that it was MacArthur’s decision to cross the 38th parallel and enter North Korea that led to China’s entry into the war. For example, Zhou Enlai clearly warned Washington on 2 October 1950 that if U.S. troops invaded the DPRK’s territory then China would enter the war.

Beginning in September 1950, Beijing also began to send warnings through Great Britain of possible Chinese intervention if UN forces crossed the Korean border into China. It also sent similar messages through Moscow, Stockholm, and New Delhi.

In support of Beijing, Moscow proposed to the UN Fifth General Assembly that it institute a cease-fire in Korea, followed immediately thereafter by the withdrawal of all foreign troops and nationwide elections to form a new government. On 4 October, the General Assembly voted down this proposal. Soon afterward, on 7 October, it approved the United States proposal to unify Korea by force.<sup>564</sup>

If President Truman had taken Beijing's and Moscow's warning signals seriously, he could perhaps have reined in MacArthur during their meeting on 16 October. Instead, MacArthur left the meeting believing that he had received a full presidential mandate to continue the war into North Korean territory. In preparation for the expected UN attack on the north, the PLA began to cross the border into North Korea. As mentioned above, between 14 October and 1 November 1950, almost 200,000 Communist "volunteers" secretly crossed the Yalu River.

With Washington's full backing, the UN offensive continued and P'yongyang, the capital of North Korea, fell on 19 October. Meanwhile, in an almost exact parallel to what had happened to the Rhee government in the south, Kim Il Sung's government had little choice but to flee northward to escape the fighting. On 20 October, MacArthur's headquarters transmitted the following intelligence summary to the entire Far East Command:

Organized resistance on any large scale has ceased to be an enemy capability. Indications are that the North Korean military and political headquarters may have fled to Manchuria. Communications with, and consequent control of, the enemy's field units have dissipated to a point of ineffectiveness. In spite of these indications of disorganization, there are no signs, at the moment, that the enemy intends to surrender. He continues to retain the capability of fighting small scale delaying actions against UN pressure.<sup>565</sup>

On 20 October, General MacArthur urged all the UN troops to exert "maximum effort" to advance northward, and on 24 October he lifted the last restrictions on American troops converging on the Yalu River.

By the middle of October, the ROK troops had reached Wonsan, and they arrived at the Yalu by 25 October. Meanwhile, the U.S. 1st Marine Division finally conducted its delayed amphibious landing at Wonsan on 25 October, the day after Bob Hope had already presented a U.S.O. show there for the infantry. Soon afterward, the UN forces began to encounter Chinese troops. In fact, by 31 October, a total of twenty-five Chinese prisoners had been taken. MacArthur and the other UN commanders ignored this ominous sign.

As a result, most military leaders of the UN forces were taken by surprise when the Chinese began their counter-attack on 25 November 1950.

### **The November 1950 Chinese invasion of Korea**

Intelligence estimates of the number of Chinese troops in North Korea in October 1950 varied between 15,000 and 20,000.<sup>566</sup> Only much later were these numbers revised upward to 250,000, and as many as 700,000 Chinese troops operated in North Korea at the peak of the Chinese campaign.<sup>567</sup> General MacArthur's decision to launch a "home-by-Christmas" offensive on 24 November 1950 prompted a massive PLA counter-attack that quickly pushed the American and South Korean troops back to the south. The UN retreat lasted until January 1951, ending only after the UN forces crossed the 38th parallel and forfeited once again the city of Seoul to the Communists. While the PLA could claim victory, it was at a high cost with hundreds of thousands of Chinese troops killed or wounded.<sup>568</sup>

Mao Zedong began to prepare for China's intervention in North Korea during August to September 1950. Although it is difficult to know for sure, Mao was concerned that American forces would soon be on the Sino-Korean border, just as Soviet troops were even then occupying the Sino-Mongolian border:

Even if Washington did not attack China immediately, it could establish a hostile regime on the Korean Peninsula and deploy its troops along the Sino-Korean border to apply military pressure. This move would constitute a very grave threat to northeastern China, the industrial heartland of the country. The task of sustaining a passive defense of the region was impossible.<sup>569</sup>

On 27 August, therefore, Mao ordered the commander and political commissar of the First Field Army and of the Northwest Military Region, General Peng Dehuai, to increase the size of his force on the Sino-Korean border from four corps to twelve.

By 15 September, additional PLA units received orders to move northward. On 6 September, the 50th Corps arrived in Manchuria. On 8 September, the 9th Army, garrisoned near Shanghai, moved north to Tianjin, and the 19th Army in Northwest China moved east. Immediately after the UN success at Inch'on, Mao reportedly stated, "it won't do for us not to intervene in the war," and he ordered that military preparations be accelerated.<sup>570</sup>

On 2 October 1950, the PRC Politburo agreed to send PLA troops into North Korea as the "Chinese Peoples' Volunteers." This decision was to go into effect on 15 October. Mao also sent a telegram to Stalin asking for Soviet aid, especially by providing Soviet weapons and ammunition. Later, Mao also

requested Soviet air cover for the Chinese troops in North Korea. One source has described Mao's request in terms of "blackmail" since Mao implied that without Soviet arms, the PLA would be able to employ only "defensive" warfare and could not take the offensive.<sup>571</sup>

Stalin initially balked at this request, but on 14 October he reportedly promised Zhou Enlai that the Soviet Union would extend its "air umbrella" to cover Chinese territory, although he would not agree to cover North Korean territory. In addition, Stalin agreed that the USSR would provide "substantial military supplies and fighter planes to China." As soon as Zhou returned to Beijing, Mao gave the final order on 18 October for the Chinese volunteers to enter North Korea.<sup>572</sup>

With the USSR's help, China hoped to create a modern, mobile army. This entailed huge purchases from the USSR of heavy artillery, tanks, and aircraft, and paid for with Chinese goods. As later Sino-Soviet exchanges made clear, the Soviet Union agreed to provide arms for sixty divisions, but by August 1952 had only delivered ten divisions' worth. Of these, Zhou Enlai explained to Stalin, "3 have been given over to Korea and 7 have been earmarked for Chinese detachments in Korea." When Stalin asked whether all sixty divisions would go to Korea, Zhou responded that in addition to the three divisions to the North Koreans, forty-two of the Chinese divisions would be for Korea, or a total of forty-five of the sixty divisions.<sup>573</sup>

In November 1950, the PLA troops did not yet possess top-of-the-line Soviet weapons. Instead, according to Shu Guang Zhang, they were confident of success because they had so recently defeated the Jiang Jieshi's American-trained and equipped troops, and so "their victory padded the illusion that China could beat American troops." Over-emphasizing their own "subjective advantage" over the UN's "objective difficulties," the PLA commanders "never realized that they exaggerated the strength of the Chinese infantrymen, who had had no experience in modern warfare."<sup>574</sup>

The exact date of China's intervention in North Korea is difficult to determine, since PLA "volunteers" crossed the border from mid-October onward. By 1 November, it was absolutely clear that China was in the war, when two full PLA divisions—an estimated 20,000 men—attacked the town of Unsan, midway between P'yongyang and the Yalu River. Simultaneously, they attacked from the north, northwest, and west, utilizing frontal assaults composed of waves of infantry variously described as a "human sea" or as a "swarm of locusts."

The Chinese troops involved in the 1 November attack did not possess heavy weapons, and were apparently supported only with light mortars. They had no air power, no tanks, and only light artillery, so, most of their attacks took place at night. The whistles, bugles, and horns that they used to signal each other were disconcerting to the ROK and American troops. According to one account: "To the ROKs and Americans, the oncoming waves of

massed manpower were astonishing, terrifying, and, to those Americans who believed the war was over, utterly demoralizing.<sup>575</sup>

Within only a couple of hours, the Chinese defeated both the UN forces and the ROK troops. Most American troops were fortunate to be able to retreat, but Chinese troops managed to cut off the 8th Cavalry. Attempts to rescue it failed, and some 600 of its original 800 men either died or were captured. Following this setback, the UN and ROK forces began to withdraw and regroup. During the next five days of fighting the Chinese forces made significant headway toward the Chongchon River, but then, on 6 November, the Chinese troops pulled back and broke off the engagement for no apparent reason.

Some UN commanders thought the Chinese had exhausted themselves. General MacArthur apparently held this view, perhaps based on erroneous intelligence estimates that the total number of Chinese combatants in Korea was below 34,000. In fact, later information showed that there were already thirty Chinese infantry divisions, or some 300,000 men in Korea. The bulk of these infantry were in the 13th Army, under General Lin Biao, which consisted of six armies of eighteen divisions, or approximately 180,000 men. The rest were part of the 9th Army Group, which was made of up twelve infantry divisions, or about 120,000 men.

In response to the fighting, MacArthur ordered the bombing of the Yalu bridges in early November, but was careful not to violate Manchurian airspace. This order was an almost impossible task considering the meandering route of the Yalu River. On 6 November Washington countermanded him, and ordered that targets within five miles of the Manchurian border were not to be bombed. MacArthur did not take the reversal of his orders without protest, and later he claimed that he received these new orders with astonishment and shock. Faced with the possibility that his disagreement with MacArthur would become public, Truman backed down and authorized the bombing. Later, he was also to agree to MacArthur's plans for a new offensive. Both of these actions merely led to greater Chinese intervention.

With Washington's full backing, MacArthur launched a "home-by-Christmas" offensive on 24 November, in response to China's introduction of ground forces. Although UN forces reached the Chongchon River after two days of fighting, the PLA counter-attacked with its full force during the night of 25 November. The size and intensity of this attack came as a complete surprise, and by 28 November the Chinese forces had succeeded in pushing the American and South Korean troops back toward the south. The 8th Army withdrew from the Chongchon River by 2 December, and they stopped along the 38th parallel by 13 December. While the Chinese forces in Korea succeeded in pushing the UN forces back, the cost was heavy: they stationed an estimated 700,000 Chinese troops in Korea at any one time, and suffered hundreds of thousands of casualties.

### The Chinese offensives and stalemate

The so-called “third” Chinese offensive on New Year’s Eve 1950 initiated a general UN retreat that lasted through January 1951, ending only after the UN forces crossed the 38th parallel, and allowed the city of Seoul to fall yet again to the Communist forces. The new line of demarcation temporarily became the Han River before the UN forces fought their way back to Seoul and formed a new line just north of the 38th parallel. It was the holding of this line that occupied both sides until a truce was achieved in July 1953. In April 1951, Truman dismissed General MacArthur and replaced him with General Matthew Bunker Ridgway, who successfully led the UN forces in a number of offensives that enabled them to regain lost ground.

The timing of the third Chinese offensive took advantage of the UN celebrations of New Year, as the Chinese crossed the 38th parallel and invaded South Korea. The primary objective was Seoul, and the Chinese troops were so numerous that the UN forces risked being encircled and wiped out. General Ridgway commanded the 8th Army, and he soon ordered a withdrawal to the outskirts of Seoul. Although some 50,000 UN forces, supported by hundreds of tanks and artillery pieces, were ready to defend Seoul, Chinese forces to the east succeeded in breaking through the ROK line and threatened to outflank and surround the city. On 3 January 1951, Ridgway ordered the withdrawal to the south of the Han River, and then, on 4 January, to a line further south close to the 37th parallel known as UN Line “D,” just thirty miles north of the Kum River.

Washington discussed the possibility of withdrawing American troops completely from Korea, but the final decision was up to General MacArthur. However, Washington defined the primary mission in Korea as protecting Japan, and so quashed all attempts by MacArthur to amplify the war into a conflict with China. Truman’s faith in MacArthur weakened following a series of messages sent during early to mid-January, in which MacArthur claimed that Washington’s policy was “not feasible” and shifted responsibility for a total withdrawal from Korea on to Truman’s shoulders. According to Clay Blair, it was this exchange that led Truman to lose faith in MacArthur. Almost immediately afterward, Washington began to bypass MacArthur in order to seek direct lines of communication with the commanders in the field.<sup>576</sup>

In China, responsibility for continuing the war now fell directly on Mao’s shoulders. The Chinese had publicly celebrated when the UN troops retreated across the Han River on 5 January 1951, but they were put off when their opponents stopped near Suwon instead of withdrawing all the way to Pusan. General Peng, concerned that a UN counter-attack might be in the offing, halted. In fact, Peng was correct, but he was still taken aback when General Ridgway launched a large-scale offensive on 25 January 1951. By 27 January it was the Chinese forces who were in retreat, and Peng advised Mao to accept a UN-sanctioned cease-fire. According to Chae-Jin Lee, Mao

rejected Peng's recommendation because he believed that the "United States was not interested in a genuine cease-fire and that the only way for China to win was to score another big military success."<sup>577</sup>

Under direct orders from Mao, General Peng ordered a "fourth" offensive. It was short-lived, however, and in mid-February 1951 he called it off. On 16 February, Peng called on his troops to "defend their line along the 38th Parallel pending receipt of additional Soviet support."<sup>578</sup> However, this Soviet aid never arrived, and the Chinese troops were soon in full retreat. By the end of February the new line was slightly north of the 38th parallel, and Seoul fell to UN forces on 14 March.

On 24 March, General MacArthur made an unauthorized announcement to the press once again calling on the widening of the war to include China.<sup>579</sup> The State Department quickly issued a statement disassociating its policies from MacArthur's. By 11 April 1951, President Truman officially announced that he was replacing MacArthur with General Ridgway. This decision almost caused a public scandal since it was leaked to the press even before Truman had informed MacArthur. The public reaction was predictable: "General MacArthur was a legend, an institution, if you will, in all America. Even people who disagreed with him entirely were shocked when he was fired."<sup>580</sup> On the other hand, Truman's decision highlighted Washington's determination to keep the war limited to the Korean Peninsula.

With Mao's urging, the Chinese forces made several final attempts to regain their previous momentum. In their "fifth" offensive, which began on 22 April 1951, they sent T-34 tanks and their heaviest artillery across the 38th parallel, but it failed to push the UN forces south of the Han River. In mid-May, the "sixth" Chinese offensive attempted to outflank the UN forces from the east, but it was checked by the 3rd Infantry Division on 19 May. Although the Chinese forces made considerable headway, in late May a successful UN counter-attack, called Operation Piledriver, succeeded in recovering territory north of the 38th parallel. In danger of being outflanked and surrounded, the Chinese troops pulled back. Their retreat quickly turned into a rout, and UN estimates of Chinese casualties were over 100,000.

Following the defeat of China's fifth and sixth offensives, the PLA assumed defensive positions just north of the 38th parallel. These lines were to remain virtually unchanged for the next two-years, as diplomats worked hard to negotiate a truce. During this two-year period, the Chinese and North Koreans reinforced their defensive lines by digging a complex network of trenches, tunnels, and bunkers that "honeycombed" the hills overlooking the UN positions. Soviet assistance enabled China to equip three divisions of North Koreans and seven divisions of Chinese troops with modern weapons. By January 1952, General Van Fleet was to report that the Chinese artillery was greater than the UN's and that "their supplies of ammunition and equipment were mountainous." Even so, new offensives during the spring of 1952 failed to change the battle lines in any major ways.<sup>581</sup>



During June 1951, the Soviet delegate to the UN first proposed peace talks. Negotiations began during July 1951. Vice Admiral C. Turner Joy, representing the UN forces, initially led the delegation, while William K. Harrison replaced him in May 1952. Relations were anything but cordial, and Harrison once referred to his Communist counterparts as “common criminals.”<sup>582</sup> Discussions on the exchange of POWs proved to be the most important issue, and the talks became bogged down almost immediately. Only after the two sides resolved this issue in March 1953, immediately after Stalin’s death, did they negotiate and sign a final truce on 27 July 1953.<sup>583</sup>

Soon after the end of the Korean War, General Peng returned to China as a national hero. The PRC hailed its actions in the Korean War as a great victory and described it as “the first time that China had effectively stood up against the West since the Opium War.”<sup>584</sup> When Beijing reorganized the PLA two years later, Peng became one of the ten marshals, second in command only to Zhu De; but Peng was ousted by Mao in 1959 during the Great Leap Forward. Later, he died in 1974 during interrogation in the Cultural Revolution. After the Cultural Revolution had run its course, Peng was rehabilitated posthumously in 1980.

While Chinese forces in North Korea succeeded in obtaining their objective of pushing the UN forces back below the 38th parallel, the cost was heavy. Throughout the war millions of Chinese troops were stationed in Korea, and estimates of Chinese killed and wounded in the fighting were staggering. According to one set of estimates, the casualties for the UN were 54,000 dead and 103,000 wounded, a total of 400,000 South Korean casualties, perhaps 600,000 North Korean casualties, and up to 1,000,000 Chinese casualties.<sup>585</sup> The Pentagon numbers were higher, putting the total number of casualties on both sides at 2,400,000 million; 996,937 on the UN side, and an estimated 1,420,000 on the Chinese and North Korean side.<sup>586</sup> More recent estimates of Chinese dead are much smaller, at 450,000.<sup>587</sup>

Regardless of the actual numbers, the Chinese losses proved to the PLA leadership that China must increase its efforts to modernize the PLA, a program that was quickly initiated during the 1950s. The Chinese “victory” in North Korea, however, widened the Chinese geopolitical perspective to include China’s former tributary states. As a result, the “Chinese emerged as legitimate and influential players in managing the Korean question.”<sup>588</sup>

## Conclusions

In the aftermath of the Korean War, the Chinese claimed that the PLA was victorious. Not only had it assisted Kim Il Sung, but it successfully countered western military “aggression.” Following the truce in July 1953, mass celebrations honored the Chinese volunteers’ return from Korea. Although China inflated its claim to victory, the Korean War did change the balance of power in the Far East in three important ways: militarily, diplomatically, and regionally.



Each of these factors eventually led to further military conflicts with China's neighbors.

Militarily, China began the Korean War as merely a satellite of the Soviet Union. By the terms of the Sino-Soviet military alliance, and based on the confidential promises made during Stalin's and Mao's talks, China committed herself to sending troops to Korea if Kim Il Sung ran into trouble. Meanwhile, the main source of weapons and ammunition would be the Soviet Union. With Kim's sudden reverses during mid-September 1950, Mao decided in early October to send PLA troops into Korea. Meanwhile, Stalin only grudgingly agreed to extend the USSR's air power to cover Chinese territory and to provide military supplies and fighter planes. This decision meant that almost all of the fighting, and the largest share of wartime financing, fell to China.

Although the PLA had emerged from the Chinese civil war with the outward appearance of a conventional army, by the time the Korean War was over it had trained its personnel to match the structure. Peng Dehuai succeeded in creating a modern, mobile army. In Korea, the PLA proved that it was able to fight and even defeat the technologically superior American-backed United Nations forces. This transition to a conventional army required huge investments in heavy artillery, tanks, and aircraft. As part of its military modernization, China even acquired Soviet MiG aircraft. These military reforms continued throughout the 1950s, and as will be shown in Chapter 15, China's newly modernized army was tested in a series of important border skirmishes with India in the early 1960s.

Diplomatically, China also came out of the Korean War much stronger than it was before the conflict. For example, during the Stalin-Mao talks in December 1949, Mao was clearly subservient to Stalin, since China was desperate for Soviet financial, industrial, and military support. Even so, the terms of the Sino-Soviet Friendship Treaty of 14 February 1950 included only \$300 million in credit, a pittance compared to what the U.S. was offering its allies at the same time. The Soviet Union later agreed to arm and equip a total of sixty divisions of Chinese and North Korean troops, but China had to pay for this privilege by sending consumer goods to the USSR.

Although Moscow clearly continued to hold the reigns of power during most of the Korean War, following Stalin's death in March 1953 the resistance to signing a truce largely disappeared. The Chinese negotiators became more conciliatory and rapidly agreed on the terms of the truce ending the Korean War. Additionally, after Stalin's death, Mao saw himself as the most senior leader in the socialist camp, and he clearly expected Moscow to treat him with greater respect. PRC propaganda celebrating China's victory in Korea added a certain military legitimacy to Mao's claims. Mao's inflation of his own international standing was not acceptable to the USSR's new leaders, and his attempt to bring about a reversal in the diplomatic order eventually exacerbated Sino-Soviet border conflicts during the late 1960s.

Regionally, the Korean War allowed China to reassert its historic claim of being the central power in Asia. Not only was the truce hailed as a great victory, but Beijing was now universally accepted as one of the major powers responsible for managing the Korean question. This change allowed the PRC once again to project its power outside its immediate borders, especially toward the former system of tributary states that had existed under earlier Chinese Empires.

This newly widened Chinese world view was to have an enormous impact throughout Asia. Without a doubt, the most notable examples of China's new geopolitical horizons were to be found in its border war with India, increased tensions with the Soviet Union, and in its rocky relations with Vietnam. As the following chapters in this volume will show, China used the PLA to reassert its Imperial borders with India, to challenge the Soviet Union's power along its lengthy borders, and to drive a wedge between Vietnam and the USSR so that China alone would be dominant in southeast Asia. All of these conflicts were part of China's long-range effort to reassert some measure of regional control over its former tributaries and along its borders.

China's so-called "victory" in North Korea was achieved at a heavy cost in terms of money, equipment, and personnel. However, it can be argued that the spoils of this victory were equally great. In particular, it allowed China over the following decades to break away from the diplomatic stranglehold of the Soviet Union, and to start the process of rebuilding Imperial China's tributary relations with Korea and Vietnam, and reforming its relations with India, the USSR, and the nations of southeast Asia. It is important to emphasize, therefore, that if China had lost the Korean War, it is not inconceivable that the underlying factors which contributed to these future international conflicts might never have surfaced.

## THE SINO-INDIAN BORDER DISPUTE

The Sino-Indian border dispute was the PRC's second modern imperialist war. From the late 1950s, soon after the Korean War and following closely upon the military reforms of the mid-1950s, to the late 1970s, the PLA fought a series of territorial disputes with many of China's major neighbors—India, the USSR, and Vietnam. The PRC's goal was to reassert China's traditional borders and to dissuade the creation of anti-Chinese political alliances among its neighbors. China achieved a notable victory in its Sino-Indian conflict, and especially during the 1962 border war.

China's diplomatic relations with India during the 1950s went through many ups and downs. For example, India was one of the first non-Communist countries to recognize the PRC. During diplomatic talks between Zhou Enlai and Jawaharlal Nehru, the Indian government also accepted China's occupation of Tibet in 1950 to 1951, an action that created the mutual border between China and India. Throughout the Korean War, the Indian government frequently acted as intermediary between the UN and Beijing. Finally, in 1955, and with India's assistance, Zhou represented China at the Bandung conference. To an international audience, Zhou advocated peace, the abolition of nuclear weapons, universal representation in the UN, and arms reduction.

Sino-Indian tension sharpened during the late 1950s due to the PLA crack-down in Tibet following the Tibetan protest movement of March 1959. Ignoring China's protests, India granted sanctuary to the Dalai Lama, the spiritual leader of Tibet, who continued to be politically active while in exile. Border clashes erupted along the westernmost section of the Sino-Indian border during 1959, because the Chinese built a road south of the Kunlun mountain chain that India claimed. Fighting also erupted further to the east near Bhutan. Furthermore, it was during this crucial period that Nikita Khrushchev agreed to grant generous credits to India and refused to back China's territorial claims. Mao and other PRC leaders could not help seeing Soviet neutrality as a "betrayal of proletarian internationalism."<sup>589</sup>

With the 1960 public break in Sino-Soviet relations (see Chapter 16), China no longer had to hold back on the Sino-Indian border dispute. During 1962, following India's decision to move troops to the Sino-Indian border,

Chinese troops moved on to the Thag La ridge, a section of the eastern border just north of the McMahon Line. Even though this territory was arguably part of China, on 22 September 1962, India ordered its troops to repel the PLA. This triggered a PLA “blitzkrieg”-type offensive on 20 October 1962.

After successfully taking its territorial objectives, China announced a unilateral cease-fire on 21 November 1962. The recently modernized PLA performed well, and quickly gained its territorial objectives. China’s military victory against India was also a diplomatic victory against the USSR, which had advocated policies of “peaceful coexistence” since the early 1960s. In sharp contrast to Khrushchev, Mao called for the expansion of the socialist camp by whatever means, including military. China’s detonation of its own atomic bomb during October 1964 re-emphasized its militant stance.

Although China’s victory in the Sino-Indian War was clearly not as important as the Korean War, there were several major differences. Most significantly, in the Korean War, Beijing and Moscow were allies and the Soviet government could claim some credit for the outcome, since it was the major supplier of arms and ammunition. In sharp contrast to the Korean War, Moscow backed New Delhi during the Sino-Indian War, and so China’s military victory against India was also a victory against the USSR. Another major difference was that Beijing’s victory in retaining, and even expanding, its territory to the southwest sent a clear signal to Moscow that unresolved territorial disagreements to the north would not be ignored forever. Therefore, the 1962 Sino-Indian War was in many ways a predecessor of the Sino-Soviet border clashes of the late 1960s.

### **The PLA military reforms during the 1950s**

The PLA’s success in the Sino-Indian War can be linked to its military reforms during the 1950s. Even before the end of the Korean War, Mao had reconsidered his earlier view of the American army as simply a paper tiger, and the PLA initiated a massive reorganization program. The size of the PLA dropped from 5 million to 2.5 million men, but the remaining divisions all carried modern rifles, mortars, and artillery. Structural reforms, put in place during 1954, divided the former six regional military bureaus into thirteen (and later eleven) regional commands. Finally, and perhaps most importantly, China opened modern military academies to train a whole new generation of officers in how to use western tactics and strategy to conduct modern war.

Since the mid-1930s, the PLA’s primary military philosophy was the “doctrine of People’s War.” Based on Mao’s tactics of guerrilla warfare, this philosophy held that the joint efforts of workers and peasants organized into a people’s army could defeat a technologically superior army. Strategically, this doctrine traded “space” for “time” by luring the enemy deep into one’s territory. As summarized by Thomas Roberts, the “advancing enemy forces gradually are worn down and weakened, and then annihilated in a campaign

of mobile and guerrilla warfare waged by a combination of regular forces and military.” As the enemy’s forces weakened, the PLA would eventually be in a position to obtain victory: “Constant attrition of the enemy’s troop strength, logistical capacity, and morale by the militia will eventually alter the balance of forces sufficiently to enable the Chinese to switch from the ‘strategic defensive’ to the ‘strategic offensive.’”<sup>590</sup>

Following the PRC’s 1949 creation, the Chinese leadership became less interested in sacrificing territory “now” to obtain victory “later.” Accordingly, a combination of “political, economic, and psychological” reasons led the PRC’s political and military leaders to consider fundamental shifts in their defense strategy, a process of reanalysis that was still going on well into the 1970s.<sup>591</sup> The PLA’s determination to retain control over comparatively insignificant borderlands adjoining India suggests that by the late 1950s and early 1960s the defense of China’s territorial borders was given the highest priority. To achieve this goal, the PLA initiated reforms in the army, air force, and navy.

The army was the single largest component of the PLA, with 5 million men in 1950. By 1953 this number had dropped to 3 million, by 1956 it was 2.75 million, and by 1957 it was 2.5 million. From late 1949 through 1953, about 1.5 million new recruits were drafted into the PLA to replace those being demobilized. New conscription laws, adopted in 1953, made all 18- to 20-year-olds eligible for the draft. Once these laws were fully adopted in 1955, they provided 800,000 new conscripts every year. The average soldier spent three years in active service, and then joined the reserves after his term was complete. Simultaneously, the military budget increased from 2.8 billion yuan in 1950, to 5.6 billion in 1953, to 6.1 billion in 1956, and then leveled off at 5.5 billion in 1957, a number that stayed constant with only comparatively minor fluctuations through 1960. As a result, the PLA’s military budget averaged between 20 to 40 percent of the entire government budget.<sup>592</sup>

Beginning in 1955, the PLA adopted a new table of fourteen ranks in the officer corps, and money salaries were paid for the first time. As Harlan Jencks has recounted:

Up to 1955, all PLA personnel had received food, clothing, and a small allowance in lieu of salaries, but that now changed dramatically. Although the regulations themselves did not mention differential salaries, they were adopted at that time. By 1964, monthly salaries would vary from US \$2.50 for privates to US \$192–236 for full generals.<sup>593</sup>

As Spence has commented, the difference in pay scales—with colonels getting three times more than lieutenants, and lieutenants ten times more than privates—helped to undermine the revolutionary unity of the earlier PLA cadre and the “last traces of the old camaraderie vanished.”<sup>594</sup> In 1965, during the Cultural Revolution, the PLA temporarily eliminated ranks and simply called all officers “cadre.”<sup>595</sup>

Politically, the PLA leaders took their orders from the Military Commission—of which Mao was chairman—under the direct control of the Party Central Committee. The Ministry of National Defense—headed during the mid-1950s by Peng Dehuai and later in the 1960s by Lin Biao—was next to be reformed. It was divided by the early 1970s into eight general groups: Military Schools, the Navy, Air Force, Artillery Corps, Armor Corps, Second Artillery Corps, Railway Engineer Corps, and Engineer Corps. There were also special groups involved with developing defenses for atomic, biological, and chemical warfare, as well as the regional Public Security Forces.

Geographically, the PLA initially expanded the former six regional bureaus to thirteen, and then later reduced them to a total of eleven Military Regions (MRs). The boundaries of the MRs tended not to conform exactly with provincial boundaries, and each MR included two or three of China's twenty-six provinces and autonomous regions. Within each MR were organized Military Districts (MDs) and Military Subdistricts (MSDs) which tended to overlap the existing political provinces and districts. In a real war the Military Regions would not be very functional. As Roberts has observed, while this military division "no doubt facilitates the army's discharge of its internal security responsibilities . . . a threat of large-scale conflict on the borders probably would result in the combining of those MRs most directly concerned into 'fronts' under the operational control of the General Staff Department."<sup>596</sup>

China's air force was comparatively small, and initially depended on a wide range of Japanese and American aircraft captured from the Japanese and Nationalist armies. Beginning in 1951, the USSR provided China with MiG-15 jet fighters and a small number of bombers. According to Xiaoming Zhang:

Korea constituted an important experience for the Chinese air force, which expanded from virtually nothing at the beginning of the war to one of the world's largest air powers by the end of the war. Ten fighter divisions (twenty-one regiments) and two bomber divisions (three flight groups), about 800 pilots and 59,700 ground personnel, were engaged in air operations in Korea.<sup>597</sup>

After 1955, China began to build its own Soviet MiG-17 jet fighters in special plants in Manchuria. Most of China's air force faced Taiwan, and a large number of airfields were located along China's southeast coast. Beginning in the mid- to late 1950s, China also set up programs to develop its own missile and the atomic bomb.

Finally, the PLA had never previously had a navy, and only after 1949 did it inherit what was left of the Nationalist Navy. This mainly included coastal vessels that were heavily concentrated in southern China, across from Taiwan. In 1955, when the Soviet Union returned the port of Lüshun (Port Arthur) to China, it handed over two destroyers and five submarines, two of which had long-range operational capabilities, but, as Jencks has discussed, it was not until

1966 to 1971 that China began “a major push to expand the fleet of major surface combatants.”<sup>598</sup>

A reform that had a huge impact on all the services was the creation of a new network of military schools and academies. Military schools opened in Beijing, Nanjing, and in Lüda. Meanwhile, a sizable number of PLA officers received advanced training in the USSR. In addition to teaching purely military matters, however, these academies supervised the political indoctrination of the PLA officers. Membership in the CCP continued to be widespread throughout the PLA officer corps.

China’s first five-year plan provided the PLA with a wide range of modern military equipment, including rifles, machine-guns, mortars, and artillery. China also began to make its own ammunition instead of purchasing it from the USSR, and so became more independent. The 1960 Sino–Soviet split had a huge impact on the PLA, and especially on the air force, which had relied on the USSR for virtually all its spare parts and fuel. By the early 1960s, China had succeeded in producing its own MiG-17s and MiG-19s, as well as T-54 tanks and naval patrol boats, but “the numbers were small and the designs out of date.”<sup>599</sup>

The 1950s’ military reforms had an enormous impact on the PLA. In particular, when compared to the PLA’s pre-1949 levels, the military reforms were clearly a success. Although the size of the PLA changed over time, by the late 1960s and early 1970s there were thirty-six tactical armies with a total force of 121 infantry divisions, twelve armored divisions, three airborne divisions, forty artillery divisions, sixteen railway and construction divisions, and about 150 independent regiments.<sup>600</sup> As the Sino–Indian conflict soon proved, the PLA’s reforms were both timely and effective.

### **The origins of the Sino–Indian border conflicts**

Following the creation of the PRC, relations between Beijing and New Delhi were generally quite good. India recognized the PRC, accepted its claim over Tibet, and acted as an intermediary during the Korean War. By inviting China to attend the Bandung Conference in 1955, India gave the PRC a platform on which to expound its views. These relations began to sour in 1959, as a result of the PRC’s militant repression of the Tibetan independence movement and the sudden departure of the Dalai Lama to India. Beginning in 1959, there were a series of small border clashes between the PLA and Indian troops. In September 1959, the PRC even challenged the validity of an 1842 treaty between Kashmir and Tibet demarcating the western border, as well as disputing the McMahon Line, which had been the *de facto* border of India and Tibet in the east since 1914. The western section in dispute was approximately 15,000 square miles in size, while the eastern section was about 25,000 square miles. Beijing claimed that these treaties were remnants of the British Imperial era.

China claimed that its diplomatic relations with India during the early 1950s were friendly, often insisting that the two countries had enjoyed 2,000 years of friendship. In fact, as Bhim Sandhu has observed, there was never any “real” friendship between the two countries, and this slogan was merely a convenient tool to “bolster their policies.”<sup>601</sup> Still, India was the second non-Communist country to recognize the PRC in 1949, right after Burma. Overlooking China’s occupation of Tibet in 1950, diplomatic talks between Zhou Enlai and Jawaharlal Nehru resulted in the April 1954 Sino-Indian Treaty on Tibet. Their talks also resulted in the so-called Panch Shila policy, which presented five principles—mutual respect of territorial integrity and sovereignty, non-aggression, non-interference, equality, and peaceful coexistence—that would govern Sino-Indian relations.

By means of this 1954 treaty, the Indian government accepted China’s occupation of Tibet in 1950 to 1951, an action that eliminated the traditional buffer state between the two Empires and created a mutual border between China and India. To critics of Nehru’s government, China’s elimination of Tibet as a buffer also proved that China had aggressive designs on Indian territory.<sup>602</sup> Even though differences regarding Tibet produced tension, the Indian government supported Beijing by advocating that China be allowed into the UN all through the Korean War, and it refused to brand China as an “aggressor.” In addition, New Delhi provided a useful function by frequently acting in the capacity of intermediary between London, Washington, and Beijing.

In 1955, India invited China to participate in the first Afro-Asian conference in Bandung, Indonesia. Zhou Enlai, in league with India and other Asian and African nations, publicly advocated peace, abolishing nuclear weapons, allowing universal representation within the UN, and global arms reduction. Bandung appeared to mark a turning point in China’s foreign policy, since Zhou’s speech appeared to show a true break from China’s earlier aggressive and expansionist policies, especially in Tibet. Zhou also tried to extend his five principles of peaceful coexistence to include other nations.

Sino-Indian tension sharpened almost immediately after the signing of the Tibet treaty and the adoption of the Panch Shila principles. On 17 July 1954, the Chinese government first claimed the Barahoti (in Chinese sources, Wuje) section of the border was Chinese. Thereafter, on 13 August 1954, China protested that Indian troops had intruded into this territory, an accusation that India firmly denied on 27 August. Soon after the successful completion of the Bandung conference, on 28 June 1955, the Indian government protested a Chinese incursion into Barahoti, and this time China denied the charge. Only two months after signing the 1954 Tibet treaty and the adoption of the Panch Shila principles, therefore, the Sino-Indian honeymoon was over.

Border tension continued to increase throughout the 1950s. During 1956, China took possession of the Tunjun La and Shipki La passes. In 1958, the



Indian government first learned of the completion of a Chinese road across Indian territory in Ladakh. India protested, but with no effect. Finally, on 24 August 1958, the Indian government protested the publication of Chinese maps showing large areas along the Sino-Indian border as Chinese territory. Beijing replied on 3 November 1958, and implied that additional border revisions might soon appear based on the results of a new survey of the border regions. When Prime Minister Nehru wrote a personal letter to Prime Minister Zhou Enlai protesting against these problems, he received a note from Zhou claiming that China and India had never signed a “treaty or agreement on the Sino-Indian border” and that, in fact, “border disputes do exist between China and India.”<sup>603</sup>

Zhou’s letter came as a shock to India, because Beijing denied the validity of every treaty ever signed on the Sino-Indian border. These included the Anglo-Chinese Convention of 1890 detailing the Sikkim boundary, the Kashmir-Tibetan treaty of 1842 detailing the Ladakh boundary, and—most importantly for India—the 1914 McMahon Line, agreed to by plenipotentiaries of China, Tibet, and India, that demarcated the eastern border running from Bhutan all the way through Burma. According to Steven Hoffmann:

More important, the Indian government came to believe that the McMahon line was not merely a British invention. Political control over all the northeast tribal region had been exercised, in various indirect fashions, from the Assam side for centuries before the British appeared on the scene. Therefore, the McMahon line itself constituted recognition that the watershed crest of the Assam Himalaya formed the natural geographical divide between Tibet and an area (the Assam Himalaya) where Indian states had regularly exercised jurisdiction while Tibet and China had not.<sup>604</sup>

However, in a second letter dated 8 September 1959, Zhou clearly stated that, in the case of the eastern borders at least, the “so-called McMahon Line was a product of the British policy of aggression against the Tibet region of China and has never been recognized by any Chinese Central Government, and is therefore illegal.”<sup>605</sup>

The slow degradation in Sino-Indian relations hit a low during China’s Great Leap Forward, after the PLA repressed the Tibetan protest movement of March 1959. Ignoring China’s protests, on 31 March, India granted sanctuary to the Dalai Lama, the spiritual leader of Tibet.<sup>606</sup> The Dalai Lama continued to be active in exile, decrying the Communist regime in China for its “aggression” in Tibet. During a press conference on 20 June, the Dalai Lama called the Chinese rule in Tibet a “reign of terror”, and claimed that the 1951 treaty between China and Tibet had been “thrust on” Tibet “at the point of a bayonet.”<sup>607</sup>

Border clashes escalated along the western Sino-Indian border during 1959, because the Chinese built a road south of the Kunlun mountain chain. India claimed this road went through its territory. Fighting also erupted further to the east in Bhutan. Perhaps the most famous incident took place on 19 October 1959, when Chinese troops killed nine Indian police and arrested ten others. This took place in the Chang Chenmo Valley in southern Ladakh, just south of Kongka Pass. Prime Minister Nehru protested against this incident in the strongest possible terms, accusing China of ignoring the “facts” behind the incident.<sup>608</sup>

It was during this difficult period that Nikita Khrushchev agreed to grant generous Soviet credits to India—the two countries signed their second five-year trade agreement on 16 November 1958—while at the same time refusing to back China’s territorial claims. China’s decision not to abide by century-old treaties potentially had a direct impact on Sino-Soviet relations, since the Tsarist treaties stripping China of hundreds of thousands of square miles of territory dated from that same period. Mao and the other PRC leaders undoubtedly saw these Soviet actions in support of India—a non-aligned, non-socialist country—as a major insult against China.

Failing to gain the USSR’s support, Zhou opened talks with Nehru in April 1960, but six days of talks ended without breakthrough. Sporadic border clashes continued, but none sparked a larger conflict. Only during the summer of 1962, following the 2 June lapsing of the Panch Shila treaty of 1954, did these border conflicts threaten to escalate. On 20 October 1962 a PLA force of 30,000 troops crossed the McMahon Line along the eastern Sino-Indian border, and by late October they were ten miles south of the McMahon Line. Elsewhere, along disputed sections to the west, PLA forces succeeded in occupying all sections claimed by China by early November.

### **The 1962 Sino-Indian Border War**

The fighting during the Sino-Indian War took place at three widely disparate geographical locations on two different fronts. There were two outbreaks on the far eastern, or NEFA (North East Frontier Area), and one outbreak on the western, Ladakh, area. The PLA troops were highly organized and well supplied, and their officers appeared to be of high caliber. All these improvements could be attributed to the recent PLA military reforms. By contrast, the Indian defenders constantly misjudged the PLA’s strength and underestimated its tactical abilities. As a result, Indian troops suffered one notable defeat after another, including the so-called débâcle at Thag La Ridge, the outflanking at Bomdi La, and the fall of Walong.

In the eastern NEFA, Indian troops first spotted the PLA advancing beyond the McMahon Line on to the Thag La Ridge during early September 1962. The Indian government was over-confident as to the ability of the Indian Army to push the Chinese back, and the nationalistic press quickly demanded

that the Chinese be forced off the Thag La Ridge. General Thapar, chief of army staff, warned India's leaders that any attempt to push the Chinese back across the ridge might simply widen the conflict, but he was ignored. On 22 September he received orders to "throw out the Chinese as soon as possible." As Neville Maxwell has pointed out, this was the moment of truth for Thapar, and if he had resigned in protest, the Sino-Indian War might never have happened: "Thapar's failure to offer his resignation at this point . . . marked one point of no return in the Indian Army's decline to crushing defeat at the hands of the Chinese."<sup>609</sup>

By late September, there were several small skirmishes along the disputed McMahon Line, which included the Chinese use of hand grenades. It was in early October, however, that tensions began to heat up. By this time, India instituted "Operation Leghorn," under the command of General B. M. Kaul, to oust the Chinese. The two sides clashed for the first time on 10 October—the fifty-first anniversary of the 1911 Revolution that had overthrown the Qing Empire—and this encounter, known as the Battle of Tseng-jong, led to seven dead, seven missing, and eleven wounded among the Indian soldiers, and a reported thirty-three casualties among the Chinese troops.

In retaliation, Chinese troops took full control over Thag La Ridge, the traditional border between India and Tibet. General Kaul returned to New Delhi to meet with Nehru. Although he advised caution, Kaul did not insist on the cancellation of Operation Leghorn. This decision proved to be a fatal error on his part, since when he returned to the field on 13 October Kaul apparently thought that the eviction order still stood. Over the next week, the Indian forces rose to 2,500, and Kaul ordered them to defend the border at all costs. To assist their planned flanking action against the PLA, the Indian troops fortified an area known as Tsangle, which was at the source of the Namka Chu River near a small lake. Technically, this territory was in Bhutan, which later complained to India about the violation of its border. The PLA commanders no doubt thought that this move was in preparation for an attack, and they quickly sent their own troops to cover the approach.

It was on 20 October 1962 that the undeclared Sino-Indian War really started. An estimated 30,000 Chinese invaded across the McMahon Line and overwhelmed the Indian troops. The PLA crossed the Namkha Chu River and gained control of the five bridges close to the Thag La Ridge. Soon afterward, on 23 October, Beijing authorized the PLA to cross the McMahon Line. In the face of the PLA invasion, the Indian troops retreated, abandoning the Dhola, Khinzemane, and Asang Dhar posts. After five days, the Chinese troops had captured Lampu, which was in Indian territory ten miles south of the McMahon Line, and they forced the Indian troops to withdraw from Tawang.

The Soviet government's first public comment on the Sino-Indian War appeared in *Pravda* on 25 October 1962. It refused to support China's view that India had provoked the war, and so appeared to be supporting India over

China. It also called for both sides to reach an amicable settlement. This editorial did condemn the McMahon Line as “notorious” and claimed that the British “imposed on the Chinese and Indian peoples,” but only a week or so later, on 5 November 1962, a second *Pravda* editorial avoided mentioning the McMahon Line at all.<sup>610</sup> Moscow was cautiously not taking a stand.

Although the Chinese invasion at Thag La Ridge has been called an “Infantry Pearl Harbor” because it was a surprise attack, the Indian troops had ample time to assess the PLA’s strength and fall back prior to any actual conflict. In addition, the next major Chinese victory in the NEFA—almost a month later—could not have possibly taken the Indian Army by surprise. This encounter took place at Bomdi La, which was one of the Indian defense planners’ anchors for the third—and final—tier of India’s border defenses. In fact, in a well-executed maneuver, the PLA forces took advantage of a small mountain trail to successfully outflank Bomdi La. By mid-November, the PLA threatened to surround an Indian force of 12,000. Following intense fighting, this strategic town fell on 19 November.

Far to the west in Ladakh, PLA troops also began their offensive on 20 October, successfully occupying two Indian posts the following day, and five more the day after that. By 24 October, the Galwan valley post had also fallen amidst heavy fighting. Troops from the Jammu and Kashmir militias counter-attacked on 28 October, preventing the Chinese from moving beyond the line between Damchok and Jara La. The following day, the PLA attacked in strength, forcing the Indian troops to retreat. By 5 November, the PLA had captured Daulat Beg Oldi, close to the Karakorum Pass, and two miles west of the line China had claimed in 1960, thus consolidating control over all Chinese territorial claims.

Meanwhile, on 26 October, the PLA initiated a new offensive further east on the McMahon Line, aimed at taking Walong near the Indian–Burmese border. Indian troops valiantly fought back at Walong, and retained control through early November. On 8 November, the PLA attacked from the hills to the north and northeast, using mortars and automatic weapons. The Indians tried to push the PLA back and even assaulted the Chinese position on 14 November—Nehru’s birthday—but they failed.

Following this setback, the PLA penetrated the main Indian defenses. The Indian artillery soon ran out of shells, and on 16 November the final Chinese assault of Walong began:

The Indians fought grimly: after the cease-fire, returning Indian parties found some positions with every man dead at his post. With key defenses overrun, the brigade position became untenable and at about 10.00 hours Kaul authorized the brigadier to order withdrawal. Some troops did not receive the order and fought on until their ammunition ran out or they were killed.<sup>611</sup>

With Walong's fall on 16 November, the entire Lohit river valley was now at risk of a Chinese invasion.

By 20 November, the PLA troops had succeeded in taking their objectives in the western section of Ladakh and in the two disputed eastern sections of NEFA. As Maxwell has concluded, by "the morning of November 20th, no organized Indian military force was left in NEFA or in the territory claimed by China in the western sector. Militarily the Chinese victory was complete, the Indian defeat absolute."<sup>612</sup> On 21 November, with no organized Indian force left to fight, the Chinese ordered a unilateral cease-fire.

To say that the lopsided military results of the Sino-Indian War came as a surprise to India would be a vast understatement. Not only did this conflict shatter any remaining belief in the 2,000 years of Sino-Indian friendship, but it convinced most Indians that China was supporting a foreign policy based on aggression and territorial expansion. The Sino-Indian conflict also turned the Indo-Pakistani bilateral relationship into a triangular relationship with China: "It was only the Sino-Indian border dispute which connected Rawalpindi and Beijing and thereby made the two lines of bilateral relationships between India on the one hand and Pakistan and China on the other a triangular one."<sup>613</sup>

Pushed by its fear of China, India sought to improve relations with Washington. The U.S. promptly authorized delivery of weapons and military aid. According to Sindhu, it was during and after the Sino-Indian War that "Indo-America cooperation and friendship reached a new high level." This included joint air exercises, Indian support for the 7th fleet cruising the Indian ocean, and CIA collaboration to collect valuable data on China.<sup>614</sup>

### **The Sino-Indian cease-fire**

There was not much doubt who had won the Sino-Indian War, nor was there any question which side had been the major aggressor. Even while the war was still going on, China proposed a three-point peace plan based on retaining control over territories the PLA had occupied, a plan that India spurned. Following the end of the war, a group of Afro-Asian non-aligned countries offered to mediate a peace. Known as the Colombo Mediation, this effort proposed a solution that would have included moving the Ladakh Line back to what it was in 1959, respecting the McMahon Line in NEFA—with the one exception being the Thag La Ridge section—and then solving outstanding problems by peaceful means. India immediately accepted these proposals, but China would not, and so all diplomatic attempts at resolving the underlying Sino-Indian border problems failed. Talks to resolve all outstanding concerns only opened many years later, in 1979.

During the midst of the fighting, on 24 October 1962, China offered India a three-point peace proposal. In summary, it suggested "respecting the line of actual control along the entire Sino-Indian boundary" while both sides

would withdraw their troops 20 kilometers from the line. In the east, China recommended withdrawing its frontier guards away from the “line of actual control,” if India would agree not to cross this line, and the “traditional line” in the middle and western sections. Finally, talks would be opened by prime ministers Nehru and Zhou to determine a suitable solution.<sup>615</sup>

Although scholars have described China’s cease-fire plan as both “subtle” and “astute,” the nature of its proposals seemed to be offering a trade on the disputed territory. According to one Indian official, they seemed to be yet “another indirect Chinese way of telling us that they were prepared to forgo their claims in NEFA if we abandoned ours in the Aksai Chin.”<sup>616</sup> India insisted that the PLA must first withdraw—to the PLA’s positions on 8 September 1962—before talks could be opened, which would mean forfeiting approximately 2,500 square miles of territory.<sup>617</sup>

As the war continued, India obtained support from both the U.S. and Great Britain. Moscow, however, surprised New Delhi by shedding its former neutrality and backing China’s three-point proposal. In fact, a *Pravda* editorial characterized the Sino-Indian conflict as “a legacy of those times when British colonizers were ruling on Indian territory,” and it blamed “imperialists” for seeking to “upset the friendship of the Soviet Union for brotherly China as well as for friendly India.” As V. B. Karnik has recounted, this editorial:

[C]ame as a shock to some in the Government of India. They were counting upon Russia maintaining an attitude of strict neutrality. Some of them had even hoped that Russia would exert her influence upon China and persuade her to desist from inflicting any further harm on India. It also created additional difficulties for the Communist Party of India. Under the pressure of public opinion, the party was thinking of adopting, at least as a tactic, an attitude of support to the national war effort. The *Pravda* editorial made it difficult for it to discipline its recalcitrant members.<sup>618</sup>

Perhaps the USSR’s apparent change of heart was not so much a sign of its support for China, as it was to escape earlier promises to assist India.

Following China’s unilateral cease-fire in mid-November, six Afro-Asian nonaligned countries, including the United Arab Republic, Cambodia, Ghana, Burma, Sri Lanka, and Indonesia, met during December 1962 in Colombo, Sri Lanka, and proposed the following settlement to the war:

(a) China, as it had repeatedly proposed, should withdraw its troops twenty kilometers, behind what it claimed to be the line of actual control in 1959, in the Ladakh area; (b) that India could move its troops up to this line of actual control; (c) that both sides, through negotiation on the basis of parity between the two, be allowed to establish civilian posts for administrative purposes in the demilitarized

zone of twenty kilometers created by the withdrawal of the Chinese forces; (d) Indian troops move up to the south part of the McMahon Line in the NEFA area, except for the sensitive and controversial areas of Thagla-ridge and Longju (thus allowing Indian troops to reoccupy Chinese vacated territory in NEFA also); and (e) the problems of the middle or central sector of the frontier be "solved by peaceful means without resorting to force," meanwhile maintaining the status quo.<sup>619</sup>

The Colombo mediators believed that their proposals would reduce tension and would result in a negotiated settlement between China and India.

Prime Minister Nehru immediately accepted the Colombo Proposals in full. Both houses in the Indian parliament supported him by large majorities; the opposition could only muster a total of fifty-nine "no" votes against 349 "yes" votes. Public opinion also supported these proposals. In a letter to the Colombo powers, Nehru pointed out that India's acceptance was contingent on China fully accepting them as well. He also specified that China should withdraw from the seven civil posts it had built in the Ladakh area prior to opening talks.

China's response to the Colombo Proposals was less enthusiastic, most likely because it had the most to lose, especially if it had to give up NEFA territory it had won by force of arms. In one interview, the Chinese vice-premier, Chen Yi, claimed that while China would agree to accept the Colombo Proposals as a "basis for meetings between Chinese and Indian officials," the "Chinese government has its own interpretation . . . on some matters of detail." Later, Premier Zhou reportedly stated that China would never let Indian troops reoccupy territory vacated by the PLA, even if India only intended to establish civilian check posts. This difference of opinion stymied the intent of the Colombo Proposals, and all hope for a rapid settlement soon died.<sup>620</sup>

From Beijing's perspective, a negotiated settlement to the Sino-Indian border was not necessary, since it already possessed what it wanted. Nevertheless, in early December 1962, Beijing claimed that it would follow up its cease-fire by withdrawing the PLA 20 kilometers behind the actual line of control. Opinions differed about why China decided not to press its advantage *vis-à-vis* India. Certainly, the prospect of facing American and British weapons must have given the PLA pause, as perhaps did the USSR's belated decision to go ahead and supply India with twelve MiG jet fighters, in addition to a factory producing MiG planes. Other commentators suggested that Beijing feared that if it continued its invasion the United States and the USSR might form an anti-Chinese coalition. Finally, still others speculated that with the coming of winter, China had decided to "save face" by withdrawing, rather than face possible defeat in the Indian plains.

A final interpretation of China's decision to retreat highlights Beijing's success in undermining the historical legitimacy of over a hundred years of



so-called imperialist diplomacy, going all the way back to 1842—the year the Opium War ended. As shown in Chapter 14, China's victory in Korea was popularized within the PRC as the first time China successfully fought off the West since the Opium War. The subsequent victory over India successfully transferred this same imperialist policy from China's northeast border with Korea to its southwestern border with India.

In a similar manner, China's victory also sent a clear message to the countries of southeast Asia—many of them former Chinese tributary states—that the PLA was now both willing and able to reassert Chinese influence abroad if need be. In fact, China's comparatively easy military victory over India sent political shock waves throughout the entire region. One of the first countries to respond, of course, was Pakistan, a South-East Asian Treaty Organization (SEATO) member. The two countries quickly signed a Sino-Pakistan border agreement and, in 1965, the PRC supported Pakistan during the Pakistani-Indian border war.

Perhaps most importantly, China's victory was a vivid reminder to the USSR that Beijing was determined to renegotiate over a hundred years of Sino-Russian and Sino-Soviet border treaties. By attacking India just as Soviet-Indian relations were warming, and thereby proving to Nehru that Moscow would not help him by actively intervening against China, Beijing effectively eliminated a possible bloc between the USSR and India; Beijing was to make a similar example of Soviet fickleness to Vietnam in the 1979 Sino-Vietnamese War, when the USSR declined to assist Vietnam under similar circumstances. Finally, as Chapter 16 will show in greater detail, the PLA's experience fighting India was in many ways simply a dress rehearsal for its upcoming conflict with the Red Army during the 1960s.

## Conclusions

Following its success in the Korean War, the PLA became involved in a 1962 imperialist conflict along China's southwestern border with India. China's diplomatic relations with India during the early 1950s went through many ups and downs, but seriously worsened during the late 1950s following the PLA's crackdown in Tibet; over China's vehement protests, India even agreed to grant political sanctuary to the Dalai Lama. Sino-Indian border clashes first broke out along the western Sino-Indian border during 1959. Border fights also erupted further east near Bhutan over the legitimacy of the 1914 McMahon Line, in a region known as the North East Frontier Area. The PLA's reforms allowed it to successfully conduct a "blitzkrieg" border war from 20 October through 21 November 1962, at which time China unilaterally declared a cease-fire. The PLA repeatedly proved its ability to defeat the Indian Army.

Although China's victory in the Sino-Indian War was clearly not on the same scale as the Korean War, it was still a watershed for several reasons. Unlike the Korean War, when the USSR and China were allies, the USSR



tacitly supported India during much of the Sino-Indian War. In fact, according to John Garver: "Since the early 1960s, Beijing had seen Moscow and India as colluding to oppose China."<sup>621</sup> Therefore, the Sino-Indian War had a direct bearing on the ongoing Sino-Soviet conflict. It is certainly no coincidence that China and India signed a border agreement settling their dispute only in September 1993, after the collapse of the Soviet Union.<sup>622</sup>

China's military victory over India was a diplomatic victory against the USSR, which had been advocating policies of peaceful coexistence since the early 1960s. In addition, by its military invasion of India, the PRC's leaders showed that they no longer had to hold back on the Sino-Indian border dispute simply to please the Soviet Union. The USSR returned the favor during this period of increasing Sino-Indian tension when Nikita Khrushchev agreed to grant generous credits to India. Khrushchev also refused to back China's territorial claims, which was the first time the USSR had publicly ignored a Communist state in favor of a non-Communist state.

Mao Zedong undoubtedly saw the Soviet Union's actions as a "betrayal" of China. From Mao's perspective, Moscow's pro-Indian attitude may have even suggested "an Indo-Russian conspiracy to encircle China in Asia and to contain her influence elsewhere in the world." On 15 December 1962, the *People's Daily* protested that the leaders in Moscow "have all along confused right with wrong, pretending to be 'neutral' calling China 'brother' while actually regarding the Indian reactionary group as their kinsmen." Later, the Chinese were to complain that Soviet aid to India proved "collaboration between the Soviet leaders and US 'imperialism' to ally themselves with India against China."<sup>623</sup>

Finally, perhaps the most important impact of the Sino-Indian War was that China's victory in regaining what it claimed was lost territory to the southwest sent a clear signal to Moscow that Beijing would no longer ignore territorial disagreements to the north and northwest. As a result of these differences, the Sino-Indian War had an important impact on the Sino-Soviet border dispute, which also eventually culminated in a border war. In fact, the Sino-Indian War of 1962 can be seen as an important dress rehearsal of the Sino-Soviet border clashes of the late 1960s.

## THE SINO-SOVIET TERRITORIAL CONFLICT

The 1969 Sino-Soviet conflict was arguably China's third imperialist war in the post-1949 period, only this time the goal was to consolidate control over her northern borders with the Soviet Union. Sino-Soviet relations through the late 1960s were hostile, and in addition to major ideological differences included sharp disagreements over the status of Outer Mongolia, and numerous territorial disputes along the Sino-Soviet border. The origins of these clashes are rooted in the Sino-Soviet diplomacy during late 1949 and early 1950, when Stalin and Mao agreed to respect all previous Sino-Soviet treaties, while making necessary changes and alterations in the future. To Stalin, this meant that so long as the USSR and China never opened discussions on the matter, then Outer Mongolia's status as a Soviet satellite state and the Sino-Soviet border would remain unchanged. Mao disagreed with this assessment and believed that Outer Mongolia's status and the exact location of the border were issues that warranted discussion and renegotiation. For Mao, over a century of Russo-Chinese treaties that had the combined effect of stripping China of hundreds of thousands of square miles of territory also fell into this category.

Although the exact location of the Sino-Mongolian border was determined in 1962, China's opposition to Outer Mongolia remaining a Soviet satellite state was not resolved. The PRC's rhetoric on this issue became more shrill following the Sino-Soviet rift in 1960. Mao even denounced the USSR for putting Outer Mongolia under its political domination. Throughout this period, however, the 1950 Sino-Soviet Friendship Treaty continued to exist and remained the foundation for Sino-Soviet relations. As this foundation became more unstable, China loudly condemned Soviet hegemonism in the Far East.

The PLA's rapid victory in the 1962 Sino-Indian border war indicated a new standing for China in world affairs, as well as sending a message to Moscow about Beijing's determination to reclaim its lost border territories. Over time, China's new-found military independence was directed against its former military ally, the Soviet Union. For example, in the mid-1960s, tensions were particularly sharp along China's western border with the USSR, and frequent border clashes took place in Xinjiang. During the late 1960s, the

scene of the fighting shifted further north and east. In a series of border incidents along the Ussuri and Amur rivers, the PLA showed surprising resilience and tenacity against the Soviet Red Army.

The first major Sino-Soviet clash was on Zhenbao Island in the Ussuri River on 2 March 1969. During the night of 1–2 March, the PLA secretly secured the island and fighting began the next morning. Although the casualty figures differ, at least seven Russians died, and many others were taken prisoner. When Soviet reinforcements arrived, the PLA vacated the island. A second clash, started by the Red Army in apparent retaliation for the 2 March attack, occurred two weeks later on 14 March. This time the battle lasted for nine hours, and resulted in an estimated sixty Russian and 800 Chinese casualties. These conflicts were small in scope, and the outcome inconclusive, but they led to later territorial conflicts in Xinjiang along China's border with the USSR. Meanwhile, both China and the USSR continued to fortify their respective sides of the border.

The PLA's new-found confidence that it could counter the Red Army gave Beijing the opportunity during 1971 to adopt a new foreign policy initiative by promoting more friendly relations with the United States; following the opening of Sino-American relations in 1972, Nixon even warned Brezhnev that any Soviet attack against China would be against American interests as well. In addition, China tried hard to improve its relations with Japan. In August 1978, the two countries signed a treaty that appeared to be critical of the Soviet Union's foreign policy in Asia by specifically condemning "hegemonism." Finally, Sino-Soviet tensions also exacerbated a number of southeast Asian proxy wars. Most importantly, it helped to create tensions that led to the Sino-Vietnamese War of 1979.

### **Sino-Soviet relations through the late 1960s**

Sino-Soviet relations through the late 1960s were marred not only by sharp disagreement over Outer Mongolia, but also by numerous territorial disputes along the Sino-Soviet border. In fact, these fundamental conflicts had festered beneath the surface of Russo-Chinese relations for over a century, ever since Tsarist Russia coerced China to sign a series of treaties ceding it vast territories. As mentioned above, during this period of Russian expansion, St. Petersburg gained control over territory that exceeded in size the United States east of the Mississippi River.<sup>624</sup>

The disputed status of Outer Mongolia and the Sino-Soviet border had a direct bearing on the Sino-Soviet conflict. The twentieth-century origins of this conflict date back to 1915, when Imperial Russia forced China to sign a tripartite treaty with Russia and Outer Mongolia in which Outer Mongolia recognized the *suzerainty* of China in exchange for Chinese recognition of Outer Mongolia's *autonomy*. Even though the Bolsheviks publicly renounced Russian imperialism in 1919, and specifically announced the abolition of this

so-called “unequal” treaty, archival documents from the 1920s have since revealed that Soviet diplomats signed a secret agreement counteracting this measure with the Beijing government in 1924. While stating that all former treaties would no longer be “enforced,” this secret agreement actually resulted in the reaffirmation of the unequal terms of Russia’s many treaties with China.<sup>625</sup>

By means of its secret diplomacy, the USSR could claim that the Tsarist terms of the 1915 tripartite treaty were still valid, thus guaranteeing Outer Mongolia’s autonomy from 1924 to 1945. This diplomatic strategy also allowed Moscow to orchestrate the formation of the Mongolian People’s Republic (MPR) on 25 November 1924. The formation of the MPR, in turn, led to the adoption in Mongolia of a socialist government and constitution. Mongolia had been recast in the Soviet Union’s image.

To wipe out domestic Mongolian opposition to its expansionist policies during the 1930s, Moscow sponsored a series of purges in the MPR. It was the Mongolian people who suffered the most during these purges. The Mongolian historian, Dorjnamjiliin Tod, has estimated that “by 1940, 35,000 people were purged and 20,000 executed,” and that more than 20,000 Mongolians fled the country during 1930 to 1934.<sup>626</sup> The MPR’s government was also not spared. For example, Mongolia’s secret service—largely patterned after the Soviet NKVD—reportedly lost 57 percent of all ministers, 100 percent of all vice-ministers, 60 percent of all department chiefs, and over 20 percent of all officers during the 1930s.<sup>627</sup>

During the early 1940s, the USSR and Japan conducted their own secret diplomatic negotiations to define their spheres of interest in northeast Asia. These talks led to the Soviet–Japanese non-aggression pact of 13 April 1941, which stipulated that a mixed commission would redraw Mongolia’s border with the Japanese puppet state of Manchukuo, formed by Japan in 1931 from territory taken from China. The decisions adopted by this mixed commission resulted in territorial gains for the MPR at the expense of Manchukuo. While the USSR publicly denounced this pact on 5 April 1945, the MPR retained all the new territories that it had taken from China.

Although Mongolia was little more than a Soviet puppet state, through 1945 Soviet diplomats publicly recognized that Outer Mongolia remained an integral part of China. During Sino–Soviet negotiations in summer 1945, however, Stalin not only obtained Nationalist China’s official recognition of Outer Mongolia’s independence, but he also retained the disputed border territories that the MPR had earlier gained from Manchukuo. Granting the MPR its independence, therefore, also meant sanctioning the MPR’s control over territory in Manchuria and Inner Mongolia that had always before been considered an integral part of China.

Following China’s 1949 Revolution, Mao journeyed to Moscow to negotiate a formal treaty with Stalin. During these talks, the two leaders agreed to respect all the former Sino–Russian and Sino–Soviet treaties, making necessary changes and additions as needed.<sup>628</sup> When the Sino–Soviet Treaty of

Friendship, Alliance, and Mutual Assistance was signed on 14 February 1950, it made no mention of Outer Mongolia, which in fact meant that the former treaties—such as those signed in 1924 and 1945—continued to be valid. Therefore, Outer Mongolia remained independent of China.

Mao later recounted the controversial nature of these secret Sino–Soviet negotiations. In particular, Stalin made enormous demands for Chinese concessions in Manchuria and Xinjiang:

During the negotiations, at Stalin's initiative there was undertaken an attempt by the Soviet Union to assume sole ownership of the Chinese Changchun (i.e. Harbin) Railway. Subsequently, however, a decision was made about the joint exploitation of the . . . Railway, besides which the PRC gave the USSR the naval base in Port Arthur, and four joint stock companies were opened in China. At Stalin's initiative . . . Manchuria and Xinjiang were practically turned into spheres of influence of the USSR.<sup>629</sup>

In addition to the public sections of the 1950 Sino–Soviet Friendship Treaty that have long been known, Mao and Stalin signed a number of secret protocols. Undoubtedly, it was the existence of these secret protocols that most concerned Mao and the other Chinese Communist leaders.

While agreeing to make these concessions to Stalin, the final text clearly stated that the two countries would undertake to base future relations on the principle of “mutual respect for state sovereignty and territorial integrity.” According to Tsien-hua Tsui:

By having such a clause, the Chinese might have intended to remind the Soviets of their 1924 commitment to the redemarcation of the Sino–Soviet boundary. It also might be that they hoped that this would serve as a barrier to any further encroachment on the Chinese domain by the other side. Although some Soviet scholars have recently interpreted this clause to mean that the PRC had, thereby, formally recognized what they called the “operative boundaries” between the two countries, it was apparent that the Chinese had no such intention or understanding.<sup>630</sup>

To Mao, therefore, leaving the former treaties temporarily intact was different from recognizing Mongolia's permanent independence from China.

Mao firmly believed that the Soviet government had earlier promised to return Mongolia to China and to demarcate the Sino–Soviet border.<sup>631</sup> Based on Mao's later complaints, he apparently received assurances from Stalin that Mongolia's status, as well as the exact location of the Sino–Mongolian and Sino–Soviet borders, would be discussed at future meetings. However, Moscow's

subsequent refusal to open negotiations with Beijing helped lead to the Sino-Soviet border clashes during the 1950s and 1960s.

To Mao, another important clause in the 1950 treaty was the resolution stating that neither party would form alliances directed against the other, and that the two governments would consult each other on all important international questions. Moscow's public support for New Delhi during the 1962 Sino-Indian War proved that the USSR was not upholding these clauses. However, the duration of the treaty was for thirty years, and clause six specifically stated that if neither signatory announced their intention to terminate the treaty during its final year, the alliance would be automatically renewed for a further five years.

The exact location of the Sino-Mongolian border was decided in 1962 after a lengthy series of diplomatic negotiations, but the underlying question of Outer Mongolia's status—i.e. as a Soviet satellite state or part of China—remained unresolved. The PRC's rhetoric on this issue became more critical following the Sino-Soviet split in 1960.<sup>632</sup> Soon after the rift became public knowledge Mao denounced Soviet encroachments on Chinese territory, and he protested against Soviet control of Mongolia: "[T]he Soviet Union, under the pretext of assuring the independence of Mongolia, actually placed the country under its domination."<sup>633</sup>

Although tension in Sino-Soviet relations was so great that western scholars have generally referred to it as a "split," the 1950 Sino-Soviet Treaty continued to exist and both sides claimed that they respected its contents. In fact, this treaty, including both the publicly released terms and the secret protocols, remained the foundation on which Sino-Soviet relations rested. This foundation was at heart unstable, since from the Chinese point of view the USSR refused to return Tsarist Russia's ill-gotten gains to China's Communist leadership. Arguably it was this issue, more than any other, that led China's leaders to condemn Soviet hegemonism in the Far East.

### **The calm before the storm**

The PLA's rapid victory in the 1962 Sino-Indian border dispute indicated a new standing for China in world affairs, as well as sending a clear message to the Soviet Union about China's determination to reclaim its lost border territories. Following the Sino-Soviet split in 1960, Beijing demanded that Moscow agree to renegotiate all former "unequal" treaties. Although the two sides held talks during 1964, they proved fruitless.<sup>634</sup> By the mid-1960s, Sino-Soviet border tensions continued to increase, especially in Xinjiang Province, and China's new-found military independence was directed against its former military ally, the Soviet Union. According to the Chinese, Soviet forces violated the border 4,189 times between 1964 and March 1969, leading to ever larger and larger skirmishes.

According to Donald Zagoria, the differences between Beijing and Moscow continued to widen from 1956 through 1960, and by 1961 the “depth of the Sino–Soviet conflict became apparent to the entire world.” Although these differences included ideological disputes over the importance of communes, how to promote the next stage of expansion of the Communist bloc, and Khrushchev’s controversial support for “peaceful coexistence” with the West, underlying all these ideological differences was the fundamental territorial dispute. By late 1960 and 1961, the Russians had already tried “to consolidate their positions in Outer Mongolia, North Korea, North Vietnam, efforts which indicated preparations for a long-term struggle for power with China within the Communist movement.” In July 1961, a Soviet official visiting Outer Mongolia even discussed the need for “firm security” along the Sino–Soviet border to oppose any Chinese attempt to adjust the border.<sup>635</sup>

During late 1962, Khrushchev perhaps unintentionally exacerbated Sino–Soviet tensions when he presented a speech before the Supreme Soviet defending his decision to remove Soviet missiles from Cuba. In answering Chinese criticisms that he had “capitulated,” Khrushchev seemed to suggest that China was also capitulating when it decided not to immediately liberate Taiwan, Hong Kong, and Macao.<sup>636</sup> On 8 March 1963, the Chinese answered this accusation:

You are not unaware that such questions as those of Hong Kong and Macao relate to the category of unequal treaties left over by history, treaties which the imperialists imposed on China. It may be asked: In raising questions of this kind, do you intend to raise all the questions of unequal treaties and have a general settlement? Has it ever entered your heads what the consequences will be?<sup>637</sup>

The list of territories the PRC claimed it had lost to Russia included a large swathe across Siberia, all of the Maritime Province, and over 500,000 square miles of territory in central Asia. Drew Middleton has estimated China’s total territorial claim at 580,000 square miles of Soviet property.<sup>638</sup>

Beijing insisted that the Sino–Soviet border was the result of “unequal” imperialist treaties, but the Bolshevik leaders continually refused to renegotiate the borders, blaming instead the former Russian governments that they had helped overthrow. This prompted Mao to tell a Japanese visitor: “About a hundred years ago, the area to the east of [Lake] Baikal became Russian territory and since then Vladivostok, Khabarovsk, Kamchatka, and other areas have become Soviet territory. We have not yet presented our bill for this list.”<sup>639</sup>

The USSR denied that all former Sino–Russian treaties were “unequal” and claimed that the Sino–Soviet border “took shape historically.” Moscow did agree, however, to discuss certain sections of the border where particular disagreements had occurred. As a result, Sino–Soviet border negotiations opened in Beijing on 25 February 1964, but they quickly reached deadlock and were

canceled during fall 1964. The Soviet government later claimed that it had offered to continue talks in Moscow and that the Chinese failed to name a date. John Gittings has surmised: "The breakdown of these negotiations is probably explained by the conflicting Chinese and Soviet interpretations of their permissible scope."<sup>640</sup>

Border clashes continued with great regularity throughout the rest of the decade, especially in China's far western province of Xinjiang, which had experienced border clashes as early as 1960 and 1962. Ever since the 1880s, with the Russo-Chinese conflict over the Ili Valley, China had opposed Russian encroachment into Xinjiang. During the 1930s, Xinjiang fell almost completely under Soviet domination and only completely returned to Chinese control during the 1950s. In order to solidify its authority, Beijing carried out a number of large-scale programs, including "colonization with army veterans, the resettlement of nomadic tribes, the sending of large numbers of civilian Han migrants from China proper, and Chinese-style education and administration."<sup>641</sup>

During fall 1963, the USSR accused China of setting up concentration camps in Xinjiang, suppressing minorities, and persecuting "Soviet citizens and minority leaders." To escape China's grip, many residents in Xinjiang fled across the border to the USSR. One source has estimated that 60,000 Chinese citizens crossed the border in 1962. On its side, the Chinese accused the USSR of trying to subvert Xinjiang's government, and also of "attacking the leadership of the Chinese Communist Party and distorting the history of Xinjiang."<sup>642</sup>

Soviet policy following Khrushchev's ouster changed little, with Leonid Brezhnev and Alexei Kosygin firmly denying the validity of China's territorial claims. By the mid-1960s, the PRC's foreign minister, Chen Yi, had accused the USSR of provoking over 5,000 border incidents between 1960 and 1965. Adding to the already enormous territory that Beijing claimed the USSR was occupying by means of the "unequal" treaties, the foreign ministry accused the Soviet Union of occupying other areas in violation of those selfsame treaties. According to Chen Yi, the Soviet leaders have "deployed their troops on the Sino-Soviet border and carried out continual military maneuvers on the border, which presupposes China as the enemy."<sup>643</sup>

Further to the north and east, Sino-Soviet tensions increased over efforts to determine the exact location of the border running through the Amur and Ussuri rivers. Based on a 1951 Sino-Soviet agreement, a mixed commission was set up to delineate the border. In December 1957, Moscow and Beijing signed a treaty detailing boundary and transit services by ships operating on border rivers and lakes. During April 1966, however, the Chinese Ministry of Communications published a new set of relations that seemed to limit Soviet shipping. Thereafter, during August 1967, the Soviet government protested that China was purposefully "wrecking" the fourteenth conference of this mixed commission.



Meanwhile, in China, the Cultural Revolution intensified during the late 1960s, and Beijing's anti-Soviet campaign became more evident as noisy demonstrators congregated in front of the Soviet Embassy. According to Alfred D. Low's description, the Maoists tried to use the Soviet threat to generate "anti-Soviet hysteria" in order to solve their own domestic problems:

They raised a false hue and cry about a "Soviet threat" to justify the further militarization of China. They justified the shortages of food-stuffs and other goods by pointing to the alleged danger from Moscow. Even school children were being indoctrinated to the effect that a larger part of the territory of the USSR in the Far East and Central Asia was once Chinese.<sup>644</sup>

Sino-Soviet border tensions heated up again following the Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia in 1968, and the "Brezhnev" doctrine's declaration that the USSR had the right to intervene in other communist countries. Beijing publicly accused the USSR of being a "social-imperialist" country. According to Richard Wich, these tensions increased for several reasons, but mainly it was because, according to the Chinese view at least, the Soviet invasion had destroyed the "socialist camp" once and for all. In addition, not wanting to appear weak and prompt a two-front war, the Soviet Far East Military District conducted a series of military exercises to prove its "high vigilance" and "combat readiness." Thus with the death of the socialist camp removing all final ideological constraints and Soviet troops intensifying on their border, "the Chinese elected to make a political issue of border tensions and of alleged Soviet border violations."<sup>645</sup>

During 1964 to 1969, Sino-Soviet border tensions continued to increase, leading to thousands of small Sino-Soviet clashes. The gradual worsening in Sino-Soviet relations, coupled with China's domestic turmoil and the USSR's 1968 invasion of a fellow socialist country, helped set the stage for a series of sharp military battles during spring 1969. In these battles, the PLA succeeded in standing up against the vaunted Red Army, as China redirected its military power against its former military ally and revolutionary mentor, the Soviet Union.

### **The 1969 Sino-Soviet border clashes**

In a series of border incidents along the Ussuri and Amur rivers in March 1969, the PLA showed surprising resilience and tenacity against the Red Army. These conflicts were small in scope, and the outcome proved to be inconclusive. However, they threatened to grow to include nuclear weapons when the USSR warned of the possible use of nuclear strikes. These disputes also led to later territorial conflicts in Xinjiang along China's border with the

USSR. According to one source, about a hundred Soviet troops and 800 Chinese troops died as a result of these encounters.<sup>646</sup>

As background to the border clashes, it is important to point out that the USSR had been strengthening its military power in the Far East for some time. This effort included a massive troop buildup from seventeen divisions in 1965, to twenty-seven divisions in 1969, and finally topping out at forty-eight divisions by the mid-1970s. Moscow was allowed to station two to three divisions in Mongolia, because of a recently signed twenty-year Treaty of Friendship that called for joint Soviet–Mongolian defenses. In addition to tanks and artillery, these troops had long- and short-range rockets, including the SS-4 MRBMs and SCUD missiles, and most likely nuclear weapons as well. As early as September 1964, Soviet leaders had stated that they would be willing to use nuclear weapons if necessary to defend their borders.

The scene of the conflict was among the more than 700 small islands located along the Sino–Soviet border in the Amur and Ussuri rivers. Soviet troops controlled over 600 of these islands, many of them taken from the Japanese puppet state Manchukuo in the 1930s, but it was not uncommon for Chinese fishermen and soldiers to visit these islands in violation of Soviet border rules. When violators were discovered, Soviet border guards usually expelled them without resorting to violence. As one commentator has suggested: “Over the years, Soviets and Chinese came to adopt a pattern of almost ritualistic practices and unwritten rules to resolve border violations in a non-shooting fashion.”<sup>647</sup>

The first major clashes occurred on 2 March 1969, on Zhenbao (in Russian sources, Damansky) Island in the Ussuri River. Both the USSR and China claimed this mile-long island, citing historical precedents for why it belonged on their side of the border. During the night of 1–2 March, approximately 300 specially trained PLA troops secretly fortified the island. Artillery fire from the Chinese shoreline supported the PLA positions and fighting erupted the next morning. During this battle, there were at least seven Russian casualties, and the PLA took nineteen prisoners. Soviet reinforcements arrived later that day, and pushed the Chinese off the island.

A Soviet report of this incident is now available, courtesy of the East German archives. Although somewhat one-sided, this report sheds valuable information on the incident. For example, it claims that in December 1967 and January 1968, the PLA initiated offensive operations on the island of Kirkinsi, on the Ussuri River, and near the Kasakevich Canal. As recently as 23 January 1969, the PLA had staged a raid on Damansky Island. On 2 March 1969, the PLA team, dressed in “special gear” and “camouflage clothes,” arrived secretly on the island. Meanwhile, during the night “PAC batteries, mines and armored artillery and heavy fire guns, had been pulled together near the Chinese shore.”<sup>648</sup>

Soviet troops first observed the PLA advancing at about 9:00 A.M., and the “guards then assumed combat order, and, reinforced by the approaching reserve from the nearby border post, threw back the Chinese surprise attack, and expelled them through decisive action from the Soviet territory.” Soviet reports also claim that the PLA tortured and mutilated Soviet troops:

During the provocation, the Chinese military committed incredibly brutal and cruel acts against the wounded Soviet border guards. Based on the on-site inspection and the expert knowledge of the medical commission which examined the bodies of the dead Soviet border guards, it can be stated that the wounded were shot by the Chinese from close range [and/or] stabbed with bayonets and knives [sic]. The faces of some of the casualties were distorted beyond recognition, others had their uniforms and boots taken off by the Chinese. The cruelties committed by the Chinese toward the Soviet border guards can only be compared with the worst brutalities of the Chinese militarists and Chiang Kai-shek’s [Jiang Jieshi’s] men during the ’20s and ’30s.<sup>649</sup>

As many as thirty Soviet troops perished during this attack. Two weeks later, on 14–15 March, the Red Army appears to have initiated a second clash in retaliation for the 2 March PLA attack.

The second conflict began during the mid-morning of 14 March. According to one description of these events:

The Chinese threw more than a regiment (about two thousand men) into the fray, charging across the ice and gaining possession of at least part of the island. When they saw this wave of Chinese, the Russians sought to block their advance with machine-gun fire from armored personnel carriers, but moved back when they saw the Chinese had more men. (Russian accounts speak of ten Chinese for every Russian.) The Chinese directed intense artillery fire not only at the Soviet troops but also at the eastern channel of the river, hoping to stop the movement of heavy vehicles over the ice. The Russians, adopting American Korean war tactics, allowed the Chinese to advance and then counterattacked with large numbers of tanks, armored cars, and infantry in armored personnel carriers. Soviet artillery launched a fierce barrage at 1:00 P.M., raking Chinese positions as far as four miles inland. Three such attacks were mounted, each breaking through Chinese positions. The first two faltered when ammunition was gone, but the third broke up the Chinese, who retreated to their own bank, taking their dead and wounded. The battle was over at 7:00 P.M., having lasted more than nine hours.<sup>650</sup>

After the battle had raged for nine hours, there were already sixty Russian casualties and as many as 800 Chinese casualties. Both sides claimed victory, and in China, “news of the battles, dramatically retold, produced an outpouring of popular excitement over PLA heroism, intensified anti-Soviet antagonisms, and made it appear that Lin Biao’s troops were literally saving the Chinese people.”<sup>651</sup>

On the Soviet side, “massive anti-Chinese demonstrations held in front of the Chinese embassy in Moscow in March 1969 were rated as the largest since the Bolshevik Revolution of 1917.”<sup>652</sup> Subsequently, other Sino-Soviet clashes occurred on Pacha (in Russian sources, Goldinsky) Island in the Amur River. Tensions along Xinjiang’s lengthy border with the Soviet Union also began to heat up.

Following the Sino-Soviet clashes on the Amur and Ussuri rivers, the possibility of a full-scale war between the USSR and China appeared increasingly likely. Faced with this threat, American policy toward China changed accordingly. On 4 August 1969, President Nixon announced to his stunned National Security Council that the Soviet Union was the greater aggressor of the two and that it was against American interests to “let China be ‘smashed’ in a Sino-Soviet war.” This comment reflected a major shift in the American government toward opening relations with China. Nixon’s 1972 visit to China made this policy change official.<sup>653</sup>

Sino-Soviet negotiations opened during summer 1969, but they were interrupted by a clash along the Xinjiang-Kazakhstan border on 13 August. On 11 September, with war looming on the horizon, Soviet Premier Kosygin flew to Beijing to meet with Premier Zhou Enlai. During a four-hour meeting, the two agreed that: (1) the borders would be retained at the current status quo, (2) there would be no further armed confrontations, and (3) their mutual forces would disengage and separate in the disputed regions. Moreover, Zhou promised that “China has no intentions to attack the Soviet Union.”<sup>654</sup>

More substantial Sino-Soviet talks began in late October 1969, but made little headway.<sup>655</sup> By the mid-1970s, the USSR had increased its troop strength along the border to more than a million men, and had equipped these troops with both conventional and nuclear weapons. The Soviet air force unit included Backfire bombers, SU-17, SU-19, MiG-25, and MiG-27 fighters. Meanwhile, over seventy Soviet ships and some seventy-five submarines were stationed in the Pacific.<sup>656</sup> Finally, a first-strike missile system that could reach China, known as the Galosh, was deployed close to Moscow and Leningrad. For all intents and purposes, the two countries were ready to go to war.<sup>657</sup>

Although the Sino-Soviet conflicts during 1969 were not conclusive, they did have several important repercussions. First, China had shown that it was unwilling to bow before Soviet military power, and by so doing had directly challenged the “Brezhnev” doctrine that claimed that the Soviet Union had the right to intervene in other socialist countries. Second, while the PLA did

not win in its military encounters with the Red Army, it did not lose them either. Simply the existence of battles between the PLA and one of the world's great military powers added greatly to the reputation of the PLA. Third, and perhaps most importantly, it sent yet another message to China's former tributaries—and specifically to Vietnam—that they should not try to challenge China's authority in Asia. China was soon to reiterate this message in 1979 with the Sino-Vietnamese War.

### **Sino-Soviet relations during the 1970s**

The PLA's limited success against the Red Army, coupled with Mao's and Zhou's concerns that it might not succeed so well in a real war, gave Beijing the opportunity during 1971 to adopt a new foreign policy initiative by promoting more friendly relations with the United States. Following the opening of Sino-American relations in 1972, Nixon warned Brezhnev that any Soviet attack against China would be against American interests as well. In addition, China tried hard to improve its relations with Japan, signing a treaty in August 1978 which appeared to be critical of the Soviet Union's foreign policy in Asia by specifically condemning "hegemonism." Finally, Sino-Soviet tensions also spawned a number of southeast Asian proxy wars between Soviet and Chinese client states, such as the late 1970s' conflict between Cambodia and Vietnam.

Throughout the rest of the 1970s, Sino-Soviet tensions remained high. China prepared for a possible conflict with the USSR by building an extensive network of tunnels for bomb shelters in its major cities, and then stocking them with food, water, and medical supplies. In addition to manning its borders with over a million troops, Beijing authorized the removal of its nuclear research facilities from Lop Nor—uncomfortably close to Xinjiang's border with the USSR—to a more remote location in Tibet. Finally, Chinese missile technology made rapid advances, and by 1973 Beijing was producing middle-range missiles reportedly capable of striking Moscow and Leningrad.

Sino-Soviet disputes continued during the 1970s. According to China, these were primarily as a result of Soviet provocation. For example, on 14 March 1974, a Soviet military helicopter flew forty miles into Xinjiang before it was captured by Chinese border guards. On 9 May 1978, eighteen Soviet motorboats, one helicopter, and some thirty infantry penetrated 2–3 miles into Chinese territory along the Ussuri River. Finally, on 16 July 1979, a border clash near Tersadi, Xinjiang Province, led to two Chinese casualties. According to the Chinese, most of these conflicts were instigated by Soviet troops, leading Tsui to conclude that the USSR, "relying on its military supremacy, has apparently adopted a 'coercive policy.' It has perpetrated border incidents in an attempt to bring more pressure on Beijing."<sup>658</sup>

In fact, during the 1970s, Moscow repeatedly pressured Beijing to negotiate a new agreement that would either support or replace their 1950 Sino-Soviet

Treaty. Beginning in 1969 and 1970, Moscow proposed that the two sides promise not to attack each other, and especially never to resort to the use of nuclear weapons. When Beijing did not show any interest in this accord, Moscow suggested in 1971 that the two countries sign a new treaty that would disavow force altogether. Thereafter, in 1973 Moscow showed its concern by specifically proposing that the two countries sign a non-aggression pact; Beijing continued to ignore Moscow's advances.

As the end of the Sino-Soviet Treaty's thirty-year term approached, the USSR's efforts to replace this treaty increased. For example, on 24 February 1978, Moscow publicly proposed that the two countries issue a statement of principles that would regulate Sino-Soviet relations. This statement of principles would include: (1) equality, (2) mutual respect for sovereignty and territorial integrity, (3) non-interference in each other's internal affairs, and (4) the non-use of force. The Soviet government clearly hoped that such a statement would replace the 1950 Sino-Soviet Treaty to regulate the nature of Sino-Soviet relations.

The ultimate goal of the Soviet proposals was clearly to limit, or perhaps even to reduce, China's growing influence throughout the smaller countries of Asia, and especially southeast Asia. According to Chang Pao-min, this aspect of the Soviet Union's policies toward China proved to be most attractive to the Vietnamese government. He even quotes one Vietnamese official as stating: "There is a tangibly strong Soviet interest coinciding with Vietnamese interests—to reduce Chinese influence in this part of the world."<sup>59</sup>

Beijing refused all of Moscow's proposals, however, and throughout the 1970s China's condemnation of the Soviet leaders and government became more vocal. For example, during February 1974, Mao publicly called for a "third world" coalition against the so-called "first world," even including the USSR with capitalist countries like the U.S. After Mao's death, an issue of *Renmin Ribao* on 1 November 1977 identified the USSR as China's most dangerous enemy, while the United States was a valued ally. Meanwhile, all the socialist countries—especially Vietnam—were also potential allies in a proposed "united front" against the USSR.

According to some scholars, China began to exert financial pressure on Vietnam, unilaterally cutting off all its aid programs to Vietnam during the mid-1970s, because Hanoi refused to side with Beijing against Moscow: "The breakdown of Vietnam's relations with China after 1975 and Vietnam's current pro-Soviet alignment may be traced to Vietnamese resistance to Chinese pressures to take sides."<sup>60</sup> Finally, on 26 March 1978, China's Ministry of Foreign Affairs demanded that Moscow, in addition to recognizing the existence of "disputed areas" along the Sino-Soviet border, must completely withdraw Soviet troops from Mongolia, as well as pulling them back from along the entire Sino-Soviet border.

In response to China's demands, Leonid Brezhnev, the general secretary of the CPSU Central Committee, visited Siberia. During early April 1978, he

announced that the Soviet Union, far from bowing to China's demands, would begin to provide new, and more advanced, equipment to missile units stationed along the Sino-Soviet border. These new weapons, Brezhnev announced, would be instrumental in "securing ourselves and our socialist friends against possible aggression, whatever the source."<sup>661</sup>

Soon afterwards, on 12 April 1978, Ulaanbaatar also publicly protested Beijing's demands, stating that Moscow had stationed additional Soviet troops along the Sino-Mongolia border at Mongolia's request in order to offset increased Chinese troop concentrations to the south of the border. Characteristically, all these announcements immediately preceded the arrival in Beijing on 26 April 1978 of L. F. Ilyichev, the Soviet deputy minister of Foreign Affairs in charge of negotiating a settlement of the Sino-Soviet border disputes; no public statements were ever issued concerning progress on these talks.

As these events show, Sino-Soviet border tensions had dramatically intensified by 1978, due mainly to increased Soviet troop concentrations along the Sino-Soviet border and in the MPR. One important underlying factor was Moscow's continuing attempts to pressure Beijing not to end the 1950 Sino-Soviet Treaty, which could be eliminated for the very first time in 1979, or—better yet—to negotiate a new treaty that would outline new principles outlining the basis for future Sino-Soviet relations. Brezhnev's announcement that he would use Soviet forces against China on behalf of Moscow's "socialist friends" was also a warning to Beijing to keep its hands off the MPR and Moscow's allies in southeast Asia.

China did not buckle under this pressure, but worked even harder to solidify its relations with both the United States and Japan. Arguably, Beijing's policy was the more successful of the two, resulting in a defensive alliance with Washington and a bilateral treaty with Japan. The Soviet response was to strengthen its diplomatic relations with all the southeast Asian countries bordering on China, most importantly Vietnam. This Soviet action helped force China to accept its role as a regional power, best shown by its 1979 invasion of Vietnam to undermine the USSR's growing influence in southeast Asia.

## Conclusions

From the early 1950s onward, Sino-Soviet relations were marred not only by sharp disagreement over the status of Outer Mongolia, but also by numerous territorial disputes along the Sino-Soviet border. China's rapid victory in the 1962 Sino-Indian border dispute indicated a new standing for China in world affairs, and it sent a message to the USSR about China's determination to reclaim its lost border territories. During the late 1960s, fighting erupted along the Ussuri and Amur rivers. Although these conflicts were small in scope, they led to later territorial conflicts in Xinjiang along China's border with the USSR. Meanwhile, both China and the USSR continued to fortify their

respective sides of the border. As part of China's security program, massive public works were undertaken in order to build a system of bomb shelters throughout Beijing; twenty years later, parts of this enormous undertaking were reportedly turned into the Beijing subway system.

The PLA's new-found confidence that it could counter the Red Army gave Beijing the confidence to adopt a foreign policy promoting friendly relations with the United States. Relations opened in 1972, whereupon Nixon warned Brezhnev that any Soviet attack against China would be against American interests as well, but the most important impact of the Sino-Soviet conflict was the 1979 Sino-Vietnamese War. The timing of this event was all-important, since it was linked to the anniversary of the signing of the 1950 Sino-Soviet Treaty of Friendship, Alliance, and Mutual Assistance on 14 February 1979. China invaded Vietnam on 17 February 1979, only three days after this important date. Soon afterward, on 3 April 1979, once China was convinced that the USSR lacked the political will to intervene on Vietnam's behalf, Beijing informed Moscow that it intended to terminate this treaty upon reaching its thirty-year term in 1980.

Since this treaty had favored the USSR's self-proclaimed role as leader of the world Communist movement, its termination eliminated a major tool through which Moscow had tried to exert its hegemony over China. Beijing's decision to go to war with Vietnam also achieved a strategic victory, by minimizing the future possibility of a two-front war with both the USSR and Vietnam. As discussed in greater detail in Chapter 17, Beijing's fourth post-1949 imperialist war in Vietnam succeeded in completely consolidating China's imperial borders against "foreign aggression."



## THE SINO-VIETNAMESE CONFLICT

The Sino-Vietnamese War was China's fourth and final imperialist conflict of the post-1949 period. Previous studies of the 1979 Sino-Vietnamese War have generally portrayed China's policy as a military failure. Although true from a strictly military viewpoint, this chapter will strive to re-evaluate the central role that Sino-Soviet diplomatic relations played in China's decision to attack Vietnam. Most importantly, it will link the timing of the Sino-Vietnamese conflict to the anniversary of the signing of the 1950 Sino-Soviet Treaty of Friendship, Alliance, and Mutual Assistance on 14 February 1979; China invaded Vietnam on 17 February 1979, only three days after this anniversary. After reassuring itself that Moscow would not intervene, Beijing informed Moscow on 3 April 1979 that it intended to cancel the 1950 Sino-Soviet treaty.

In order to understand China's diplomatic motives behind attacking Vietnam, one must recall that on 14 February 1950 Beijing and Moscow signed a thirty-year treaty designed to strengthen and regulate friendly Sino-Soviet relations. In fact, this treaty heavily favored the USSR's self-proclaimed role as leader of the world Communist movement. Sino-Soviet relations quickly became anything but friendly as increased tensions erupted in violence during the late 1950s and early 1960s, and a series of Sino-Soviet border clashes plagued Sino-Soviet relations during the late 1960s and 1970s. These incidents proved that Moscow stubbornly refused to renegotiate the Sino-Soviet territorial disputes.

While the Sino-Soviet split during the 1960s was widely discussed by western scholars, they often overlooked that the 1950 Sino-Soviet Treaty of Friendship, Alliance, and Mutual Assistance remained fully in force throughout this entire period. In fact, this treaty continued to underlie Sino-Soviet relations all of the way through April 1979, when China finally canceled it. From Beijing's viewpoint at least, the 1950 Sino-Soviet treaty was a major tool through which Moscow had tried to exert its "hegemony" over China.

The Soviet Union also sought to use its relations with Vietnam to exert pressure on China. On Vietnam's part, a planned campaign against Cambodia made necessary forging closer military links with the USSR, which resulted in the signing of the Soviet-Vietnamese Treaty of Friendship and Cooperation

on 2 November 1978. In fact, this agreement was really a mutual defense treaty aimed at China. Soon after the announcement of normalization of Sino-American relations on 15 December 1978, the Vietnamese attacked Cambodia. By 7 January 1979, the Vietnamese forces had secured Phnom Penh.

On 17 February 1979, Chinese forces invaded Vietnam. After three weeks of intense fighting, China could claim that it captured three of Vietnam's six provincial capitals—Cao Bang, Lang Son, and Lao Cai—that bordered on China. Although the Chinese forces totaled over 250,000 men, the Vietnamese turned to guerrilla tactics to rob China of a quick victory. When Beijing announced a troop withdrawal on 5 March 1979, it appeared that the primary goals of this offensive had not been achieved, namely, Vietnam's military potential was still largely undamaged. The Sino-Vietnamese border remained tense even when, after less than three weeks of fighting, China withdrew from Vietnam. To most outsiders, therefore, China's attack appeared to be a military failure.

Instead of working under the premise that China's 1979 invasion of Vietnam failed, this chapter will show that one of the primary diplomatic goals behind China's attack was to discredit Soviet assurances of military support to Vietnam. Seen in this light, Beijing's policy was a diplomatic success, since Moscow did not actively intervene. This showed Hanoi that there were practical limitations to the Soviet-Vietnamese military pact. As a result, China achieved a strategic success similar to its Sino-Indian victory by minimizing the future possibility of a two-front war. More importantly, this strategic victory had a direct impact on China's diplomacy, since it allowed Beijing to announce, on 3 April 1979, that it planned to scrap the 1950 Sino-Soviet Treaty.

### **Early Sino-Soviet relations and Vietnam**

Although China may not have been an active participant in the Vietnam conflict during the 1960s and 1970s, it sent numerous advisers, and Chinese economic and material support for Vietnam played a crucial role. Not only did China send PLA troops to Vietnam to help maintain supply lines, but Beijing's estimate of its economic aid to Hanoi during 1950 to 1978 exceeded \$20 billion.<sup>662</sup> In 1975, concerned that any new aid would simply help build up Vietnam's military ability to threaten China, Beijing refused Hanoi's request to increase its aid programs. In sharp contrast to Beijing, Moscow made a five-year commitment estimated at \$3 billion. Given the 1960s' history of Sino-Soviet disputes and Beijing's firm conviction that the USSR was conducting imperialistic policies against China, it is not hard to understand why Beijing was concerned about improving diplomatic relations between Moscow and Hanoi. Meanwhile, Beijing continued to spurn all Soviet attempts to negotiate a new Sino-Soviet Friendship Treaty.

Although diplomatic relations between Beijing and Hanoi during the 1960s and early 1970s were generally good, policy differences widened after the

April 1975 fall of Saigon. Anne Gilks has plotted the gradual worsening in Sino-Vietnamese relations, and has concluded that the path to the 1979 conflict was “a logical conclusion to the gradual process of degeneration that had begun in 1970.”<sup>663</sup> One of the most important steps in this process took place in September 1975, when Le Duan, the secretary-general of the Communist Party of Vietnam (CPV), traveled to Beijing. During the series of meetings that followed Le Duan’s arrival it became clear that China was extremely worried about Vietnam’s close relations with the USSR.<sup>664</sup>

Fear of Soviet encirclement was the root cause of China’s concern. With the Vietnamese government’s 1975 decision to rapidly unify with South Vietnam, China’s fear of sending increased aid to develop a country that might soon prove to be a security threat became evident. Although it continued its former aid program to Vietnam, Beijing’s reluctance to increase aid was equally clear.

Therefore, when Beijing, which promised only about \$200 million for the year 1976, refused Hanoi’s additional requests during a September 1975 visit, Minister Le Duan openly criticized China’s “systematic hostile policy.” Le Duan then went to Moscow, where he received a five-year commitment estimated to be worth as much as \$3 billion. In return, Vietnam endorsed “certain aspects of Soviet foreign policy” that China considered to be the “principal tools of Soviet expansionism.”<sup>665</sup>

During 1976, China’s domestic turmoil—as the so-called Gang of Four took control following the deaths of both Zhou Enlai and Mao Zedong in September 1976—caused increased frictions along the Sino-Vietnamese border. Relations continued to worsen during the next couple of years, but the rift between China and Vietnam first became apparent only when thousands of ethnic Chinese began to flee Vietnam during the spring and summer of 1978. In addition, territorial disputes over the Spratly Islands, as well as over Vietnam’s December 1978 invasion of Cambodia (Kampuchea), also increased Sino-Vietnamese tensions.

Likewise, Sino-Soviet tensions remained high throughout most of the 1970s. During this period, Moscow continually tried to persuade Beijing to negotiate a new agreement that would either support, or replace, the 1950 Sino-Soviet Friendship Treaty. Beginning in 1969 and 1970, Moscow proposed that the two sides promise not to attack each other, and especially never to resort to the use of nuclear weapons. When Beijing did not show any interest in this, Moscow suggested in 1971 that the two countries sign a new treaty that would disavow force altogether. Thereafter, in 1973 Moscow proposed that the two countries sign a non-aggression pact, but Beijing ignored all such advances from Moscow.

As the end of the Sino-Soviet Treaty’s thirty-year term approached, the USSR’s efforts to renew this treaty strengthened. For example, on 24 February 1978, Moscow publicly proposed that the two governments issue a statement of principles that would regulate Sino-Soviet relations. This statement of principles would include: (1) equality, (2) mutual respect for sovereignty and

territorial integrity, (3) non-interference in each other's internal affairs, and (4) the non-use of force. Moscow clearly hoped that such a statement could replace the 1950 Sino-Soviet Treaty to regulate Sino-Soviet relations.

However, from Beijing's point of view, the ultimate goal behind the USSR's proposals was clearly to limit, or perhaps even to reduce, China's growing influence throughout Asia. As mentioned above, this aspect of Moscow's China policy was extremely attractive to the Vietnamese. One Vietnamese official stated that there was a very strong Soviet interest coinciding with Vietnamese interests in reducing Chinese influence throughout southeast Asia<sup>666</sup>

Beijing's main concern was that if the USSR's policies in Vietnam were successful, the Soviet government could outflank China to the south, thus achieving a strategic and military stranglehold over China. Ever since the Sino-Soviet rift, and especially since the Sino-Soviet border conflicts of the late 1960s, Beijing's primary goal was to build up its foreign alliances directed against Moscow. In addition, the PLA worked hard to build up its military potential in order to face off the Soviet Red Army, a goal it had largely achieved during the mid- to late 1960s, and early 1970s, when the PLA's strength reportedly reached 3.6 million men.

Beijing, for its part, tried to exert diplomatic pressure on Moscow by solidifying its relations with the United States and Japan. During the 1970s, Beijing concluded landmark agreements with both Washington and Tokyo. The USSR's response to China's improving relations with the U.S. was to strengthen its diplomatic relations with all the southeast Asian countries bordering on China, and most importantly among them, with Vietnam.

Increasing signs of Soviet-Vietnamese cooperation began to appear during the summer of 1978, as Vietnam asked to become a member of Comecon. In addition, U.S. government sources reported that by August 1978 as many as 4,000 Soviet advisers were in Vietnam. During September 1978, the USSR began carrying out increased arms shipments to Vietnam, which included "aircraft, missiles, tanks, and munitions."<sup>667</sup>

An early indicator of Beijing's concern over a Soviet-Vietnamese Treaty appeared in *Renmin Ribao*, which warned that Moscow was using Vietnam against China as it had earlier tried—and failed—to use Cuba to exert diplomatic pressure against the United States. Beijing also warned that Moscow's ultimate goal was to "bring the whole of Indochina under its control."<sup>668</sup> From China's perspective, the creation of a Soviet-Vietnamese defense treaty was irrefutable proof that the USSR hoped to use its relations with Vietnam to outmaneuver and outflank China. According to one source, the contents of the future Soviet-Vietnamese defense treaty were negotiated during the summer of 1978, but it was signed only in early November, when Vietnam was ready to invade Cambodia.<sup>669</sup>

All these signs of improving Soviet-Vietnamese relations came to fruition on 2 November 1978, when Vietnam and the USSR signed a Treaty of

Friendship and Cooperation. There was no doubt that this treaty concerned China, since the sixth clause stated that Vietnam and the USSR would immediately consult each other if either was attacked or was threatened with attack in order to eliminate that threat.<sup>670</sup> Reportedly, this treaty also included a secret protocol granting Soviet military forces access to Vietnam's "airfields and ports."<sup>671</sup>

The Vietnamese government later claimed that it signed the Treaty of Friendship and Cooperation with the USSR to stop Chinese "adventurist" acts. However, Chinese leaders undoubtedly saw this treaty as part of Moscow's ongoing efforts to pressure China into backing down and renewing the unequal terms of the 1950 Sino-Soviet Friendship Treaty. If the USSR was able to establish a foothold in southeast Asia, it could easily outflank China on its southern border. If successful, this policy might give Moscow sufficient leverage to force Beijing into renewing, or at least renegotiating, the Sino-Soviet Friendship Treaty on Moscow's terms.

### **Sino-Soviet relations through February 1979**

The Soviet-Vietnamese Treaty of Friendship and Cooperation of 2 November 1978 was a mutual defense treaty that was specifically aimed at China. According to Robert Scalapino, this Soviet-Vietnamese alliance made Vietnam the "linchpin" in the USSR's "drive to contain China."<sup>672</sup> From Beijing's perspective, therefore, Moscow's attempt to surround China diplomatically appeared to be on the verge of succeeding. To oppose Moscow's encirclement, Beijing decided to invade Vietnam in February 1979. Before making this momentous decision, however, Beijing first solidified its relations with Washington so as to counter Moscow's determination to carry through on its treaty commitment to Hanoi.

The Treaty of Friendship and Cooperation was the first comprehensive treaty signed by the Soviet Union and Vietnam. At the heart of the treaty was Article Six, which related to the question of Vietnam's security, and especially security from Chinese attack. Article Six reads:

In case either party is attacked or threatened with attack the two parties signatory to the treaty shall immediately consult each other with a view to eliminating the threat, and shall take appropriate and effective measures to safeguard the peace and security of the two countries.

Although this clause only says the two countries would "consult" each other, Douglas Pike has reported that it is likely there was a secret protocol:

Treaties with other Asian Communist nations are more binding. An attack on North Korea or Mongolia would bring "immediate

military aid," a phrase that may have been contained in a secret Vietnam-USSR protocol signed along with the treaty, thus making it equivalent to similar treaties with North Korea and Mongolia.<sup>673</sup>

Clearly, Beijing believed that this treaty was not simply consultative. According to Anne Gilks, Beijing immediately interpreted the Soviet-Vietnamese Treaty of Friendship and Cooperation as "an offensive military alliance foreshadowing an imminent Vietnamese offensive against Kampuchea." Similar to the Soviet-Indian treaty of 1971, which had preceded India's war with Pakistan, this Soviet-Vietnamese alliance paved the way for a future Vietnamese attack. Therefore, "China's response to the Soviet-Vietnamese treaty was to intensify its efforts to isolate Vietnam in Southeast Asia and to reaffirm its support for Kampuchea."<sup>674</sup>

Although Beijing had long worried about the military threat posed by Soviet forces on her northern borders, Beijing now had to contend with the additional threat that Soviet military forces might soon be on China's southern borders. Following the signing of the Soviet-Vietnamese Treaty, therefore, Beijing had to find a way to break this Soviet attempt to encircle China. Thus Beijing's fear of being outflanked by Moscow was instrumental in motivating Beijing to take action.

China's first move was to improve relations with the United States so as to stalemate Moscow diplomatically. Beijing officially normalized relations with Washington on 1 January 1979. Zbigniew Brzezinski, Carter's National Security adviser, agreed with Beijing's policy and pushed for rapid normalization. He also hoped that China would use its military might to break the back of the Soviet-Vietnamese alliance. According to Marilyn Young:

Brzezinski was delighted with the way the Chinese played cards. Like John Foster Dulles, who in the 1950s sought to split the Chinese and Russians by driving them ever closer together, Deng argued that the way to "remove the Soviet threat from Vietnam was to push them into closer cooperation, which would lead to eventual friction between the two and put an end to the Soviet presence." Brzezinski, who saw the Vietnamese as despicable Soviet puppets, was in complete agreement.

With Brzezinski's blessing, President Carter reassured the visiting Deng Xiaoping of "American 'moral support' for the forthcoming Chinese punitive war against Vietnam."<sup>675</sup>

After receiving America's blessing, Deng returned to China to launch the invasion. Brzezinski later expressed his pleasure with the results:

The invasion revealed some limits to Soviet power by demonstrating that an ally of the Soviet Union could be molested with relative

impunity. This was a lesson bound not to be lost on a number of observers, notably those potentially threatened by the Soviet Union. I also felt that a steadfast U.S. position would convince the Chinese that we were not a “paper tiger” and that the relationship with us had certain longer-range and reciprocal security benefits.

In particular, according to Brzezinski, the Sino–Vietnamese War imposed “major costs on [the Vietnamese], produced a great deal of devastation, and, above all, showed the limits of their reliance on the Soviets.”<sup>676</sup>

According to Brzezinski’s viewpoint, China’s main reason for invading Vietnam was to test the USSR’s resolve to see whether it would stand by its treaty with Vietnam or back down and refuse to intervene. In fact, it was a test of the USSR’s strategic alliance. Deng Xiaoping even reportedly told President Carter in January 1979 that a war between China and Vietnam would “disrupt Soviet strategic calculations.”<sup>677</sup>

In sharp contrast to this view, Robert Ross has argued that China’s military invasion of disputed Sino–Vietnamese territory was in fact closely “synchronized” with Vietnam’s invasion of Cambodia. Therefore, Ross has concluded that the ongoing disputes over Cambodia and the Sino–Vietnamese border had an “organic connection,” as Chinese leaders warned Vietnam not to mistakenly think that China was “weak and easily bullied.”<sup>678</sup> However, even Ross has conceded that, in the aftermath of Vietnam’s successful campaign into Cambodia, “the resultant Soviet encirclement of China necessitated a limited invasion of Vietnam.”<sup>679</sup>

In the final analysis, Vietnam was a relatively small country in terms of population, but not in military strength. It was undoubtedly the sudden arrival of large numbers of Soviet advisers—an estimated 5,000 to 8,000 by mid-1979—and enormous quantities of military supplies that boded ill for China’s immediate strategic security. Thus, according to one scholar: “Had there been no Soviet–Vietnamese alliance, the sixteen-day war between China and Vietnam might not have been fought.”<sup>680</sup> In a clear admission that the USSR’s military cooperation with Vietnam deeply concerned China, Deng publicly acknowledged that this new Soviet–Vietnamese “military alliance” was really just part of the USSR’s long-time goal of wanting to “encircle China.”<sup>681</sup>

During 1978, a new strategic configuration appeared in Asia, as China and the United States moved closer, on the one hand, and the Soviet Union and Vietnam signed a military alliance, on the other hand. These alliances were the direct result of Moscow’s and Beijing’s inability to come to terms in their own mutual relations, and the resulting desire to form alliances designed to outflank and surround the other. Ramses Amer has acknowledged the close links between the USSR’s and China’s new alliances: “Thus two strategic alliances had been created in the closing months of 1978, a Soviet–Vietnamese alliance and a Sino–American alliance, and they would prevail for about a decade.”<sup>682</sup>



Desperate that the USSR might one day face a two-front war against NATO to the west and China to the east, Moscow sought to force Beijing to come to terms by intensifying diplomatic relations with Hanoi. This effort led to the USSR signing the twenty-five-year defense treaty with Vietnam. As expected, the Soviet-Vietnamese treaty put tremendous pressure on China to back down and negotiate a new treaty, since Moscow could now threaten Beijing with the possibility of just such a two-front attack from the USSR to the north and Vietnam to the south. Moscow may also have hoped that this treaty would divert substantial numbers of Chinese troops southward, away from the disputed and heavily fortified Sino-Soviet border.

Instead of backing down, China decided to invade Vietnam. This invasion took place just three days after the twenty-ninth anniversary of the signing of the 1950 Sino-Soviet Treaty. When Moscow did not immediately intervene on Vietnam's behalf, Beijing publicly proclaimed that the USSR had broken its numerous promises to assist Vietnam in case of a Chinese attack. In addition to undermining the validity of the Soviet-Vietnamese treaty, therefore, Moscow's reluctance to intervene dispelled China's last remaining fears of a two-front war with the USSR and Vietnam. Once China's concern about a two-front conflict was proved groundless, Beijing announced that it would end the 1950 Sino-Soviet Treaty of Friendship, Alliance, and Mutual Assistance; by making this decision, China cut its last socialist link with the Soviet Union.

### **The 1979 Sino-Vietnamese War**

Chinese forces invaded Vietnam on 17 February 1979. Although the exact motives underlying China's attack are still open to interpretation, Beijing's concern that Moscow's twenty-five-year defense treaty with Hanoi might lead to the Soviet militarization of the Sino-Vietnamese border was certainly a major factor. Beijing may have also wanted to prove to Moscow that its treaty with Hanoi would not require diverting Chinese troops away from the north, which would have weakened China's military defense along the Sino-Soviet border. After only three weeks of fighting, China withdrew, and the major disputes along the Sino-Vietnamese border remained unresolved. To most outsiders, China's invasion appeared to be a military failure. However, if the real goal behind China's attack was to expose Soviet assurances of military support to Vietnam as a fraud, the USSR's decision not to intervene effectively undermined the Soviet-Vietnamese defense treaty. Thus, Beijing did achieve a clear strategic victory by breaking a possible Soviet encirclement and by minimizing Moscow's threat of a two-front war.

On 15 February 1979, just one day after the twenty-ninth anniversary of the Mao-Stalin agreement on Mongolia, and moreover the first day that China could have officially announced the termination of the Sino-Soviet Treaty of Friendship, Alliance, and Mutual Assistance, Deng declared that



China planned to conduct a limited military campaign against Vietnam. To prevent Soviet intervention on Vietnam's behalf, Deng warned Moscow the following day that China would wage a full-scale war against the USSR. In preparation for this conflict, China put all of her troops along the Sino-Soviet border on an emergency war alert, set up a new military command in Xinjiang, and even evacuated an estimated 300,000 civilians from the Sino-Soviet border.<sup>683</sup> In addition, Beijing stationed the bulk of the PLA's active forces—as many as 1.5 million troops—along China's borders with the USSR.<sup>684</sup>

China's military offensive against Vietnam began three days after the anniversary of the 1950 Sino-Soviet Treaty. An estimated 30,000 PLA troops, commanded by Yang Dezhi, the former deputy commander of Chinese forces in the Korean War, crossed the 480-mile long Sino-Vietnamese border at fourteen different points. By 25 February, this number had risen to 75,000 Chinese troops out of a total of 180,000 troops deployed along the border. Finally, by early March, an estimated 120,000 Chinese faced an equal number of Vietnamese.<sup>685</sup>

As Deng had announced, from the very beginning China conducted a limited action against Vietnam. Not only were many of China's best troops stationed along the Sino-Soviet border, but Beijing decided not to deploy the estimated 500 fighters and bombers it had stationed in the area. To claim, therefore, that China's effort was not a complete military success overlooks the fact that China was not allocating even a fraction of its total resources to the task.<sup>686</sup>

In response to China's attack, the USSR sent several naval vessels to Vietnam. It also initiated an airlift of armaments to assist the Vietnamese Army. On 22 February 1979, Colonel N. A. Trarkov, the Soviet military attaché in Hanoi, even threatened that the USSR would "carry out its obligations under the Soviet-Vietnam treaty."<sup>687</sup> Elsewhere, however, Soviet diplomats made it clear that the USSR would not intervene so long as the conflict remained limited. The USSR clearly had no intention of risking a full-scale war with China for the sake of Vietnam.

After three weeks of intense fighting, China could claim that out of Vietnam's six provincial capitals near the border, it had captured three—Cao Bang, Lang Son, and Lao Cai. Although the Chinese forces totaled over 100,000 men, the Vietnamese turned the tables on the Chinese by adopting guerrilla tactics to rob them of a quick victory. When Beijing announced its intention to withdraw its troops on 5 March 1979—coincidentally the twenty-sixth anniversary of Stalin's death—it appeared that the primary goals of this offensive were not yet achieved; namely, China had not seriously damaged Vietnam's military potential. The Sino-Vietnamese border remained tense when, after less than three weeks of fighting, China withdrew from Vietnam.

To many western observers, it appeared that China's attack against Vietnam was a complete and total failure. According to Ellis Joffe:

These [PLA] shortcomings were demonstrated in China's 1979 invasion of Vietnam. The PLA's superiority in manpower was nullified by the shortage of trucks and armored personnel carriers. Tactical communications were so primitive that orders were transmitted by foot soldiers sent from division to division. Artillery units did not have sufficient ammunition. The front did not receive food and water for days because supplies had to be transported by peasants. Food stocks—mainly noodles and bean curd—were perishable and quickly spoiled in the heat. Maps were outdated, and disintegrated in the rain. Some companies and platoons lost contact with main forces and suffered heavy casualties because they did not have proper radios. No air reconnaissance had been made of the battlefield, which increased casualties as troops discovered unexpected obstacles. In this brief but bloody engagement Chinese casualties amounted to some 26,000 men killed and 37,000 wounded.<sup>688</sup>

However, China claimed success by exaggerating assertions that the Vietnamese had suffered 50,000 casualties.<sup>689</sup> Further, as Banning Garrett has correctly observed, the "Chinese demonstrated that they could attack a Soviet ally without retaliation."<sup>690</sup>

By proving that the USSR would not actively intervene on Vietnam's behalf, China concluded that breaking its long-time treaty with the USSR would also not provoke war. As a result, Beijing announced that the 1950 Sino-Soviet Treaty was no longer valid. Thereafter, although Sino-Soviet negotiations officially opened during October 1979, the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan gave China a pretext for calling off future meetings.

Because the exact motives underlying China's 1979 invasion of Vietnam have remained unclear, scholars studying this conflict have proposed many plausible sounding theories. Perhaps the most common has been that China wanted to "punish" Vietnam for invading Cambodia, an area that had formerly been considered a tributary state to the Chinese Empire. Other Sino-Vietnamese problems, such as territorial disputes over the Spratly Islands or the mass exodus of Chinese nationals from Vietnam, perhaps also played a major role.

Most convincing, however, have been the relatively small number of scholars who have argued that Vietnam's decision to promote closer relations with the USSR was the primary reason behind China's attack. These authors have discussed how China's actions were a response to the Soviet-Vietnamese defense treaty of 2 November 1978. For example, Chang Pao-min has shown how, from Beijing's point of view at least, the 1978 Soviet-Vietnamese defense treaty was a clear threat to China's security. Therefore, not only did the USSR hope to use this treaty to set up an "Asian Collective Security System" aimed at China, but its military relations with Vietnam were an attempt to "threaten and attempt to pin down China from the south." In this regard, China described Vietnam in later statements as "the knife the Soviet Union

has at China's back." As Chang concluded, the Sino-Vietnamese conflict was a reaction to the Soviet Union's attempt to use Vietnam "to contain and encircle China in Southeast Asia . . . [thus posing] a serious threat to China's southern flank."<sup>691</sup>

From a purely diplomatic perspective, China's February 1979 war with Vietnam was a clear success, since Beijing learned that Moscow would not intervene on Hanoi's behalf. This knowledge emboldened Beijing to break with Moscow completely by canceling the 1950 treaty. As final proof of the essential linkages between China's policies in Vietnam and Sino-Soviet relations, Amers has noted and discussed how China's 1988 decision to disengage its border relations with Vietnam and the issue of Cambodia has corresponded almost exactly with Mikhail Gorbachev's attempts to normalize relations with China and improve the USSR's relations with the ASEAN states.<sup>692</sup> Thus, by breaking the Soviet encirclement and eliminating Moscow's threat of a two-front war, China arguably achieved a significant diplomatic victory against the USSR.

### **The diplomatic aftermath of the Sino-Vietnamese War**

Following the Sino-Vietnamese War, the Soviet Union's close relations with Vietnam continued. By the mid-1980s estimates of annual Soviet aid to Vietnam had risen to \$4 to \$6 billion. The tenure of the relationship did change, however, and Moscow has been cautious not to criticize Vietnam's policies *vis-à-vis* the refugee problem and its war in Cambodia. According to Pike, the USSR's "unreserved backing" for Vietnam "undoubtedly stems in part from Moscow's conclusion that it cannot dissuade the Vietnamese in any case."<sup>693</sup> This analysis suggests that Moscow's influence over Hanoi decreased rapidly after or, more likely, as a result of the Sino-Vietnamese War.

In the aftermath of the war, Beijing whole-heartedly agreed with this assessment, and claimed that the USSR's failure to intervene against China proved that it was merely a "paper polar bear."<sup>694</sup> Recently declassified archival documents from the USSR have tended to support China's claim, raising the important question of whether, by 1979, Beijing had already correctly identified Far Eastern symptoms of Moscow's internal decay—the same decay that eventually brought down the Soviet government in 1991—almost a decade before similar evidence of this decay became widely available in the European theater. If so, the possibility exists that the "beginning of the end" of the Cold War really occurred in Asia, and it occurred—in part at least—as a result of China's military actions.

By ignoring the impact of the Sino-Vietnamese War on the USSR's rapid loss of influence in southeast Asia, western scholars have almost universally concluded that China's 1979 invasion of Vietnam was fruitless. For example, according to Gerald Segal, "the 1979 Sino-Vietnamese war was China's most important foreign policy failure since 1949."<sup>695</sup> To a large degree Robert Ross

agreed, stating: "The failure of Chinese policy underscores the ambiguous role of the regional power in contemporary international politics."<sup>696</sup> Most recently, Ellis Joffe, a specialist on the PLA at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, concluded: "China got burned by limited measures against Vietnam in 1979. China was going to teach Vietnam a lesson, but Vietnam taught China a lesson."<sup>697</sup>

However, these negative western assessments sharply contrast with Beijing's own claims that its 1979 war against Vietnam was a success, since Moscow was too weak to intervene.<sup>698</sup> Beijing was apparently willing to back up this claim with action, since after it announced the termination of the 1950 treaty it delivered to Moscow three preconditions for improving Sino-Soviet relations. These three preconditions included: (1) withdrawing Soviet troops from the Sino-Soviet border and Mongolia, (2) withdrawing Soviet troops from Afghanistan, and (3) stopping Soviet support for Vietnam's incursion into Cambodia.<sup>699</sup>

Prior to the actual expiration of the treaty in April 1980, there was a lively exchange of notes concerning issues such as "principles governing relations between the two countries, Chinese border demands, and recent strong Soviet support for Vietnam." On 31 December 1979, the Chinese government condemned Soviet interventions abroad, and on 19 January 1980, a second note warned that the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan threatened "world peace" and "Chinese security." As a result of the USSR's invasion of Afghanistan, which to Beijing may have appeared to be a Soviet attempt to outflank China's ally Pakistan, Beijing announced on 20 January 1980 that further Sino-Soviet negotiations on a new treaty would halt.<sup>700</sup>

In addition to adopting a more assertive posture in its relations with the USSR, China's southern neighbors were also forced to treat her with more respect. This increased respect has especially been evident in Vietnam:

For years afterward a low-intensity border war continued along the Sino-Vietnamese frontier. Ground clashes were frequent and artillery duels often dumped as many as 10,000 shells a day on the opposing positions. By 1988 the daily average of artillery shells fired across the border had dropped to 700, and as Vietnam withdrew from Cambodia, relations gradually improved between the ancient enemies.<sup>701</sup>

According to one 1986 report, because Hanoi lost its gamble that Beijing would never attack, Vietnam "now stations 700,000 combat troops in the northern portion of the country."<sup>702</sup>

China's more assertive role in Asia during the 1980s suggests that Beijing really believed it was victorious in the 1979 Sino-Vietnamese War. Through the early 1980s, China held firm to its demands that before normalization of relations could occur, they had to resolve disputes over Mongolia, Afghanistan, and Indochina. Thus, although Nayan Chanda and others have suggested that

Chinese claims that the USSR was weak may simply have been propaganda, Beijing's own actions indicate that they firmly believed this view.

It is for this reason that recent discussions about when the Cold War really ended would appear to have a direct bearing on Beijing's 1979 claim that Moscow was already too weak politically to fight a two-front conflict. According to China's view, the USSR's failure to intervene on Vietnam's behalf was proof positive that Moscow no longer had the stomach to fight a major war with China. In other words, the most dangerous era of the Cold War was already over.

Until now, popular discussion of whether the Cold War was really over before the 1989 fall of the Berlin Wall has revolved around statements made by retired four-star Soviet General Anatoly Gribkov, who was the chief of staff of the Warsaw Pact during the early 1980s. Gribkov bases his arguments on the fact that by December 1981, the Soviet Politburo had clearly lost the political will to use force to keep their extended empire in line. This assessment was based on the Politburo's refusal to send troops to Poland to thwart a democratic take-over, a sign of weakness which Gribkov points to as evidence that the USSR really "lost" the Cold War as early as 1981.<sup>703</sup>

Recently declassified minutes of a Soviet Politburo meeting from 10 December 1981 seem to support Gribkov's claims, by showing that Moscow unanimously rejected the option of sending troops against Poland's "Solidarity" party as too risky. These minutes further reveal, however, that the Politburo was also seriously considering backing down in the Far East by ordering the withdrawal of Soviet troops from Mongolia; if Moscow had carried out this plan, it would have been acceding to one of Beijing's three preconditions for improving Sino-Soviet relations, which suggests that Beijing was largely successful in putting significant diplomatic pressure on Moscow.<sup>704</sup>

While these Soviet documents appear to support Gribkov's claim that by 1981 the Soviet leadership had already lost the ability to use force in order to shore up the crumbling Soviet Empire, this same reasoning can equally be applied to the Sino-Vietnamese conflict, since China's invasion of Vietnam clearly posed a real threat to the security and stability of the USSR's sphere of influence in southeast Asia. The fact that the Soviet Politburo declined to carry through on its treaty obligations to Vietnam and to intervene against China would suggest that the Soviet Politburo had lost the political will to hold its empire together by the time of the 1979 Sino-Vietnamese War.

The fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989 and the USSR's unexpected collapse in 1991 demands a fresh assessment of the impact of Sino-Soviet relations on the February 1979 Sino-Vietnamese conflict. One facet of this assessment must be to consider whether China's 1979 claim that the USSR was already too weak to fight now appears more plausible in light of the USSR's subsequent dissolution. If true, Beijing must be given proper credit for correctly identifying Far Eastern symptoms of Moscow's internal weakness more than two years before similar indications became discernible in the West. This issue raises the

question of whether the beginning of the end of the Cold War really took place in 1979, and whether it was not, in fact, as a result of Moscow's refusal to accept Beijing's bold-faced challenge to the USSR's military supremacy in the Far East. If so, then future historians may conclude that the Cold War ended first in Asia, and that a crucial step in this process was China's 1979 invasion of Vietnam.

### Conclusions

Previous studies of the Sino-Vietnamese conflict have generally portrayed China's actions as an absolute failure: "China failed to force a Vietnamese withdrawal from [Cambodia], failed to end border clashes, failed to cast doubt on the strength of the Soviet power, failed to dispel the image of China as a paper tiger, and failed to draw the United States into an anti-Soviet coalition."<sup>705</sup> However, if one factors in the 1950 Sino-Soviet Treaty of Friendship, Alliance, and Mutual Assistance, then it is clear that China became convinced that the USSR lacked the political will to resort to war in order to sustain the Soviet sphere of influence throughout Asia, and particularly in southeast Asia. This conviction led Beijing to terminate the Sino-Soviet Treaty upon reaching its thirty-year term in 1980.

It was no coincidence that China invaded Vietnam on 17 February 1979, just three days after the twenty-ninth anniversary of the Sino-Soviet Treaty. When Moscow refused to intervene on Hanoi's behalf, Beijing announced that it planned to cancel this treaty. Diplomatically, Beijing won a victory against all of Moscow's attempts to pressure it into signing a new treaty to replace or augment the Sino-Soviet Treaty of Friendship, Alliance, and Mutual Assistance.

Of equal importance was Beijing's concern that Soviet forces did not surround China both in the north and south. China's 1979 invasion of Vietnam, for all its obvious military failings, did achieve this strategic objective, since the USSR's refusal to intervene on Vietnam's behalf eliminated the threat of a two-front war. Finally, in hindsight, China's claim that the USSR was really just a paper polar bear appears to have been accurate. This represents perhaps the first outside indicator that the Soviet Empire was on the verge of internal collapse, a collapse that only became evident ten years later with the 1989 fall of the Berlin Wall and the 1991 dissolution of the USSR.

By contrast, the Sino-Vietnamese War was China's fourth, and apparently final, imperialist war in the post-World War II era. As a result of these wars, China once again reasserted her historical rights over her colonies and tributaries, proof that the dynastic resurgence was successful and that the dynastic cycle had revolved full circle. To all outside appearances, China was now the supreme Asian power. That is, until student protesters in May to June 1989 publicly questioned the political legitimacy of the Communist regime. Once more, China's Mandate of Heaven was imperiled.



## Part 5

# THE DYNASTIC QUESTION





Figure 5 The dynastic question: renewed civil unrest at the center.

## THE TIANANMEN MASSACRE AND THE FUTURE OF THE PLA

To China's ruling Communist Party the Tiananmen "Incident" was a domestic uprising, not too dissimilar in its basic elements from the White Lotus or the Eight Trigram uprisings some two centuries before. Granted, the pro-democracy demonstrators in Tiananmen Square were peaceful and unarmed—in sharp contrast to the knife-wielding Eight Trigram followers—but their goal of forcing the collapse of the ruling government and creating a new government to replace it must have seemed frighteningly similar. Therefore, the military reaction to both disturbances was also similar: just as Manchu princes used muskets to shoot down the Eight Trigram invaders inside the Forbidden City, China's Communist rulers used tanks and infantry to run down helpless students outside the Forbidden City. More recently, in the late 1990s and in 2000, the PLA has helped round up and imprison members of the religious sect Falun Gong. Faced with these clear signs of domestic unrest, the primary dynastic question is: Will China's Communist "Dynasty" slip into decline and eventually fall, just as the Qing Dynasty declined and collapsed as a result of similar events almost two centuries ago?

Although the Chinese leadership has been denounced both at home and abroad for its militant policies, from a traditional viewpoint the repression of domestic uprisings shows that the Communist Dynasty has the resolve to crack down on opposition and that it still retains the "Mandate of Heaven." But, this concept acts like a double-edged sword. On the one hand, when a Chinese government's hold over the Mandate is universally accepted, civil unrest is minimized and domestic uprisings can be quickly repressed. On the other hand, when a dynasty's Mandate is questioned—as it was by the pro-democracy activists in Tiananmen Square in 1989 and, most recently, by members of the Falun Gong—then that dynasty has little choice but to act decisively, before the very failure to act validates its detractors' claims.

The pro-democracy movement lasted for fifty-four days, from 15 April through 4 June 1989. At its height, on 27 April, it was estimated that over a million people rallied in Tiananmen Square, but on most days, a few thousand protesters gathered peacefully. Even though the protesters used non-violent tactics, the government characterized the movement in late April as a "planned

conspiracy.” On 2–3 June, tens of thousands of citizens took to the streets to block the People’s Liberation Army (PLA) deployment into Beijing, but eventually 200,000 to 300,000 PLA troops surrounded the city. On 4 June, the Communist government ordered tanks and troops to clear the square. Estimates of the number of dead and wounded range from several hundred to several thousands.

The PLA played a central role in destroying the democracy movement. At first glance, this role seems to differ widely from the PLA’s former responsibilities, which included defeating the Nationalist Army, rebuilding the Chinese Empire in Tibet, Xinjiang, and Manchuria, and reasserting limited regional authority over China’s tributaries in Korea and Vietnam. However, quashing domestic uprisings has always been an integral duty of the Chinese military, regardless of whether they are Manchu-led forces fighting the White Lotus, Eight Trigrams, and Taipings, Nationalist-led troops fighting Communist “bandits” in the five anti-Communist campaigns, or PLA tanks running over student demonstrators in Tiananmen Square. The PLA faced this very same situation following Zhou Enlai’s death on 5 April 1976, and set the pattern when it used force to halt all demonstrations in Tiananmen Square. The incident on 4 June 1989 was much the same, with the important exception that for the first time ever an international audience was present to witness the resulting massacre on TV.

The impact of the Tiananmen Massacre on China has been enormous. Domestically, it has led to a crisis of confidence, as intellectuals continue to question—albeit privately—the government’s legitimacy. Without a doubt, this lack of faith in the government has helped promote the spectacular growth of the Falun Gong. At its height, the pro-democracy movement in Beijing was estimated to include one million people, while the Falun Gong currently claim a membership of 100 million worldwide. Internationally, economic sanctions ended quickly, but foreign disillusionment with the PRC continues. Finally, militarily, there is no longer any doubt that the PLA is not the people’s “liberator,” but instead its warden. For this reason, the PLA is now perceived by many to be the true power behind the throne. As one China commentator put it, as a result of the massacre on 4 June 1989 many Chinese “concluded that rulers who could turn tanks and machine guns on their own citizens now could represent only tanks and machine guns.”<sup>706</sup>

### **The democracy movement and the “Mandate of Heaven”**

Democracy in Chinese history has deep roots and is linked with the concept known as the “Mandate of Heaven.” As Roger V. Des Forges has argued, since its appearance during the twelfth century BC, the Mandate of Heaven was “based on many criteria, including heavenly signs, earthly changes, and human action (including military power, political skill, moral virtue, etc.).” Although a ruling dynasty that has the Mandate of Heaven enjoys full political

control, it must still respect the fundamental fact that a form of “popular sovereignty” exists and that at the heart of this sovereignty is the belief that “people are the basis of the state.”<sup>707</sup> In other words, once a majority of the people believe that a government no longer has the Mandate of Heaven, then political collapse is sure to follow.

Obscuring this age-old view of “popular sovereignty,” however, is the equally important question of state power, since government repression of popular expression can easily generate the false outer appearance of social harmony. Although military power has been important throughout all Chinese dynasties, it became especially pertinent after 1949, when by means of political purges and anti-revolutionary campaigns the CCP constantly quelled public unrest. The number of Chinese affected by these campaigns was enormous: approximately 900,000 dead with the 1949 formation of the PRC, some 700,000 killed in the 1951 repression of counter-revolutionaries, the execution of 1,000 and imprisonment of 30,000 in the 1951 to 1952 “Three Antis and Five Antis Campaign,” the imprisonment of over 500,000 in the 1957 Anti-Rightest Campaign, and over ten million Chinese dead during the 1966 to 1969 Cultural Revolution.<sup>708</sup> One estimate of the number of Chinese who died as a result of famine, war, or state repression between 1949 and 1987 totals almost seventy-five million.<sup>709</sup>

Many of the supporters of the democracy movement in 1989 saw through the government’s claim that it enjoyed the true support of the Chinese people. They knew the Mandate of Heaven was sustained only through military force. For example, one big-character poster, written by an anonymous teacher at People’s University and displayed on campus on 12 May 1989, proclaimed that military force—defined as “military forces, police, plainclothes security personnel, courts, prisons, etc.”—was the most important pillar holding up the Communist regime, and “whoever controls the military is the one with the greatest power.”<sup>710</sup>

Beginning on 17 April 1989, pro-democracy demonstrators challenged the military when they began to congregate around the Monument to the Martyrs in Tiananmen Square. In fact, the spark for the pro-democracy movement was the death of former Communist Party General Secretary Hu Yaobang on 15 April. His funeral allowed students to assemble legally to mourn his passing, a pattern set by Zhou Enlai’s death in April 1976, after which protesters gathered in Tiananmen Square to denounce the Gang of Four. As Fang Lizhi, one of the main leaders of the pro-democracy demonstration, was to admit: “Hu Yaobang was not that important, and the regard heaped on him was excessive. . . . But in China, a leader’s death provides an excuse for people to assemble. . . . [And] it’s only when people can assemble that something can be achieved.”<sup>711</sup>

Numerous wreaths and wall posters lauded Hu as a people’s hero, but others were highly critical, stating that “Seventy years have passed since the May Fourth Movement and still we have no freedom and democracy!”

Students also presented a seven-point petition to the National People's Congress demanding greater press freedom, the right to protest, and a renunciation of "mass political campaigns" to repress political dissidents.<sup>712</sup>

On 19 April and the morning of 20 April, the first hint of violence appeared. Gathering outside the gates of Zhongnanhai, where Premier Li Peng and the other major Communist leaders lived, some 20,000 demonstrators demanded that Li Peng come out and confront them. Under the guidance of Wu'er Kaixi, a young education student, the crowd remained peaceful and seemed satisfied with verbal criticism of the government. At 3:00 A.M., government loudspeakers accused the demonstrators of insulting party leaders and shouting "reactionary slogans." Soon, policemen appeared and began to beat students with belts and boots. Instead of calming the pro-democracy movement the arrested students became martyrs, and the movement quickly grew in size.

### **PLA modernization under Deng Xiaoping**

Before examining the Tiananmen Massacre in detail, it is important to look at the PLA's modernization reforms. Although the PLA succeeded in chastising Vietnam in their 1979 border war, it by no means defeated the Vietnamese army. In fact, considering the overwhelming size of the PLA and its enormous defense budget, the Chinese came out of this war somewhat the worse for wear. During the late 1970s and early 1980s, therefore, the PLA carried out a series of reforms designed to modernize its weaponry and to rethink its structure by establishing new rules and regulations. The Maoist military doctrine was the first victim of this modernizing reform.

Mao's military doctrine, known as the "people's war," became part of the Chinese military thinking. According to Ellis Joffe, at the heart of Mao's thought was the idea that human beings—or the "human factor"—could "substitute for both the quantity and quality of the opponent's weapons," and that the outcome of a military conflict will be decided by "properly mobilized and politically motivated soldiers, fighting in accordance with the correct strategy and tactics."<sup>713</sup> But in June 1978, Deng Xiaoping finally "broke the ice" when he claimed that Mao himself had said it was necessary to "seek truth from facts." Therefore, the PLA should integrate Mao's thought "with reality, analyze and study actual conditions and solve practical problems." Deng's speech quickly led to comprehensive PLA reforms on three different levels: (1) modernization of weapons, (2) streamlining and restructuring the officer corps, and (3) restoring political control over the PLA.<sup>714</sup>

China's experience in the 1979 Sino-Vietnamese conflict proved that modernizing the PLA's weaponry was of prime importance. Not only did the PLA find itself short of trucks, ammunition, and radios, but the air force was so poor that it was perhaps withheld from the conflict for fear that "Chinese fighters would have been at a disadvantage in any engagement with Vietnamese air units." Throughout the 1980s, therefore, China sought to modernize its

defense industry, to build and buy more modern weapons, and “tailor” the “ends of weapons modernization to their limited means.” Although Beijing’s primary goal seems to have been to fight a limited conventional war against the USSR, its modernization efforts also enhanced “its ability to take on a smaller power like Vietnam.”<sup>715</sup>

Of equal importance to modernization was the training of a professional army. Mired in decades of Maoist dogma, PLA officers gained promotion for political reliability rather than for professional competence. This situation changed in the early 1980s, as many new academies and specialized technical schools opened, and enrollment standards became more strict. As a result of forced retirement and streamlining, the PLA was able to train officers for a modern war. In 1984, the PLA adopted new service regulations spelling out “the duties and rights of servicemen pertaining to discipline, training, study, rest and physical appearance as well as procedures for daily routine and combat readiness.”<sup>716</sup>

The final and most important reform was the reinstitution of civilian control over the PLA. During the Cultural Revolution, the PLA assumed enormous political responsibilities that left it “largely autonomous from civilian control.” Under Deng’s leadership, he reduced the PLA’s role in internal security, civil construction, and railway engineering. He restored political control over regional military commanders, which once more made them directly responsible to Beijing. Finally, Deng redefined the PLA’s role in society and, as Joffe somewhat over-optimistically stated, the “aim has been to restore the PLA to its traditional role of assisting the population in times of need rather than ruling over it.”<sup>717</sup>

Deng’s military reforms were well underway by the mid-1980s. These reforms proved crucial when the government ordered the PLA to move into Tiananmen on 19 May 1989. While city residents stopped the first troops, rumors that PLA detachments either “resisted or rebelled” appear unfounded. In fact, according to Nan Lin, while “commanders might vary in their execution of the orders, there is no evidence that any commanders or armies refused to follow orders throughout the struggle.”<sup>718</sup> In the end, the PLA proved loyal to Beijing.

### **The Tiananmen Massacre**

During the late evening of 21 April 1989, thousands of students gathered in Tiananmen Square in preparation for Hu Yaobang’s funeral the following day. As the ceremony was taking place within the Great Hall of the People, crowds outside called for Premier Li Peng to come outside and receive the students’ demands. In a gesture reminiscent of Imperial times, three student representatives even knelt before the doors, and one held a scroll intended for the Communist “emperor.” The government leaders declined to accept the students’ petition, thus missing “a critical opportunity to defuse the confrontation at a time when modest concessions might well have mollified the demonstrators.”<sup>719</sup>

In late April, the student demonstrators organized under Wu'er Kaixi, Wang Dan, and Chai Ling, a female psychology student, called outright for Li Peng's resignation. On 26 April, the *People's Daily* attacked the students and even hinted that it might require military force to subdue them. The following day, students protested against this editorial, as about 150,000 demonstrators marched on Tiananmen Square. Almost immediately thereafter, Deng Xiaoping reportedly visited regional military commanders and ordered military units to be moved to Beijing. The PLA troops were in position by 18 May.

On 13 May, about 400 students congregated in Tiananmen Square and began a hunger strike that lasted through 19 May. Military action against the pro-democracy activists was delayed because of President Gorbachev's arrival in China on 15 May, and it was not until after his departure on 18 May that the government dared order the PLA to intervene. By that time, over a million demonstrators had gathered in Tiananmen Square. On 19 May, Li Peng visited hospitalized hunger strikers and tried to convince the students to return home, but to no avail. Later that night, Li announced that the government had ordered the PLA into Beijing, and the following day he declared martial law.

During late May, PLA troops tried to enter Beijing, but failed because local residents surrounded their trucks and refused to let them pass. Adopting a new tactic, on 1 June, government-sponsored counter-demonstrations began on the outskirts of Beijing. The goal was to have pro-government demonstrators march into downtown Beijing, at which point PLA troops would join them. This plan failed, however, and so the PLA had to go in alone. At 10:30 P.M. on the night of 3 June, PLA troops were loaded into trucks, given live ammunition, and ordered: "Shoot to kill when the order comes." A total of 25,000 troops converged on Tiananmen Square from the west, east, north, and south, while 75,000 additional troops waited in reserve outside the city.<sup>720</sup>

Skirmishes soon began between the advancing troops and city residents, and Beijing's thirty-seven hospitals admitted an estimated 4,000 dead or wounded before midnight. Meanwhile, tanks slowly converged on Tiananmen Square, smashing and crushing any barricades that were in their path. By 3:00 A.M. on 4 June, PLA troops and tanks had moved into the square and approached the center of the pro-democracy demonstrators, near their home-made statue of the Goddess of Democracy. Thirty minutes later the demonstration was over. Although the official government report stated that no one was killed, early estimates reported 4,000 dead and 6,500 wounded.<sup>721</sup>

On 4 June 1989, millions of people around the world watched in horror as the PLA massacred defenseless students at Tiananmen Square on live TV. For many, both Chinese and non-Chinese alike, the scenes of PLA troops and tanks shooting, bayoneting, and running over innocent students starkly revealed the previously unimaginable brutality of the Chinese Army; as one foreign journalist wrote: "If this is the People's Liberation Army, God spare China!"<sup>722</sup> By dawn of 4 June, the demonstrators were removed from Tiananmen Square.

The Chinese government had forcibly retained the Mandate of Heaven, but the Tiananmen Massacre shocked the world. In the aftermath, the government labeled the pro-democracy demonstrators as “counter-revolutionaries,” called the PLA action “the quelling of violent turmoil,” and ordered the arrest and imprisonment of the leaders of the democracy movement. On 9 June, Deng Xiaoping came out of retirement to hail the PLA as “a truly Great Wall of iron and steel around the Party and country.”<sup>723</sup>

### **Tiananmen, the PLA, and beyond**

Most Chinese were stunned by the Tiananmen Massacre, and were at a loss to explain what had happened. This event not only had an enormous impact on its victims—the Chinese people—but also on the People’s Liberation Army. Considered by many as a “people’s army” that liberated China first from the Japanese and then from the Nationalists, it came as a surprise to many PLA cadre when they received orders to use deadly force against Chinese citizens. This event created a crisis of confidence within the PLA ranks, a crisis that will undoubtedly have lasting repercussions in the coming decades.

One of the greatest challenges of the Tiananmen Massacre has been trying to determine how many people died in the massacre. Soon after 4 June, the *New York Times* estimated 400 to 800 dead, Amnesty International said 700 to 3,000, *Time* magazine reported 5,000, while one Russian reporter estimated 10,000.<sup>724</sup> The true number may never be known for sure, but, whatever the number, the impact on the PLA’s reputation has been devastating: for the first time since 1949, the Chinese government publicly turned the PLA’s weapons on the Chinese people.

The psychological impact of the Tiananmen Massacre has also been tremendous, as for the first time the Chinese people have begun to look upon the PLA not as their friend, but as their enemy. As recounted by David Rice, on the night of the massacre many Chinese falsely assumed that the PLA troops were using rubber bullets, not live ammunition:

When I talk of people falling to the ground, I don’t mean crowds of people being shot. The PLA soldiers were picking off individuals. So many people got shot because those bringing up the rear simply would not believe the soldiers were using real ammunition. Perhaps rubber bullets, they thought, and they were still crowding forward to see what was happening.

The resulting disillusionment among the Chinese populace was profound, as the slogan “the People’s Army loves the People” turned into “the People’s Army shot the People.”<sup>725</sup>

Scholars have also examined the ideological impact of the massacre on the Chinese people. For many PRC citizens, it was unimaginable prior to 4 June



1989 that the PLA would ever turn its guns on the people. In fact, before “Tiananmen, the use of bullets to stop anti-government unrest in Chinese cities had been almost unheard of since 1949, except in Tibet.” The average Chinese found it difficult to believe that the PLA “would actually open fire on demonstrators and crush them with tanks in the nation’s hallowed capital.”<sup>726</sup> Of course, this was merely a public display of what the PLA had already been doing in secret since the early 1950s, especially in such far-flung ethnic regions like Tibet and Xinjiang.

This attitude applied equally well to many PLA soldiers, a large number of whom supported the pro-democracy movement, and continue to doubt that the massacre was “morally and ideologically correct.”<sup>727</sup> On 21 May 1989, seven prestigious retired PLA leaders, including a former minister of defense as well as the former head of the PLA General Staff, addressed Deng and reminded him that the PLA belonged to the people and so “cannot stand in opposition to the people, much less oppress the people, and it absolutely cannot open fire on the people and create a blood-shedding incident. In order to prevent further worsening of the situation, troops should not enter the city.”<sup>728</sup>

One city-born PLA officer, who was put on leave prior to the massacre, later explained how the Chinese leaders chose mainly soldiers from rural areas to send into Beijing. Many of them could not even speak Mandarin. These soldiers were “naïve, ignorant people,” who were genuinely “ill-informed” about what was taking place in Beijing. This strategy insured that the troops would carry out the leaders’ orders: “I feel that the PLA is pitiable. One thing about simple-minded, naïve people is, if used in a good way, they can do wonderful things. But if used in a bad way, they can do terrible things. If those ignorant people owe blood, then we have to ask for a return of blood from the persons at the top who gave the instructions.”<sup>729</sup>

PLA displeasure with the Tiananmen Massacre even led to speculation that the military would stage a coup and take control of the government. In 1992, the Hong Kong *South China Morning Post* published an article stating that the PRC had set up a special committee within the PLA to “prevent *coup d’état* from taking place.” According to a military source quoted in this article, “Deng knows that the Communist Party has to go on relying on the PLA to maintain its monopoly on power. . . . However, he does not want a maverick faction within it to be strong enough to stage a *coup*.”<sup>730</sup>

### **The never-ending dynastic cycle**

China’s Communist rulers resorted to tanks and infantry to slaughter helpless students outside the Forbidden City. They feared that the pro-democracy demonstrators could force the collapse of the ruling regime. During the late 1990s and early in 2000, the government has been under constant threat from Falun Gong-sponsored demonstrators. Understandably, what makes the PRC

government and the Communist Party even more concerned about Falun Gong than they were about the Tiananmen demonstrators is how many ordinary citizens—including disaffected government officials—have joined the movement.

From a traditional Chinese viewpoint, the Tiananmen Massacre and the constant public arrests of Falun Gong members show that the Communist “dynasty” is unhealthy, and is proof that the Communist hold on the Mandate of Heaven is not unchallenged. China’s leaders clearly fear that if domestic uprisings are not repressed, their very failure to act quickly will validate claims that the government had lost its political legitimacy. This paradox has set a deadly vicious cycle into motion, since the Beijing government is damned if it represses dissidents, and yet faces destruction if it doesn’t.

The government’s decision on 4 June 1989 to use tanks and troops to clear Tiananmen Square changed the PLA’s post-World War II duties from defeating China’s foreign enemies to repressing domestic rebellion. However, throughout Chinese history, insuring continued unification has always included destroying domestic uprisings, and it was perhaps inevitable that this duty would one day fall to the PLA. One essential difference, of course, has been that the entire world could watch the massacre of 4 June 1989 on TV. As a result, the Chinese government and the Communist Party have lost tremendous “face,” and this loss damaged their hold on the Mandate of Heaven even more. In a similar pattern, the PLA’s declining prestige within China has led to a worsening in “civil–military” relations, including civilian attacks on PLA troops, their families, and military installations.<sup>731</sup>

The psychological impact of this domestic unrest on the PLA has also been tremendous, leading to a crisis of confidence as PLA cadre and troops have begun to question the wisdom of their political leaders. There can no longer be any doubt that the PLA is not the people’s “liberator,” as was once proclaimed, but instead it has become the people’s watchdog. For this reason, the PLA is now generally considered to be the true power behind the Chinese throne. Ever watchful and with full knowledge of the importance of the military throughout Chinese history, the Communist leadership must be careful to repress domestic unrest while simultaneously avoiding a military coup. If it fails, then China’s never-ending dynastic cycle may well begin once again.

# NOTES

## 1 THE SECRET SOCIETIES AND QING DYNASTIC DECLINE

- 1 Susan Naquin, *Millenarian Rebellion in China: The Eight Trigrams Uprising of 1813* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1976), 182.
- 2 Henry Guerlac, "Vauban: The Impact of Science on War," in Edward Mead Earle, *Makers of Modern Strategy: Military Thought from Machiavelli to Hitler* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1943), 26.
- 3 Herbert Franke, "Siege and Defense of Towns in Medieval China," in Frank A. Kierman, Jr. and John K. Fairbank, eds, *Chinese Ways in Warfare* (Harvard, MA: Harvard University Press, 1974), 172.
- 4 For a discussion of why portable firearms became important in the West, but failed "to achieve tactical significance" in China, see Harold Kleinschmidt, "Using the Gun: Manual Drill and the Proliferation of Portable Firearms," *The Journal of Military History*, Vol. 63, No. 3 (July 1999), 601–630.
- 5 Emeric Szabad, *Modern War: Its Theory and Practice* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1863), 15–16.
- 6 Geoffrey Parker, *The Military Revolution: Military Innovation and the Rise of the West, 1500–1800* (London: Cambridge University Press, 1988), 43.
- 7 J. Colin, *The Transformations of War* (London: Hugh Rees, 1912), 118–119.
- 8 William H. McNeill, *The Pursuit of Power: Technology, Armed Force, and Society since AD 1000* (Chicago, IL: The University of Chicago Press, 1982), 147.
- 9 For a discussion of the Zunghar campaign, see Peter C. Perdue, "Military Mobilization in Seventeenth and Eighteenth-Century China, Russia, and Mongolia," *Modern Asian Studies*, Vol. 30, No. 4 (1996), 757–793.
- 10 David B. Ralston, *Importing the European Army: The Introduction of European Military Techniques and Institutions into the Extra-European World, 1600–1914* (Chicago, IL: The University of Chicago Press, 1990), 110.
- 11 James A. Millward, *Beyond the Pass: Economy, Ethnicity, and Empire in Qing Central Asia, 1759–1864* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1998), 146–147.
- 12 As McCord has observed, the connection between the military and politics has remained closely linked in twentieth-century China, although all too many China scholars have been "reluctant to acknowledge the political importance of military power in the founding and survival of China's Communist government." Edward A. McCord, *The Power of the Gun: The Emergence of Modern Chinese Warlordism* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1993), 1.

- 13 Robert Darrah Jenks, "The Miao Rebellion, 1854–1872: Insurgency and Social Disorder in Kweichow During the Taiping Era" (Ph.D. dissertation: Harvard University, 1985), 80.
- 14 Ralph L. Powell, *The Rise of Chinese Military Power, 1895–1912* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1955), 8–9.
- 15 Ibid., 12–13.
- 16 Peter Ward Fay, *The Opium War 1840–1842* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1975), 345.
- 17 Ibid.
- 18 Kierman and Fairbank, 1–16.
- 19 Ibid., 25–26.
- 20 Alistair Johnston emphasizes the wide gap between what he calls the Confucian–Mencian paradigm, which stressed "that conflict is aberrant or at least avoidable through the promotion of good government and the coopting or enculturation of external threats," and the *parabellum* paradigm, which stressed "that conflict is a constant feature of human affairs, that it is due largely to the rapacious or threatening nature of the adversary, and that in this zero-sum context the application of violence is highly efficacious for dealing with the enemy." Alastair Iain Johnston, *Cultural Realism: Strategic Culture and Grand Strategy in Chinese History* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1995), 249. Johnston's view of Chinese "strategic culture" is not universally accepted. For example, in 1996, Hans J. van de Ven opined: "Leaving aside the issue of what a Chinese cultural essence might be or if such a thing exists, it is plain that China's history has in fact been at least as violent as Europe's." "War in the Making of Modern China," *Modern Asian Studies*, Vol. 30, No. 4 (1996), 737.
- 21 Quincy Wright, *A Study of War* (Chicago, IL: The University of Chicago Press, 1965), 863–894; Geoffrey Best, *Humanity in Warfare* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1980).
- 22 R. J. Rummel, *China's Bloody Century: Genocide and Mass Murder since 1900* (New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Publishers, 1991), 12.
- 23 Jenks, 50.
- 24 June Teufel Dreyer, *China's Forty Millions: Minority Nationalities and National Integration in the People's Republic of China* (Harvard, MA: Harvard University Press, 1976), 12–13.
- 25 Susan Mann Jones and Philip A. Kuhn, "Dynastic Decline and the Roots of Rebellion," in Denis Twitchett and John K. Fairbank, *The Cambridge History of China* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1978), Vol. 10, Part I, 132.
- 26 Jenks, 96–97.
- 27 Twitchett and Fairbank, 131–133.
- 28 For an in-depth view of Chinese strategy, see *Shengwuji* (Beijing: Xinhua Shudian, 1984).
- 29 Jenks, 97.
- 30 For a more general discussion of eighteenth- and nineteenth-century secret society uprisings, including the White Lotus, see Philip A. Kuhn, *Soulstealers: The Chinese Sorcery Scare of 1768* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1990).
- 31 Yu Songqing, *Ming Qing bailianjiao yanjiu* (Chengdu: Sichuan renmin chubanshe, 1987), 20.
- 32 For more on the religious nature of the White Lotus, see B[arend]. J. Ter Haar, *The White Lotus Teachings in Chinese Religious History* (New York: E. J. Brill, 1992), and Barend J. Ter Haar, *Ritual and Mythology of the Chinese Triads: Creating an Identity* (Boston, MA: E. J. Brill, 1998).
- 33 Twitchett and Fairbank, 139–141.

- 34 Philip A. Kuhn, *Rebellion and Its Enemies in Late Imperial China: Militarization and Social Structure, 1796–1864* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1970), 40–41.
- 35 Powell, 22.
- 36 Naquin, 182.
- 37 Kenneth Scott Latourette, *The Chinese: Their History and Culture* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1934), 346–347.
- 38 Naquin, 89–91.
- 39 Hu Sheng, *From the Opium War to the May Fourth Movement* (Beijing: Foreign Languages Press, 1991), 18–19.
- 40 Kuhn, *Rebellion*, 49.
- 41 Immanuel C. Y. Hsü, *The Rise of Modern China* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990), 165; for unknown reasons, this sentence was apparently cut from later editions of Hsü's textbook. See, for example, the Fifth Edition published in 1995.

## 2 THE OPIUM WAR AND THE ORIGIN OF CHINA'S MODERN WARFARE

- 42 For a discussion of how the Chinese treated foreign guests and how they conducted international diplomacy, see James L. Hevia, *Cherishing Men From Afar: Qing Guest Ritual and the Macartney Embassy of 1793* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1995).
- 43 Russia and China had previously signed treaties—such as the Treaty of Nerchinsk in 1689—but these agreements followed traditional Chinese practices and largely placed Russia in a subservient—or tributary—position *vis-à-vis* Beijing. According to Mancall, the Chinese “Empire dealt with the Russians through the same mechanism used for continental barbarians. In effect, the Empire incorporated the Russians into its structure in the same way it did Central Asians.” Mark Mancall, *China at the Center: 300 Years of Foreign Policy* (New York: The Free Press, 1984), 76.
- 44 Fairbank was one of the first supporters of this view. More recently, it has been challenged by a wide range of authors, including Timothy Brook, Peter Perdue, and R. Bin Wong. However, most PRC and Taiwanese histories do continue to use the Opium War as a major divide in Chinese history.
- 45 *The Opium War* (Peking: Foreign Languages Press, 1976), 14. For a Chinese perspective equating American participation in the Opium trade with England's, see Xiao Zhizhi, *Yapian zhanzheng qian Zhongxi guanxi jishi, 1517–1840* (Wuhan: Hubei renmin chubanshe, 1986), 581–585.
- 46 As early as November 1837, Superintendent of Trade Elliot warned Lord Palmerston in London that the entire China trade was “threatened” by changes in the trading system. Michael Greenberg, *British Trade and the Opening of China 1800–42* (London: Cambridge University Press, 1951), 200.
- 47 Han Chinese historians have had a difficult time interpreting the Opium War: on the one hand, they accuse the British of imperialism, while on the other hand, they admit that China was being ruled by “a group of corrupt, feudal oligarchs who stood on the opposite side of their own people.” Hu, *From the Opium War*, Vol. 1, 62.
- 48 Hsin-pao Chang, *Commissioner Lin and the Opium War* (New York: W. W. Norton & Co., 1970), 203.
- 49 Millward, *Beyond the Pass*.
- 50 Sir John Francis Davis, *China, During the War and Since the Peace* (Wilmington, DE: Scholarly Resources Inc., 1972), 18–19.
- 51 Han Chinese authors apparently do not see the inherent contradiction of lauding Commissioner Lin for being loyal to the Manchus against the Han merchants while

- also calling him a nationalist. For a Chinese description of Lin as a “patriotic comrade” and a “people’s hero,” see Yao Weiyuan and Xiao Zhizhi, eds, *Yapian Zhanzheng yanjiu* (Wuchang: Wuhan Daxue chubanshe, 1987), 255–258. The Taiwanese have a similar problem with the concept of modernization. For example, see Zhang Weifen, *Lin Zexu: Zhongguo jindaihua de xianchu* (Taipei: xiushi wenhua, 1989), which translates as “Lin Zexu: the Pioneer of Chinese Modernism.”
- 52 Edgar Holt, *The Opium Wars in China* (Chester Springs, PA: Dufour Editions, 1964), 78.
- 53 Brian Inglis, *The Opium War* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1976), 120.
- 54 Maurice Collis, *Foreign Mud* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1947), 215.
- 55 Chang, 203.
- 56 Ibid.
- 57 Arthur Waley, *The Opium War Through Chinese Eyes* (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1958), 70.
- 58 Chang, 203.
- 59 Waley, 70.
- 60 James M. Polachek, *The Inner Opium War* (Cambridge, MA: The Council On East Asian Studies, 1992), Chapter 4, 137–175.
- 61 Hu, 43.
- 62 Gerald S. Graham, *The China Station: War and Diplomacy 1830–1860* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1978), 100.
- 63 E. H. Parker, *Chinese Account of the Opium War* (Wilmington, DE: Scholarly Resources Inc., 1972), 11; this is a translation of an original account of the Opium War by Yüan Wei.
- 64 Polachek, 153.
- 65 Chang, 212.
- 66 Ssu-yü Teng, *Chang Hsi and the Treaty of Nanking, 1842* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1944), 3.
- 67 Fay, 244.
- 68 Waley, 113–114.
- 69 Polachek, 163.
- 70 Frederic Wakeman, Jr., *Strangers at the Gate: Social Disorder in South China, 1839–1861* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1966), 18.
- 71 Fay, 301–302.
- 72 Wakeman, 18.
- 73 Jack Beeching, *The Chinese Opium Wars* (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1975), 62.
- 74 William D. Bernard, *Narrative of the Voyages and Services of the Nemesis* (London: Henry Colburn, 1844), 178–179.
- 75 Daniel E. Headrick, *The Tools of Empire: Technology and European Imperialism in the Nineteenth Century* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1981), 49.
- 76 Graham, 154–155.
- 77 Wakeman, 27.
- 78 Waley, 115.
- 79 Fay, 341.
- 80 Waley, 209.
- 81 Jack Gray, *Rebellions and Revolutions: China from the 1800s to the 1980s* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990), 47.
- 82 Fay, 353.
- 83 For an interesting discussion of how Britain modernized Hong Kong, especially its water and sewage systems, see Daniel R. Headrick, *The Tentacles of Progress: Technology Transfer in the Age of Imperialism, 1850–1940* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988), 148–152.

- 84 Wakeman, 48–49.
- 85 Ralston, 110.
- 86 Lucien W. Pye, *The Spirit of Chinese Politics* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1992), 4.
- 87 Recently, there have been serious debates on what “modernization” actually means. For a discussion of how Chinese views of commercial markets differed from European views of capitalism, see R. Bin Wong, “Chinese Understanding of Economic Change: From Agrarian Empire to Industrial Society,” in Timothy Brook and Hy V. Luong, eds, *Culture and Economy: The Shaping of Capitalism in Eastern Asia* (Ann Arbor, MI: The University of Michigan Press, 1997), 45–60.

### 3 THE TAIPIING REBELLION AND THE ARROW WAR

- 88 For more on the Hakka’s military prowess, see Mary S. Erbaugh, “The Hakka Paradox in the People’s Republic of China: Exile, Eminence, and Public Silence,” in Nichole Constable, ed., *Guest People: Hakka Identity in China and Abroad* (Seattle, WA: University of Washington Press, 1996), 211–214.
- 89 Jonathan D. Spence, *God’s Chinese Son: The Taiping Heavenly Kingdom of Hong Xiuquan* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1996).
- 90 C. A. Curwen, *Taiping Rebel, The Deposition of Li Hsiu-ch’eng* (London: Cambridge University Press, 1977), 79.
- 91 J. C. Cheng, *Chinese Sources for the Taiping Rebellion, 1850–1864* (Hong Kong: Oxford University Press, 1963), 6–7.
- 92 *The Taiping Revolution* (Peking: Foreign Languages Press, 1976), 16.
- 93 Chinese historians have lionized Feng as “anti-imperialist” and “anti-feudal,” and so a “national hero.” Xing Fenglin and Xing Fengwu, *Feng Yunshan* (Guangdong: Guangdong renmin chubanshe, 1979), 82–83.
- 94 The Taiping were also associated with Triad secret societies. See C. A. Curwen, “Taiping Relations with Secret Societies and with Other Rebels,” in Jean Chesneaux, ed., *Popular Movements and Secret Societies in China, 1840–1950* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1972), 65–84.
- 95 This claim did not sit well with the British, who were “apparently annoyed by this attitude.” Shih Yu-cheng, *The Taiping Ideology: Its Sources, Interpretations, and Influences* (Seattle, WA: University of Washington Press, 1967), 89. For a discussion of the Taipings’ Christian philosophy, see Eugene Powers Boardman, *Christian Influence upon the Ideology of the Taiping Rebellion* (New York: Octagon Books, 1972), and Jonathan D. Spence, *The Taiping Vision of a Christian China, 1836–1864* (Waco, TX: Markham Press Fund, 1998).
- 96 Jen Yu-wen, *The Taiping Revolutionary Movement* (New Haven, CN, and London: Yale University Press, 1973), 154–165, 127.
- 97 Peter C. Perdue, *Exhausting the Earth: State and Peasant in Hunan, 1500–1850* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1987), 237.
- 98 Jen, 45–48.
- 99 *Ibid.*, 79.
- 100 *Ibid.*, 108.
- 101 Augustus Lindley, *Ti-Ping Tien-kwoh, The History of the Ti-Ping Revolution* (New York: Praeger Publishers, 1970), Vol. 1, 137–138.
- 102 Jen, 169.
- 103 Thomas T. Meadows, *The Chinese and Their Rebellions* (Stanford, CA: Academic Reprints, 1953), 177.

- 104 Ssu-yü Teng, *New Light on the History of the Taiping Rebellion* (New York: Russell & Russell, 1966), 61.
- 105 William James Hail, *Tseng Kuo-fan and the Taiping Rebellion, With a Short Sketch of his Later Career* (New York: Paragon Books, 1964).
- 106 Ralston, 111.
- 107 Jen, 243–244.
- 108 Ibid., 165–166.
- 109 According to Teng, in “the mid-1850s, the main interest of Western powers in China was treaty revision, their object being to gain more privileges.” S. Y. Teng, *The Taiping Rebellion and the Western Powers: A Comprehensive Survey* (London: Oxford University Press, 1971), 231.
- 110 Graham, 303.
- 111 Ibid., 317.
- 112 J. Y. Wong, *Yeh Ming-ch'en, Viceroy of Liang Kuang, 1852–8* (London: Cambridge University Press, 1976), 187.
- 113 For a detailed description of these negotiations, see Immanuel C. Y. Hsü, *China's Entrance into the Family of Nations: The Diplomatic Phase, 1858–1880* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1960), 46–70.
- 114 J. Y. Wong, *Deadly Dreams: Opium, Imperialism, and the Arrow War (1856–1860) in China* (London: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 414.
- 115 Graham, 375–377.
- 116 Ibid., 383.
- 117 Michael Mann, *China, 1860* (London: Michael Russell, 1989), 80.
- 118 Ibid., 82.
- 119 Ibid., 84–85.
- 120 Graham, 400.
- 121 Raymond Bourgerie and Pierre Lesouef, *Palikao (1860), Le Sac du Palais d'Été et la prise de Pékin* (Paris: Economica, 1995), 123–126.
- 122 Jonathan D. Spence, *The Search for Modern China* (New York: W. W. Norton & Co., 1990), 181.
- 123 As discussed by Hurd, although “the figure for opium imports remained high, they represented by the end of the century a far lower proportion of China's total imports.” Douglas Hurd, *The Arrow War: An Anglo-Chinese Confusion, 1856–1860* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1967), 176.
- 124 Jen, 389.
- 125 Caleb Carr, *The Devil Soldier, The Story of Frederick Townsend Ward* (New York: Random House, 1992), 119.
- 126 Jen, 428.
- 127 Andrew Wilson, *The “Ever-Victorious Army,” A History of The Chinese Campaign under Lt. Col. G. G. Gordon, C.B.R.E. and of the Suppression of the Tai-ping Rebellion* (San Francisco, CA: Chinese Materials Center, Inc., 1977).
- 128 Jen, 460.
- 129 van de Ven, 737.
- 130 For the lower estimate, see Flavia Anderson, *The Rebel Emperor* (London: Victor Gollancz, 1958), 7.
- 131 Before concerns over trade were raised, many westerners hoped the Taipings would win. For example, in 1857, Mackie wrote: “the career of the God-worshiper has been throughout marked with such superior sagacity, and attended with such uninterrupted good fortune, as naturally encourages the belief that he will succeed in gradually diminishing the resources, and finally subverting the dominion of his rival.” J. Milton Mackie, *Life of Tai-Ping-Wang* (San Francisco, CA: Chinese Materials Center, Inc., 1978), 274.



4 THE NIAN, MUSLIM, AND TUNGAN REBELLIONS

- 132 In addition to the three rebellions discussed in this chapter, other rebellions—such as the Miao and Yi in Guizhou—also broke out during the same time period. Siangtseh Chiang, *The Nien Rebellion* (Seattle, WA: University of Washington Press, 1967), 2.
- 133 Elizabeth Perry, ed., *Chinese Perspectives on the Nien Rebellion* (Armonk, NY: M. E. Sharpe, Inc., 1981), 4.
- 134 Kuhn, *Rebellion*, 211–225.
- 135 Jen, 172, Fn. 7.
- 136 Perry, 74–77.
- 137 Between 1853 and 1855 the Yellow River switched its course from the south to the north of the Shandong Peninsula, in the process “devastating thousands of square miles of plain around the mountain strongholds of the Nian” and thereby swelling the Nian ranks “from among the millions made destitute.” Gray, 53.
- 138 Twitchett and Fairbank, 310–316.
- 139 Chiang, 87.
- 140 S. Y. Teng, *The Nien Army and Their Guerrilla Warfare, 1851–1868* (Paris: Mouton & Co., 1961), 170–173.
- 141 Perry, 120–123.
- 142 Ibid., 127–130.
- 143 Teng, *The Nien Army*, 174–180.
- 144 Ibid., 176.
- 145 Stanley Spector, *Li Hung-chang and the Huai Army: A Study in Nineteenth-Century Chinese Regionalism* (Seattle, WA: University of Washington Press, 1964).
- 146 Twitchett and Fairbank, 212–214.
- 147 Kwang-Ching Liu and Richard J. Smith, “The Military Challenge: The North-west and the Coast,” in John K. Fairbank and Kwang-Ching Liu, eds, *The Cambridge History of China* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1980), Vol. 11, Part 2, 214.
- 148 Ibid., 227–228.
- 149 Wen-Djang Chu, *The Moslem Rebellion in Northwest China, 1862–1878* (Paris: Mouton & Co., 1966), 143–145.
- 150 Twitchett and Fairbank, Vol. 11, 235.
- 151 Gray, 109.

5 THE ILI CRISIS AND CHINA'S DEFENSE  
OF XINJIANG AGAINST RUSSIA

- 152 Yakub Beg did not support the Tungans, however, and even declared a religious war on them, because “they were believed to be of the Shafi’ite school of law and not Hanafite school, to which Kashgar’s religious authorities adhered.” Liu and Smith, 223.
- 153 Wen-Djang Chu, 191.
- 154 Liu and Smith, 223.
- 155 Demetrius Charles Boulger, *The Life of Yakoob Beg; Athalik Ghazi, and Badaulet; Ameer of Kashgar* (London: William H. Allen & Co., 1878), 137.
- 156 Liu and Smith, 224.
- 157 Christopher Hibbert, *The Dragon Wakes: China and the West, 1793–1911* (New York: Harper & Row, 1970), 288.
- 158 S. C. M. Paine, *Imperial Rivals: China, Russia and their Disputed Frontier* (Armonk, NY: M. E. Sharpe, 1996), 28–29.
- 159 Hsü, *The Rise*, 318–319.

- 160 David Pong, *Shen Pao-chen and China's Modernization in the Nineteenth Century* (London: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 109–112.
- 161 Liu and Smith, 237.
- 162 Hsü, *The Ili Crisis: A Study of Sino-Russian Diplomacy, 1871–1881* (London: Oxford University Press, 1965), 29–31.
- 163 Boulger, 181; italics in original.
- 164 Gray, 102.
- 165 Paine, 37–39.
- 166 Hsü, *The Ili Crisis*, 34–35.
- 167 Twitchett and Fairbank, 238–239.
- 168 W. L. Bales, *Tso Tsung'ang, Soldier and Statesman of Old China* (Shanghai: Kelly & Walsh, 1937), 325.
- 169 Boulger, 252.
- 170 Hsü, *The Ili Crisis*, 43.
- 171 Ibid., 52.
- 172 Ibid., 57–58.
- 173 Hosea Ballou Morse, *The International Relations of the Chinese Empire* (Shanghai: Kelly & Walsh, 1918), Vol. 2, 333.
- 174 Twitchett and Fairbank, 92–95.
- 175 James Joll, *Europe Since 1870: An International History* (New York: Harper & Row, 1973), 16.
- 176 Paine, 161–167.
- 177 Chu, vii. Unlike the United States and Europe, in Chinese warfare there was little benefit in taking prisoners and civilians were not accorded special privileges, so Zuo's forces slaughtered untold numbers of Muslim rebels. For a discussion of the American and European legal tradition, and especially the creation of the "Lieber Code" during the American civil war, see Best, 128–215.

## 6 THE SINO-FRENCH WAR IN ANNAM

- 178 Twitchett and Fairbank, 101.
- 179 Hsü, *The Rise*, 325.
- 180 John F. Cady, *The Roots of French Imperialism in Eastern Asia* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1954), 13–14.
- 181 Oscar Chapuis, *A History of Vietnam: From Hong Bang to Tu Duc* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1995), 195.
- 182 Michael Clodfelter, *Vietnam in Military Statistics: A History of the Indochina Wars, 1772–1991* (London: McFarland & Co., 1995), 9.
- 183 Mark W. McLeod, *The Vietnamese Response to French Intervention, 1862–1874* (New York: Praeger Publishers, 1991), 54–55.
- 184 Ella S. Laffey, "The Making of a Rebel: Liu Yung-fu and the Formation of the Black Flag Army," Jean Chesneaux, ed., *Popular Movements and Secret Societies in China, 1840–1950* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1972), 85–96.
- 185 Henry McAleavy, *Black Flags in Vietnam: The Story of a Chinese Intervention* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1968), 102–105.
- 186 Spencer C. Tucker, *Vietnam* (Lexington, KY: University Press of Kentucky, 1999), 32.
- 187 Robert Hart, the foreign head of the Chinese Customs Service, established a firm "working relationship" with Li and assisted him in adopting "Western arms, ships, technology, and learning in the 'self-strengthening' movement of the 1870s and 1880s."

- Richard J. Smith, John K. Fairbank, and Katherine F. Bruner, eds, *Robert Hart and China's Early Modernization: His Journals, 1863–1866* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1991), 398–399.
- 188 See Thomas L. Kennedy, “Li Hung-chang and the Kiangnan Arsenal, 1860–1895,” in Samuel C. Chu and Kwang-Ching Liu, *Li Hung-chang and China's Early Modernization* (Armonk, NY: M. E. Sharpe, 1994), 197–214; Spector, *Li Hung-chang and the Huai Army*.
- 189 Japanese imperialism in China dates from this action. See Noriko Kamachi, *Reform in China: Huang Tsun-hsien and the Japanese Model* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1981), 102–109. Although not excusable, it should be put in proper context with Russia's expansion into eastern Siberia in the 1850s, the founding of Vladivostok (whose name “Ruler of the East” gave Japan pause) right across from Japan's western coast, and Russia's continued expansion into central Asia. Seen in this light, Japan's imperialist policies were largely a reaction to the dangers inherent in having Russia become the dominant Imperial power in Asia. For more on these early Russo–Japanese tensions, see Paine, *Imperial Rivals*.
- 190 John L. Rawlinson, *China's Struggle for Naval Development, 1839–1895* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1967), 63–81.
- 191 *Ibid.*, 94.
- 192 Louis Sarrat, *Journal D'un “Marsouin” au Tonkin, 1883–1886* (Paris: Editions France-Empire, 1987), 142–144.
- 193 Lloyd E. Eastman, *Throne and Mandarins: China's Search for a Policy during the Sino–French Controversy* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1967), 136.
- 194 *Ibid.*, 155–156.
- 195 Rawlinson, 116–120.
- 196 Eastman, *Throne and Mandarins*, 170–171.
- 197 Tucker, 35.
- 198 *L’Affair du Tonkin, Histoire Diplomatique De L’Etablissement de Notre Protectorat sur L’Annam et de Notre Conflict avec le Chine, 1882–1885* (Paris: J. Hetzel), 169.
- 199 Lewis M. Chere, *The Diplomacy of the Sino–French War (1883–1885): Global Complications of an Undeclared War* (Notre Dame, IA: Cross Cultural Publications, Inc, 1988), 40–41; Russian diplomats observed and later repeated China's delaying tactic: while the 1924 Sino–Soviet Friendship Treaty stated that the Red Army would retreat from Outer Mongolia, Soviet diplomats successfully argued that a retreat could not be carried out until an exact timetable was determined. Bruce A. Elleman, *Diplomacy and Deception: The Secret History of Sino–Soviet Diplomatic Relations, 1917–1927* (Armonk, NY: M. E. Sharpe, 1997), 85–113.
- 200 Hsü, *The Rise*, 329.

## 7 THE SINO–JAPANESE WAR AND THE PARTITIONING OF CHINA

- 201 Powell, 50.
- 202 Stewart Lone, *Japan's First Modern War: Army and Society in the Conflict with China, 1894–95* (London: St. Martin's Press, 1994), 25.
- 203 Jeffery Michael Dorwart, *The Pigtail War: The American Response to the Sino–Japanese War of 1894–1895* (Ph.D. Dissertation: University of Massachusetts, 1971), 10.
- 204 Hilary Conroy, *The Japanese Seizure of Korea: 1868–1910* (Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1960), 223.
- 205 See the eleven-volume series by Qi Qizhang, ed., *Zhongri Zhanzheng* (Beijing: 1995), Vol. 1, 3–6.

- 206 Morse, 22.
- 207 The site of Hiroshima as the headquarters for Japan's first imperialist venture abroad was not to go unnoticed some fifty years later by U.S. military planners, who perhaps selected Hiroshima for the first use of the A-bomb as a symbolic gesture that Japan's imperialist aggression in Asia was at an end.
- 208 Russian accounts also repeated this story of Japanese atrocities, which was generally in line with the prevalent Russian view that the Japanese—not the Russians—were the primary aggressors in Asia. G. V. Efimov, *Vneshniaia politika Kitaia, 1894–1899 gg.* (Moscow: Gos.izd-vo, 1958), 75.
- 209 Morse, 24.
- 210 Hu, *From the Opium War*, Vol. 1, 533.
- 211 F. Warrington Eastlake and Yamada Yoshi-aki, *Heroic Japan: A History of the War Between China & Japan* (Yokohama: Kelly & Walsh, 1896), 10–11.
- 212 Ibid., 32.
- 213 Powell, 47.
- 214 Eastlake and Yamada, 32.
- 215 Meirion and Susie Harries, *Soldiers of the Sun: The Rise and Fall of the Imperial Japanese Army* (New York: Random House, 1991), 58.
- 216 Dorwart, 90.
- 217 Meirion and Susie Harries, 59.
- 218 Lone, 36–37.
- 219 Morse, 32.
- 220 John L. Rawlinson, "China's Failure to Coordinate Her Modern Fleets in the Late Nineteenth Century," in Albert Feuerwerker, Rhoads Murphey, and Mary C. Wright, *Approaches to Modern Chinese History* (Berkeley, CA: University of Berkeley Press, 1967), 130.
- 221 Chia-chien Wang, "Li Hung-chang and the Peiyang Navy," in Chu and Liu, *Li Hung-chang and China's Early Modernization*, 248–262.
- 222 Dorwart, 94.
- 223 Twitchett and Fairbank, 106.
- 224 Although it is difficult to know for sure, traditionally the Chinese throne granted special honors and awards to any captain who sank an enemy ship. This fact might help explain why so many of the Chinese ships turned on Japan's weakest and most outdated ships, rather than use their combined firepower to greater effect against Japan's more modern, but less vulnerable, battleships.
- 225 Jukichi Inouye, *The Japan-China War: Compiled from Official and Other Sources* (Yokohama: Kelly & Walsh, 1895), 7–8.
- 226 Dorwart, 97.
- 227 Eastlake and Yamada, 117.
- 228 Meirion and Susie Harries, 48–49.
- 229 Twitchett and Fairbank, 270.
- 230 Dorwart, 131.
- 231 Morse, 36.
- 232 By contrast, the Chinese massacre of millions of Muslims in Xinjiang during the 1870s was largely ignored by the western press, thus setting up a double standard that was to haunt Japan well into the twentieth century, as perhaps best shown by the so-called "Rape of Nanjing" in 1937.
- 233 Dorwart, 134.
- 234 It should be noted that the Russians also made good use of continental Asia's bitter winters to halt invaders, perhaps best shown in their successful campaigns against Napoleon and Hitler.
- 235 Eastlake and Yamada, 256, 249.

- 236 Ibid., 262–263.
- 237 Ibid., 356–368.
- 238 Jukichi Inouye, *The Fall of Wei-hai-wei: Compiled from Official and other Sources* (Yokohama: Kelly & Walsh, 1895), 25.
- 239 Mutsu Munemitsu, *Kenkenroku: A Diplomatic Record of the Sino-Japanese War, 1894–95* (Tokyo: The Japan Foundation, 1982), 179.
- 240 Lone, 170.
- 241 Powell, 49–50.
- 242 Allen Fung, “Testing the Self-Strengthening: The Chinese Army in the Sino-Japanese War of 1894–1895,” *Modern Asian Studies*, Vol. 30, No. 4 (1996), 1029.
- 243 Maxime Joseph Marie Sauvage, *La guerre sino-japonaise 1894–1895* (Paris: L. Baudoin, 1897), 229.
- 244 Kamachi, 191.
- 245 For a discussion of the founding of the “Newly Established Army” and its later reforms in 1899, see George F. Nafziger, *The Growth and Organization of the Chinese Army (1895–1945)* (West Chester, OH: The Nafziger Collection, Inc., 1999), 6–15.
- 246 Fung, 1030.
- 247 Hans van de Ven, “The Military in the Republic,” *The China Quarterly*, No. 150 (June 1997), 355.

## 8 THE BOXER ANTI-FOREIGN UPRISING

- 248 For early signs that the Empress Dowager was anti-reform, see Ding Richu, “Dowager Empress Cixi and Toshimichi: A Comparative Study of Modernization in China and Japan,” in Frederic Wakeman, Jr., and Wang Xi, eds, *China’s Quest for Modernization: A Historical Perspective* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1997), 175–190.
- 249 For the reform movement, see Min Tu-ki, *National Polity and Local Power: The Transformation of Late Imperial China* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1989), 112–136.
- 250 For more on the reformers, see Luke S. K. Kwong, *T’an Ssu-t’ung, 1865–1898: Life and Thought of a Reformer* (New York: E. J. Brill, 1996).
- 251 Yen-p’ing Hao and Erh-min Wang, “Changing Chinese Views of Western Relations, 1840–95,” in John K. Fairbank and Kwang-ching Liu, eds, *The Cambridge History of China* (London: Cambridge University Press, 1980), Vol. 11, Pt. 2, 200–201.
- 252 According to Hirschfeld, the Empress Dowager’s coup made the confrontation between the westerners and the Boxers “inevitable.” Burt Hirschfeld, *Fifty-five Days of Terror: The Story of the Boxer Rebellion* (New York: Julian Messner Inc., 1964), 56.
- 253 William J. Duiker, *Cultures in Collision, The Boxer Rebellion* (San Rafael, CA: Presidio Press, 1978), 31.
- 254 Chester C. Tan, *The Boxer Catastrophe* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1955), 16–17.
- 255 Joseph W. Esherick, *The Origins of the Boxer Uprising* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1987), 104–106.
- 256 Chen Guizong, *Yihetuan de Zuzhi he Zongzhi* (Jilin: Jilin University Press, 1987), 187–201.
- 257 Robert Hart, *These From the Land of Sinim*, *Essays on the Chinese Question* (London: Chapman and Hall, 1901), 163.
- 258 Hsü, *The Rise*, 390–391.
- 259 Spence, *The Search*, 232.

- 260 Esherick, 136–155.
- 261 L. K. Young, *British Policy in China: 1895–1902* (London: Clarendon Press, 1970), 127.
- 262 Victor Purcell, *The Boxer Uprising: A Background Study* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1963), 194–208.
- 263 Peter Fleming, *The Siege at Peking* (New York: Harper & Row, 1959), 59; Hsü, *The Rise*, 393.
- 264 Charlotte Haldane, *The Last Great Empress of China* (London: Constable & Co., 1966), 178–180.
- 265 Morse, 191–192.
- 266 Edmund S. Wehrle, *Britain, China, and the Antimissionary Riots, 1891–1900* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1966), 162.
- 267 Purcell, 250–252.
- 268 Hsü, *The Rise*, 396.
- 269 Richard O'Connor, *The Spirit Soldier, A Historical Narrative of the Boxer Rebellion* (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1973), 125.
- 270 L. R. Marchant, ed., *The Siege of the Peking Legations: A Diary, Lancelot Giles* (Nedlands, Australia: University of Western Australia Press, 1970), 121–126.
- 271 *Ibid.*, 127–131, 156, 170.
- 272 *Ibid.*, 141.
- 273 O'Connor, 125.
- 274 Fleming, 212–213.
- 275 Hsü, *The Rise*, 394.
- 276 Fleming, 213.
- 277 O'Connor, 142.
- 278 Hibbert, 333.
- 279 Morse, 240–242.
- 280 Esherick, 190–191.
- 281 Morse, 240–242.
- 282 Robert Coventry Forsyth, *The China Martyrs of 1900. A Complete Roll of the Christian Heroes Martyred in China in 1900 with Narratives of Survivors* (New York: Fleming H. Revell Co., 1904), 509–511.
- 283 Marchant, 66–67.
- 284 *Ibid.*, 94–95.
- 285 The Boxer Uprising gave the Russians provocation to carry out a separate military campaign in Manchuria. Although Lensen seemed to think it was a separate war from the Boxer conflict, most other historians treat them together. See George Alexander Lensen, *The Russo–Chinese War* (Tallahassee, FL: The Diplomatic Press, 1967); Li Dezheng, Liao Yizhong, and Zhang Xuanru, *Yihetuan Yundongshi* (Taipei: 1987), 478–480.
- 286 Fleming, 199–208.
- 287 A. S. Daggett, *America in the China Relief Expedition* (Kansas City, KS: Hudson–Kimberly Publishing Co., 1903), 106–108; the Russians insisted that they be allowed to lead the march, even though it was generally agreed that the Japanese deserved this place of honor because of the greater role Japan had played in relieving the siege. The Japanese politely declined this honor and let the Russians lead.
- 288 *The Yi Ho Tuan Movement of 1900* (Peking: Foreign Languages Press, 1976), 83–85.
- 289 Marchant, 158–165.
- 290 Purcell, 252.
- 291 Esherick, 306–307.
- 292 Powell, 115–116.
- 293 Fleming, 247–249.
- 294 Li Dezheng, et al., *Baguo Lianqun Jinhuashi* (Shandong: 1990), 424; although Chinese nationalists have always been outraged at the indemnity, they ignore the fact that the

United States government indemnified Beijing for those Chinese citizens killed in anti-Chinese riots in America during the late nineteenth century.

295 Hsü, *The Rise*, 397–398.

296 Morse, 241; Fn. 62.

297 Gray, 139.

## 9 THE CHINESE REVOLUTION AND THE FALL OF THE QING

298 For an account of Yuan's early career, see Stephen R. MacKinnon, *Power and Politics in Late Imperial China: Yuan Shi-kai in Beijing and Tianjin, 1901–1908* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1980).

299 Dreyer explains that from “1901 on modernization of Chinese military forces along Western–Japanese lines was a priority goal of the Chinese elite”; Edward L. Dreyer, *China at War, 1901–1949* (London: Longman Group, 1995), 1. Many of the sources referred to in previous chapters suggest that military modernization in China began much earlier, although Dreyer is undoubtedly correct that after 1901 there was no question that the military was a “priority” for every Chinese government.

300 Wolfgang Franke, *China and the West* (Columbia, SC: University of South Carolina Press, 1968), 116–119.

301 Edmund S. K. Fung, *The Military Dimension of the Chinese Revolution: The New Army and its Role in the Revolution of 1911* (Vancouver, B.C.: University of British Columbia Press, 1980), 20–21.

302 Meribeth E. Cameron, *The Reform Movement in China, 1898–1912* (New York: Octagon Books, Inc., 1963), 92–93.

303 For a description of the structure of the New Army, see H. S. Brunnert and V. V. Hagelstrom, *Present Day Organization of China* (Shanghai: Kelly and Walsh, 1912), 138–147.

304 Douglas R. Reynolds, *China, 1898–1912: The Xincheng Revolution and Japan* (Harvard, MA: Harvard University Press, 1993), 155.

305 Fung, 27–28.

306 That the Han Chinese were aware of the power that resided in the New Army is best shown by a 1903 pamphlet by Tsou Jung entitled “The Revolutionary Army” in which the author states of the Qing: “when calamities came, it was the Han who suffered from them; when good fortune came, it was the Manchus who enjoyed it.” John Lust, *The Revolutionary Army: A Chinese Nationalist Tract of 1903* (The Hague: Mouton & Co., 1968), 80.

307 Powell, 183.

308 Joseph W. Esherick, *Reform and Revolution in China: The 1911 Revolution and Hunan and Hubei* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1976), 144–145.

309 Ibid., 144–150.

310 Fung, 114–144.

311 Ibid., 202–203.

312 Mary Wright, *China in Revolution: The First Phase, 1900–1913* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1968), 398.

313 Fung, 401–402.

314 Dreyer, *China at War*, 34.

315 Ibid., 35.

316 Jin Chongji, “Two Issues Concerning the Wuchang Uprising,” in Eto Shinkichi and Harold Z. Schiffman, eds, *China's Republican Revolution* (Tokyo: University of Tokyo Press, 1994), 59–63.

- 317 Wright, 408–411.  
 318 Hsü, 468–470.  
 319 See Franz Michael, “Regionalism in Nineteenth-Century China,” Introduction to Spector, xxi–xliii.

10 THE WARLORD ERA AND THE NATIONALISTS’  
 NORTHERN EXPEDITION TO UNITE CHINA

- 320 Michael Gasster, *Chinese Intellectuals and the Revolution of 1911: The Birth of Modern Chinese Radicalism* (Seattle, WA: University of Washington Press, 1969), 229.  
 321 For a critical biography of Yuan, see Jerome Ch’en, *Yuan Shih-k’ai, 1859–1916: Brutus Assumes the Purple* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1961).  
 322 Ernest P. Young, *The Presidency of Yuan Shih-k’ai: Liberalism and Dictatorship in Early Republican China* (Ann Arbor, MI: The University of Michigan Press, 1977), 50.  
 323 Cameron, 202.  
 324 Escherick, *Reform and Revolution in China*, 242–243.  
 325 Young, 50.  
 326 Hsü, *The Rise*, 482.  
 327 Fung, 257–258.  
 328 William Reginald Wheeler, *China and the World War* (New York: Macmillan, 1919).  
 329 Ch’i Hsi-sheng, *Warlord Politics in China: 1916–1928* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1976), 127.  
 330 Dreyer, *China at War*, 87.  
 331 Spence, *The Search*, 289.  
 332 McCord, 1.  
 333 For a concise but useful biographical sketch of Sun Zhongshan, see John E. Wills, *Mountain of Fame: Portraits in Chinese History* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1994), 310–321.  
 334 Marie-Claire Bergere, *Sun Yat-sen* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1998), 50.  
 335 Hsü, *The Rise*, 457.  
 336 Michael Gasster, “The Republican Revolutionary Movement,” in John K. Fairbank and Kwang-ching Liu, eds, *The Cambridge History of China* (London: Cambridge University Press, 1980), Vol. 11, Part 2, 505.  
 337 Pinghou C. Liu, “Chinese Foreign Affairs—Organization and Control” (Ph.D. dissertation, New York University, 1936), 40–41.  
 338 Andrew J. Nathan, *Peking Politics, 1918–1923: Factionalism and the Failure of Constitutionalism* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1976), 131–132.  
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 340 Vladimir Vilenskii, “Politicheskie gruppirovki i partii v Kitae” (Political Groups and Parties in China), *Kommunisticheskii Internatsional* (Communist International), No. 23, November/December 1922, 6077–6104.  
 341 G. Safarov, “Natsional’no-kolonial’nyi vopros na 4 kongresse Kominterna” (National-Colonial Question at the Fourth Congress of the Comintern), *Novyi Vostok* (New East), No. 2, 1922, 59.  
 342 Bergere, 293.  
 343 “Pis’mo inostrannykh del rossiiskoi sovetskoi sotsialisticheskoi respubliki (28 avgusta 1921 g)” (Letter from the Foreign Ministry of the Russian Soviet Socialist Republics),



- Sun' Iatsen Izbrannye proizvegeniia* (Selected Works of Sun Yat-sen) (Moscow: Nauka, 1964), 342–343.
- 344 L. P. Deliusin, *Agrarno-krest'ianskii Vopros v Politike KPK (1921–1928)* (Agrarian and Peasant Questions in the Policies of the CCP (1921–1928)), (Moscow: Nauka, 1972), 56.
- 345 Sidney H. Chang and Leonard H. D. Gordon, *All Under Heaven . . . Sun Yat-sen and His Revolutionary Thought* (Stanford, CA: Hoover Institution Press, 1991), 73.
- 346 Sergei Dalin, *V Riadakh Kitaiskoi Revoliutsii* (In the Ranks of the Chinese Revolution) (Moscow: Moskovskii rabochii, 1926), 68.
- 347 Ibid., 115–117. It is not clear which declaration Dalin is referring to, but on 27 January 1923, Sun signed an agreement with Adolf Joffe which did agree that Soviet troops did not have to leave Outer Mongolia.
- 348 *Kommunisticheskii International i kitaiskaia revoliutsiia* (The Communist International and the Chinese Revolution) (Moscow: Nauka, 1986), 25–26.
- 349 “Soobshchenie ROSTA o kommynike polnomochnogo predstavitelia RSFSR v Kitae A. A. Ioffe i Sun' Iat-cena po povogy sovetsko-kitaiskikh otnoshenii” (ROSTA Report on the communique of the full representative of the RSFSR A. A. Joffe and Sun Yat-sen concerning Soviet–Chinese relations), *Sovetsko-kitaiskie otnosheniia* (Moscow, 1959), 64–65; Archives of the Historical Commission of the Central Committee of the Kuomintang Party, No. 047/2; Jane Degras, *Soviet Documents on Foreign Policy* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1952), 370–371.
- 350 Ibid.; Sun's agreement with Joffe caused no little embarrassment to the Guomindang Party after it later turned anti-Communist. To try to soften Sun's responsibility in this matter, versions of this four-point agreement published in GMD publications translate the third point as saying that decisions on the railway would be made “temporarily” while an original Chinese-language copy of these four points uses the word “definitely.” See Archives of the Historical Commission of the Central Committee of the Guomindang Party, File No. 047/2.
- 351 Ibid.
- 352 Tony Saich, *The Origins of the First United Front in China: The Role of Sneevliet [Alias Maring]* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1991), Vol. 2, 527.
- 353 Lydia Holubnychy, *Michael Borodin and the Chinese Revolution, 1923–1925* (Ann Arbor, MI: University Microfilms International, 1979), 211–212.
- 354 *Jiang Jieshi Milu* (Guangxi: Guangxi Renmin Chubanshe, 1988), 160–181.
- 355 Chiang Kai-shek, *Soviet Russia in China* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Cudahy, 1957), 19–22.
- 356 Donald A. Jordan, *The Northern Expedition: China's National Revolution of 1926–1928* (Honolulu, HI: The University Press of Hawaii, 1976), 19–20.
- 357 Robert C. North, *Moscow and Chinese Communists* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1963), 76.
- 358 Harold R. Isaacs, *The Tragedy of the Chinese Revolution* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1961), 64.
- 359 John E. Schrecker, *The Chinese Revolution in Historical Perspective* (New York: Greenwood Press, 1991), 154.
- 360 Harold Z. Schiffrin, *Sun Yat-sen Reluctant Revolutionary* (Boston, MA: Little, Brown, 1980), 259.
- 361 There are many recent works analyzing the warlord era. For an important link to China's fiscal crisis, see Hans J. van de Ven, “Public Finance and the Rise of Warlordism,” *Modern Asian Studies*, Vol. 30, No. 4 (1996), 829–868. For a discussion of nationalism and warlords, see Arthur Waldron, “War and the Rise of Nationalism in Twentieth-Century China,” *Journal of Military History* Vol. 57 (October 1993), 87–104, and Edward A. McCord, “Warlords against Warlordism: The Politics of

- Anti-Militarism in Early Twentieth-Century China," *Modern Asian Studies*, Vol. 30, No. 4 (1996), 795–827. For a discussion of warlords and state-building, see R. Bin Wong, *China Transformed: Historical Change and the Limits of European Experience* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1997), 166–180.
- 362 James E. Sheridan, "The Warlord Era: Politics and Militarism under the Peking Government, 1916–28," in John K. Fairbank, ed., *The Cambridge History of China* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1983), Vol. 12, Pt. 1, 296.
- 363 *Ibid.*, 296–297.
- 364 Dreyer, *China at War*, 87.
- 365 Arthur Waldron, *From War to Nationalism: China's Turning Point, 1924–1925* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 39.
- 366 Ch'i, *Warlord Politics in China*, 127.
- 367 For a detailed description of Wu Peifu's army, see Lawrence Impey, *The Chinese Army as a Military Force* (Tientsin: Tientsin Press, 1926).
- 368 Waldron, *From War*, 43–49.
- 369 Gray, 192.
- 370 Ch'i, *Warlord Politics in China*, 222–226.
- 371 Gray, 194.
- 372 Dreyer, *China at War*, 124.
- 373 F. F. Liu, *A Military History of Modern China, 1924–1949* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1956), 8–15.
- 374 Louis Fischer, *The Soviets in World Affairs* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1951), Vol. II, 640.
- 375 Ch'i, *Warlord Politics in China*, 112–113.
- 376 Liu, *A Military History*, 15–16.
- 377 Chang Hsu-hsin, "The Kuomintang's Foreign Policy, 1925–1928" (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Wisconsin, 1967), 118.
- 378 James Robert Shirley, "Political Conflict in the Kuomintang: The Career of Wang Ching-wei to 1932" (Ph.D. dissertation, University of California, 1962), 77.
- 379 Chen Duxiu, "Dao Sun Zhongshan Xiansheng" (Mourn Dr. Sun Yat-sen), *Xiangdao zhoubao* (*The Guide Weekly*), 14 March 1925, No. 106, 881.
- 380 Chang, "The Kuomintang's Foreign Policy," 132–133.
- 381 James E. Sheridan, *Chinese Warlord: The Career of Feng Yu-hsiang* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1966), 167.
- 382 "Article by Stalin on the International Situation and the Tasks of the Communist Parties," 22 March 1925, in Degras, 19–23.
- 383 Gao Xiaoxing, *Minguo Haijun de Xingshuai* (Jiangsu: People's Press, 1989), 75–80.
- 384 G. Skalov, *Kantonskaia Kommuna* (Canton Commune) (Moscow: Nauchno-issledovatel'skii institut po kitaiu, 1929), 295.
- 385 Victor A. Yakhontoff, *The Chinese Soviets* (New York: Coward-McCann Inc., 1934), 124.
- 386 For a more detailed account of the Northern Expedition, see Jordan, 67–168; Gavan McCormick, *Chang Tso-lin in Northeast China, 1911–1928: China, Japan and the Manchurian Idea* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1977), 188–249; Dreyer, *China at War*, 128–140.
- 387 Schrecker, 155.
- 388 Liu, *A Military History*, 33–34.
- 389 Dreyer, *China at War*, 136.
- 390 Yueh Sheng, *Sun Yat-sen University in Moscow and the Chinese Revolution* (Center for East Asian Studies, The University of Kansas), 119.
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- Bickers, *Britain in China: Community, Culture and Colonialism 1900–1949* (New York: Manchester University Press, 1999), 28.
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- 393 *North China Herald*, 7 March 1927.
- 394 Dan N. Jacobs, *Borodin: Stalin's Man in China* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1981), 244–245.
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- 396 *North China Herald*, 9 April 1927.
- 397 Frederic Wakeman, Jr., *Policing Shanghai, 1927–1937* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1995), 122–124.
- 398 Dreyer, *China at War*, 146.
- 399 *Ibid.*, 151–155.
- 400 Elleman, *Diplomacy and Deception*, 85–143.

# 11 THE SINO-SOVIET CONFLICT IN MANCHURIA

- 401 Bruce A. Elleman, “The 1907–1916 Russo–Japanese Secret Treaties: A Reconsideration,” *Asian Cultural Studies*, Vol. 25 (30 March 1999), 29–44.
- 402 Hollinton K. Tong, *Chiang Kai-shek: Soldier and Statesman* (Shanghai: The China Publishing Co., 1937), Vol. 1, 283.
- 403 Degras, 381–383.
- 404 Maxim Litvinov, *Notes For a Journal* (New York: W. Morrow, 1955), 94; Soviet and some western scholars have disputed the validity of this memoir, but the information it provides on the 1929 Sino–Soviet Conflict seems thoroughly accurate.
- 405 Japanese Foreign Ministry Archives, Tokyo, Japan (hereafter Gaimushō), File F 192.5–4–4.
- 406 Gaimushō, File F 192.5–4–4.
- 407 North, 123.
- 408 Gaimushō, File F 192.5–4–4.
- 409 Degras, 384–389.
- 410 R. W. Davies, *The Industrialization of Soviet Russia 1: The Socialist Offensive* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1980), 117–137.
- 411 *Ibid.*, 117.
- 412 James P. Harrison, *The Long March to Power* (New York: Praeger Press, 1972), 162–167.
- 413 Henry Wei, *China and Soviet Russia* (Princeton, NJ: D. Van Nostrand Co., 1956), 95.
- 414 Tien-fong Cheng, *A History of Sino–Russian Relations* (Washington, D.C.: Public Affairs Press, 1957), 154–156.
- 415 O. Edmund Clubb, *China and Russia: The “Great Game”* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1971), 262–263.
- 416 Tien-fong Cheng, 156.
- 417 Robert T. Pollard, *China's Foreign Relations: 1917–1932* (New York: The Macmillan Co., 1933), 396.
- 418 Harrison, 162.
- 419 *Ibid.*
- 420 *Communist International*, 1930, Nos 13/14, 96–97.
- 421 M. Lewin, *Russian Peasants and Soviet Power* (New York: W. Morrow, 1975), 438.
- 422 *Ibid.*, 432–433.
- 423 Degras, 408–432.

- 424 Gaimushō, File F 192.5-4-1(3).
- 425 Ibid.
- 426 Gaimushō, File F 192.5-4-1(5).
- 427 Ibid.
- 428 An early example of the inherent risks in Asia of playing one power off against another can be seen in Chapter 6, where the French refused to leave Annam once they had been invited in. In another interesting parallel, during March 1918 Leon Trotsky asked the United States to intervene in Siberia to halt Japanese expansion. Once Washington sent troops and Tokyo's colonial goals were stymied, the Soviet government publicly accused the United States of invading Russia; unlike the cases of Annam in the 1880s and Manchuria in the 1930s, the United States actually withdrew its forces from Siberia in 1920. For other similarities between Russian and Asian diplomacy, especially the USSR's adoption of secret diplomacy, see Elleman, *Diplomacy and Deception*.
- 429 Gaimushō, File F 192.5-4-4; as a general rule, whenever China hoped to use foreign pressure to halt Russian or Soviet expansion, it secretly turned to Japan. When it hoped to halt Japanese expansion, it turned most often to the United States. Given the extreme secrecy that masked these events, it is not surprising that American officials did not realize that it was Nanjing that had invited Tokyo's intervention in Manchuria in the first place, and so the United States government generally condemned Japan for unilaterally adopting an imperialist policy.
- 430 *Japan Advertiser*, 14 December 1929, "Signatures Likely Within Short Time on C.E.R. Agreement".
- 431 *Japan Advertiser*, 23 December 1929, "Russo-Chinese Agreement."
- 432 Wei, 100-101.
- 433 *Japanese Advertiser*, 21 December 1929, "Victory of Russian Seen in Protocol."
- 434 Degras, 434-436.
- 435 *New York Times*, 20 February 1931, "China Revives Soviet Treaty Negotiations."
- 436 Lewin, 476.
- 437 Helene Carrere D'Encausse, *Stalin, Order Through Terror* (New York: Longman, 1981), 20.
- 438 Roger A. Clarke and Dubravko J. I. Matko, *Soviet Economic Facts 1917-81* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1983), 64; *China Yearbook*, 1934, 155.
- 439 *Japan Advertiser*, 28 January 1928, "Shortage of Cars Now Facing CER."
- 440 *Shanghai Evening Post* 23 June 1931, "Nanking May Buy Eastern Railway"; the copy of this article housed at the Japanese Foreign Ministry archives was circled in red marker pen, giving some indication of Tokyo's concern over possible changes in the system of duties throughout Manchuria. Of course, if enacted, this Sino-Soviet agreement would have violated the Nine-Power Agreement signed at the 1922 Washington Conference, in which the Chinese government promised the main powers, including Japan, not to grant preferential treatment to one power over another.
- 441 *New York Times*, 10 April 1932, "Warning by Lytton Shocks the Chinese."
- 442 *Morning Oregonian*, 16 December 1932, "Russia's Shadow Over China."
- 443 Gaimushō, File F 192.5-4-7.
- 444 Hu Shih, "China in Stalin's Grand Strategy," *Foreign Affairs* (October 1950), 11-40.

## 12 THE SINO-JAPANESE CONFLICT

- 445 According to one Taiwanese account, the 1937 to 1945 Sino-Japanese War can be divided into over fifty separate incidents, battles, and operations. Hsu Long-hsuen and

- Chang Ming-kai, eds, *History of the Sino-Japanese War (1937–1945)* (Taipei, Taiwan: Chung Wu Publishing Co., 1985). For a detailed PRC history of this period, see *Zhongguo Kangri Zhanzheng* (Beijing: Beijing Chubanshe, 1995). For a recent Taiwanese history of the Sino-Japanese War, see *Kangri Zhanzheng* (Taipei, Taiwan, 1997) and the six-volume set *Zhonghua Minguo Zhongyal Shiliao Qubian* (Taipei, Taiwan, 1981).
- 446 Edward Dreyer treats this period as two different wars: first, the “Sino-Japanese War, 1937–1941” and second, the “Second World War, 1941–5.” Dreyer, *China at War*, 206–311. In fact, to the Chinese this is considered as one period. Soviet authors generally agree with the Chinese view; see *Kitai v period voiny protiv Iaponskoi agressii (1937–1945)* (Moscow, 1988), *Po dorogam Kitaia, 1937–1945*, *Vosominaniia* (Moscow, 1989).
- 447 John W. Garver, *Chinese–Soviet Relations, 1937–1945: The Diplomacy of Chinese Nationalism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988), 147.
- 448 Dreyer has not emphasized the cause-and-effect relationship between the Sino-Soviet War and Japan’s later invasion of Manchuria, giving only one sentence to the entire Sino-Soviet War when he states that “Chang Hsueh-liang . . . was then tied up in an undeclared war with Soviet troops, who had succeeded to the prewar Russian special position in northern Manchuria.” Dreyer, *China at War*, 153.
- 449 For an economic interpretation for the “Manchurian Incident,” see Akira Iriye, “Japanese Aggression and China’s International Position 1931–1949,” John K. Fairbank and Albert Feuerwerker, *The Cambridge History of China* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1986), Vol. 13, Part 2, 492–546.
- 450 F. C. Jones, *Manchuria Since 1931* (London: Royal Institute of International Affairs, 1949), 19; Takehiko Yoshihashi, *Conspiracy at Mukden: The Rise of the Japanese Military* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1963), 1–7.
- 451 Louise Young, *Japan’s Total Empire: Manchuria and the Culture of Wartime Imperialism* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1998), 3–52.
- 452 Sino-Japanese Entanglements, 1931–1932 (*A Military Record*) (Tokyo: The Herald Press, 1932), 8–9.
- 453 Hsü, *The Rise*, 549–550.
- 454 *Sino-Japanese Entanglements*, 33–101.
- 455 Justus D. Doenecke, *When the Wicked Rise: American Opinion-Makers and the Manchurian Crisis of 1931–1933* (Cranbury, NJ: Associated University Presses, 1984), 26.
- 456 Spence, *The Search*, 394.
- 457 Jonathan Haslam, *The Soviet Union and the Threat from the East, 1933–41: Moscow, Tokyo and the Prelude to the Pacific War* (London: Macmillan Press, 1992), 45.
- 458 James E. Sheridan, *China in Disintegration, The Republican Era in Chinese History, 1912–1949* (New York: The Free Press, 1975), 254.
- 459 Dreyer, *China at War*, 180–181.
- 460 Otto Braun, *A Comintern Agent in China, 1932–1939* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1982), 45.
- 461 Dick Wilson, *The Long March, 1935: The Epic of Chinese Communism’s Survival* (New York: Penguin Books, 1982), 66.
- 462 For a detailed discussion of this meeting, see Harrison E. Salisbury, *The Long March, The Untold Story* (New York: Harper & Row, 1985), 119–126.
- 463 The formation of this CCP policy has recently been the subject of scholarly discussion. See Michael M. Sheng, “Mao, Stalin, and the Formation of the Anti-Japanese United Front, 1935–37,” *The China Quarterly*, No. 129 (March 1992), 149–170; and John W. Garver’s response, 171–179.
- 464 Although much has been made of Jiang’s German military advisers, they were recalled in June 1938 after the signing of the Anti-Comintern pact between Japan and Germany.

- William Kirby, *Germany and Republican China* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1984), 237.
- 465 Tien-wei Wu, *The Sian Incident: A Pivotal Point in Modern Chinese History* (Ann Arbor, MI: Center for Chinese Studies, The University of Michigan, 1976), 75.
- 466 Hsü, *The Rise*, 564.
- 467 Luo Ruiqing, Lü Zhengcao, and Wang Bingnan, *Zhou Enlai and the Xi'an Incident* (Beijing: Foreign Languages Press, 1983), 78.
- 468 Lloyd E. Eastman, "Nationalist China during the Nanking decade, 1927–1937," in Lloyd E. Eastman *et al.*, eds, *The Nationalist Era in China 1927–1949* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 48.
- 469 Hsü, *The Rise*, 588.
- 470 Clubb, 303–304.
- 471 Dick Wilson, *When Tigers Fight: The Story of the Sino-Japanese War, 1937–1945* (New York: The Viking Press, 1982), 18–19.
- 472 For a discussion on the training of Nationalist officers, see Chang Jui-te, "National Army Officers during the Sino-Japanese War, 1937–1945," *Modern Asian Studies*, Vol. 30, No. 4 (1996), 1033–1056.
- 473 Hsü, *The Rise*, 583.
- 474 It is not absolutely clear, however, whether Bogomolov's execution was solely linked to his activities in China, or whether he was accused of other crimes as well. Jonathan Haslam, *The Soviet Union and the Struggle for Collective Security in Europe, 1933–39* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1984), 143.
- 475 Spence, *The Search*, 446–447.
- 476 Gaimushō, B100-C/R1-3.
- 477 Hsi-sheng Ch'i, *Nationalist China at War: Military Defeats and Political Collapse, 1937–45* (Ann Arbor, MI: The University of Michigan Press, 1982), 42.
- 478 Estimates vary widely on the numbers of people killed, from 200,000 to as many as 377,400. Lord Russell, *The Knights of Bushido: A Short History of Japanese War Crimes* (London: Cassell & Co. Ltd., 1958), 42; Iris Chang, *The Rape of Nanking: The Forgotten Holocaust of World War II* (New York: Basic Books, 1997), 101.
- 479 Lloyd E. Eastman, "Nationalist China during the Sino-Japanese War 1937–1945," in John K. Fairbank and Albert Feuerwerker, eds, *The Cambridge History of China* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1986), Vol. 13, Part 2, 553.
- 480 Wellington Gu Archives, Columbia University.
- 481 Stephen MacKinnon, "The Tragedy of Wuhan, 1938," *Modern Asian Studies*, Vol. 30, No. 4 (1996), 932.
- 482 Eastman, "Nationalist China," 556.
- 483 Lyman P. Van Slyke, *Enemies and Friends, The United Front in Chinese Communist History* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1967), 95.
- 484 Van Slyke, "The Chinese Communist Movement During the Sino-Japanese War 1937–1945," in John K. Fairbank and Albert Feuerwerker, *The Cambridge History of China* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1986), Vol. 13, Pt. 2, 679.
- 485 Van Slyke, "The Battle of the Hundred Regiments: Problems of Coordination and Control during the Sino-Japanese War," *Modern Asian Studies*, Vol 30, No. 4 (1996), 999–1000.
- 486 At various times Wang Jingwei was an ally of Jiang Jieshi. See, for example, So Wai-chor, "The Origins of the 'Wang–Chiang Cooperation' in 1932," *Modern Asian Studies*, Vol. 25, No. 1 (1991), 175–208.
- 487 Alvin D. Coox, *The Anatomy of a Small War: The Soviet-Japanese Struggle for Changkufeng/Khasan, 1938* (Westport, CN: Greenwood Press, 1977).
- 488 Alvin D. Coox, *Nomonhan: Japan against Russia, 1939* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1985), 2 vols.

- 489 Gaimushō, B100-JR/1, 2.1.00–23.
- 490 For a copy of the published text, see Harold Scott Quigley, *Far Eastern War, 1937–1941* (Boston, MA: World Peace Foundation, 1942), 296–297.
- 491 Alvin D. Coox, *Year of the Tiger* (Philadelphia, PA: Orient/West Incorporated Publishers, 1964), 83–101.
- 492 For a detailed history of this campaign, see Louis Allen, *Burma: the Longest War 1941–45* (London: J. M. Dent & Sons Ltd., 1984).
- 493 Spence, *The Search*, 471.
- 494 Barbara Tuchman, *Stilwell and the American Experience in China, 1911–45* (New York: The Macmillan Co., 1971), 312–313, 394.
- 495 Keith Ayling, *Old Leatherface of the Flying Tigers: The Story of General Chennault* (New York: The Bobbs-Merrill Co., 1945); Robert Lee Scott, Jr., *Flying Tiger: Chennault of China* (New York: Doubleday & Co., Inc., 1959).
- 496 Lu Qiuwen, *Zhonghe Waimeng Jiaoshe Shimo* (The Ins and Outs of Sino–Russian Negotiations on Outer Mongolia), (Taipei, Taiwan: Zhengwen Chubanshe, 1976), 242–247.
- 497 “Statement of W. Averell Harriman, Special Assistant to the President, regarding our wartime relations with the Soviet Union, particularly as they concern the agreements reached at Yalta.” Maxwell Hamilton Collection, Hoover Institution Archives, Box 3, 13 July 1951.
- 498 For more information on the territorial issue, see Bruce A. Elleman, “The Final Consolidation of the USSR’s Sphere of Interest in Outer Mongolia,” in Stephen Kotkin and Bruce A. Elleman, eds, *Mongolia in the Twentieth Century: Landlocked Cosmopolitan* (Armonk, NY: M. E. Sharpe, 1999), 123–136.
- 499 “Notes taken at Sino–Soviet Conferences,” 2 July 1945 to 14 August 1945, Victor Hoo Collection, Hoover Institution Archives.
- 500 Luke T. Chang, *China’s Boundary Treaties and Frontier Disputes* (New York: Oceana Publications, Inc., 1982), 216.
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### 13 CHINA’S NATIONALIST–COMMUNIST CIVIL WAR

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- 503 Dreyer, *China at War*, 190–191.
- 504 For a study of Mao’s turbulent rise to power, see Raymond F. Wylie, *The Emergence of Maoism: Mao Tse-tung, Ch’en Po-ta, and the Search for Chinese Theory, 1935–1945* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1980). See also Frederick C. Teiwes and Warren Sun, “From a Leninist to a Charismatic Party: The CCP’s Changing Leadership, 1937–1945,” in Tony Saich and Hans van de Ven, eds, *New Perspectives on the Chinese Communist Party* (Armonk, NY: M. E. Sharpe, 1995), 339–387.
- 505 Lincoln Li, *The Japanese Army in North China, 1937–1941* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1975), 187–188.
- 506 Yung-fa Chen, *Making Revolution, The Communist Movement in Eastern and Central China, 1937–1945* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1986), 39–40.
- 507 John Hunter Boyle, *China and Japan at War, 1937–1945* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1972), 315n.
- 508 *Ibid.*, 337.
- 509 Theodore H. White, *Thunder Out Of China* (New York: William Sloane Associates, Inc., 1946), 76–77.



- 510 T'ien-wei Wu, "The Chinese Communist Movement," in James C. Hsiung and Steven I. Levine, eds, *China's Bitter Victory: The War with Japan, 1937–1945* (Armonk, NY: M. E. Sharpe, 1992), 100.
- 511 Yung-fa Chen, 116–117.
- 512 Wu, 101.
- 513 Lionel Max Chassin, *The Communist Conquest of China: A History of the Civil War, 1945–1949* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1965), 43, 49; Chassin quotes General Stilwell as warning that the Nationalist figures were highly inflated because their divisions were often at only half-strength, the troops received little training, and they had little artillery, transport, or medical support.
- 514 Ibid., 53.
- 515 William Morwood, *Duel for the Middle Kingdom: The Struggle Between Chiang Kai-shek and Mao Tse-tung for Control of China* (New York: Everest House, 1980).
- 516 Chassin, 58–59.
- 517 C. P. Fitzgerald, *Son of Heaven: A Biography of Li Shih-min, Founder of the T'ang Dynasty* (London: Cambridge University Press, 1933), 51; quoted in Chassin, 59.
- 518 Odd Arne Westad, *Cold War and Revolution: Soviet–American Rivalry and the Origins of the Chinese Civil War, 1944–1946* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1993), 105.
- 519 Chassin, 66.
- 520 Chonghal Petey Shaw, *The Role of the United States in Chinese Civil Conflicts, 1944–1949* (Salt Lake City, UT: Charles Schlacks, Jr., 1991), 145.
- 521 John Robinson Beal, *Marshall in China* (New York: Doubleday & Co. Inc., 1970).
- 522 Chassin, 72–75.
- 523 Hsü, *The Rise*, 626.
- 524 *China White Paper*, 2, 694.
- 525 Suzanne Pepper, *Civil War in China: The Political Struggle, 1945–1949* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1978), 52–53.
- 526 *Marshall's Mission to China: December 1945–January 1947: The Report and Appended Documents* (Arlington, VA: University Publications of America, Inc., 1976), Vol. 1, 99–100.
- 527 Ibid., 282–310.
- 528 Ibid., 431–457.
- 529 Shaw, 241.
- 530 A. V. Meliksetov, *Pobeda Kitaiskoi revoliutsii, 1945–1949* (Moscow: Nauka, 1989), 122.
- 531 Spence, *The Search*, 498–502.
- 532 Chassin, 143–144; italics in original.
- 533 Ibid., 144–145. This harsh criticism of Jiang Jieshi would tend to cast doubt on Soviet authors' claims that the United States had the power to "dictate" the Guomindang's policies. G. V. Astaf'ev, *Interventsiia SShA v Kitae, 1945–1949* (Moscow: 1985), 312.
- 534 Tang Tsou, *America's Failure in China, 1941–50* (Chicago, IL: The University of Chicago Press, 1963), 492.
- 535 Kenneth W. Rea and John C. Brewer, eds, *The Forgotten Ambassador: The Reports of John Leighton Stuart, 1946–1949* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1981), 119–121.
- 536 Harlan W. Jencks, *From Muskets to Missiles: Politics and Professionalism in the Chinese Army, 1945–1981* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1982), 45.
- 537 Chassin, 151–152.
- 538 Joseph K. S. Yick, *Making Urban Revolution in China: The CCP–GMD Struggle for Beijing–Tianjin, 1945–1949* (Armonk, NY: M. E. Sharpe, 1995), 163.
- 539 Steven I. Levine, *Anvil of Victory: The Communist Revolution in Manchuria, 1945–1948* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1987), 87.



- 540 Suzanne Pepper, "The KMT-CCP conflict 1945-1949," in John K. Fairbank and Albert Feuerwerker, *The Cambridge History of China* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1986), Vol. 13, Part 2, 775-776.
- 541 *Ibid.*, 780.

# 14 CHINA'S ROLE IN THE KOREAN WAR

- 542 Lanxin Xiang, *Recasting the Imperial Far East: Britain and America in China, 1945-1950* (Armonk, NY: M.E. Sharpe, 1995), 209.
- 543 According to Kathryn Weathersby, the "new Russian archival sources tend to support the argument that the Korean War served as a substitute for World War III." Kathryn Weathersby, "Stalin, Mao, and the End of the Korean War," in Odd Arne Westad, ed., *Brothers in Arms: The Rise and Fall of the Sino-Soviet Alliance, 1945-1963* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1998), 91.
- 544 *The Cold War in Asia*, "Cold War International History Project Bulletin" (Washington, D.C.: Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars, Winter 1995/1996), 5-7; Westad, 314-318.
- 545 *Ibid.*, 5-9; Westad, 323-329.
- 546 Recently, Chen Jian has discussed how, when the Chinese brought up Outer Mongolia, Stalin "immediately became nervous, saying that the status of Mongolia was a settled matter," and then was relieved when the Chinese communists offered to recognize Mongolia's independence. Chen Jian, *China's Road to the Korean War: The Making of the Sino-American Confrontation* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994), 83, fn. 78; this early CCP offer does not necessarily conflict with Mao's later criticism of the USSR for turning Mongolia into a Soviet protectorate, since in early 1950 detailed information on how the USSR used secret diplomacy to bring about this result might have still been unavailable to Mao.
- 547 Shu Guang Zhang, *Mao's Military Romanticism: China and the Korean War, 1950-1953* (Lawrence, KS: University Press of Kansas, 1995), 40-51.
- 548 Hsü, *The Rise*, 661.
- 549 Clay Blair, *The Forgotten War: America in Korea 1950-1953* (New York: Anchor Press Books, 1989), 43-45.
- 550 John Lewis Gaddis, *We Now Know: Rethinking Cold War History* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), 73-75.
- 551 Sergei N. Goncharov, John W. Lewis, and Xue Litai, *Uncertain Partners: Stalin, Mao, and the Korean War* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1993), 145.
- 552 Hsü, *The Rise*, 661.
- 553 Russell Spurr, *Enter the Dragon: China's Undeclared War Against the U.S. in Korea, 1950-51* (New York: Newmarket Press, 1988), 49.
- 554 Mineo Nakajima, "Foreign Relations: From the Korean War to the Bandung Line," in Roderick MacFarquhar and John K. Fairbank, eds, *The Cambridge History of China* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1987), Vol. 14, Part 1, 272.
- 555 David Clayton, *Imperialism Revisited: Political and Economic Relations between Britain and China, 1950-54* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1997), 32-33.
- 556 Blair, 76-77.
- 557 Glenn D. Paige, *The Korean Decision [24-30 June 1950]* (New York: The Free Press, 1968), 254.
- 558 Whelan has commented that some "historians have judged the early performance of American troops in Korea very harshly . . . yet the fact is that they were successful in carrying out their assignment . . . [since the] North Koreans failed in their determined

- attempt to take Pusan.” Richard Whelan, *Drawing the Line: The Korean War, 1950–1953* (Boston, MA: Little, Brown, 1990), 173.
- 559 Although not formally a war; see Jonathan D. Pollack, “Perception and Action in Chinese Foreign Policy: The Quemoy Decision” (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Michigan, 1976); Thomas J. Christensen, *Useful Adversaries: Grand Strategy, Domestic Mobilization, and Sino-American Conflict, 1947–1958* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1996).
- 560 Spence, *The Search*, 528–529.
- 561 Michael Langley, *Inchon Landing: MacArthur’s Last Triumph* (New York: Times Books, 1979), 42; William Whitney Stueck, *The Korean War: An International History* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1995), 85. According to Leckie, Tokyo newsmen called the Inchon landing “Operation Common Knowledge” because so much top secret information on the invasion was being openly discussed. Robert Leckie, *The Korean War* (London: Barrie and Rockliff, 1962), 131.
- 562 Burton I. Kaufman, *The Korean War: Challenges in Crisis, Credibility, and Command* (Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press, 1986), 82.
- 563 Max Hastings, *The Korean War* (London: Michael Joseph, 1987), 131.
- 564 Allen S. Whiting, *China Crosses the Yalu: The Decision to Enter the Korean War* (New York: The Macmillan Co., 1960), 108–113.
- 565 Hastings, 145.
- 566 Kaufman, 95.
- 567 Spence, *The Search*, 530.
- 568 Alexander L. George, *The Chinese Communist Army in Action: The Korean War and its Aftermath* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1967).
- 569 Hao Yufan and Zhai Zhihai, “China’s Decision to Enter the Korean War: History Revisted,” in Kim Chull Baum and James I. Matray, eds, *Korea and the Cold War: Division, Destruction, and Disarmament* (Claremont, CA: Regina Books, 1993), 153.
- 570 Goncharov *et al.*, 172–174.
- 571 *Ibid.*, 179.
- 572 Chae-Jin Lee, *China and Korea: Dynamic Relations* (Stanford, CA: Hoover Press, 1996), 19–20.
- 573 *The Cold War in Asia*, “Cold War International History Project Bulletin” (Washington, D.C.: Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars, winter 1995/1996), 10–11.
- 574 Zhang, 85.
- 575 Blair, 382.
- 576 *Ibid.*, 624–630.
- 577 Lee, 32–33.
- 578 Charles R. Shrader, *Communist Logistics in the Korean War* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1995), 176.
- 579 Carl Berger, *The Korea Knot: A Military-Political History* (Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1964), 135–137.
- 580 Edwin P. Hoyt, *The Day the Chinese Attacked: Korea, 1950, The Story of the Failure of America’s China Policy* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1990), 198.
- 581 Kaufman, 219.
- 582 Lee, 42.
- 583 Sydney D. Bailey, *The Korean Armistice* (London: Macmillan Press, 1992), 113–149.
- 584 Lee, 56.
- 585 Spence, *The Search*, 530–531.
- 586 Blair, 975.
- 587 Spurr, 313.
- 588 Lee, 58.

## 15 THE SINO-INDIAN BORDER DISPUTE

- 589 Donald S. Zagoria, *The Sino-Soviet Conflict, 1956-1961* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1962), 283.
- 590 Thomas C. Roberts, *The Chinese People's Militia and the Doctrine of People's War* (Washington, D.C.: National Defense University Press, 1983), 2.
- 591 *Ibid.*, 3.
- 592 Spence, *The Search*, 558-559.
- 593 Jencks, 50.
- 594 Spence, *The Search*, 560-561.
- 595 Roberts, 6.
- 596 *Ibid.*, 12-13.
- 597 Xiaoming Zhang, "China and the Air War in Korea, 1950-1953," *Journal of Military History*, Vol. 60 (1998), 335. Interestingly, the Chinese Air Force was originally created in 1949 to assist in the future attack on Taiwan, but was diverted instead to Korea.
- 598 Jencks, 161.
- 599 Ellis Joffe, *The Chinese Army After Mao* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1987), 17.
- 600 Roberts, 13.
- 601 Bhim Sandhu, *Unresolved Conflict: China and India* (New Delhi: Radiant Publishers, 1988), 78-79.
- 602 *Ibid.*, 97-98.
- 603 Indu Patel, "The Border Problem," in V. B. Karnik, ed., *China Invades India* (Bombay: Allied Publishers Private Ltd., 1963), 185-191.
- 604 Steven A. Hoffmann, *India and the China Crisis* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1990), 27.
- 605 Patel, 193-196.
- 606 John Rowland, *A History of Sino-Indian Relations: Hostile Co-existence* (Princeton, NJ: D. Van Nostrand Co. Inc., 1967), 110-112. The Dalai Lama's successful flight was reportedly due to CIA assistance. See Xuecheng Liu, *The Sino-Indian Border Dispute and Sino-Indian Relations* (New York: University Press of America Inc., 1994), 23.
- 607 V. B. Karnik, "The Invasion And After," in Karnik, Appendix I, 295.
- 608 Patel, 214-215.
- 609 Neville Maxwell, *India's China War* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1970), 315-316.
- 610 Bisal Prasad, "Indo-Soviet Treaty: The Historical Background," in Shankar Dyal Sharma, ed., *Studies in Indo-Soviet Cooperation* (New Delhi: Kalamkar Prakashan Private Ltd., 1981), 74.
- 611 Maxwell, 394.
- 612 *Ibid.*, 408.
- 613 Ram Naresh Trivedi, *Sino-Indian Border Dispute and its Impact on Indo-Pakistan Relations* (New Delhi: Associated Publishing House, 1977), 260.
- 614 Sindhu, 169-172.
- 615 Karnik, 232-235.
- 616 D. K. Palit, *War in High Himalaya: The Indian Army in Crisis, 1962* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1991), 349.
- 617 Chih H. Lu, *The Sino-Indian Border Dispute* (New York: Greenwood Press, 1986), 76.
- 618 Karnik, 235.
- 619 Sindhu, 204-205.
- 620 *Ibid.*, 205-206.
- 621 John W. Garver, "The Indian Factor in Recent Sino-Soviet Relations," *The China Quarterly*, No. 125 (March 1991), 56.
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- 656 Tsui, 48.
- 657 Hsü, *The Rise*, 684–685.
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