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The Battle for China

ESSAYS ON THE MILITARY HISTORY
OF THE SINO-JAPANESE WAR OF 1937–1945

Edited by Mark Peattie,
Edward J. Drea, and
Hans van de Ven

STANFORD UNIVERSITY PRESS
STANFORD, CALIFORNIA

Stanford University Press
Stanford, California

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Printed in the United States of America on acid-free, archival-quality paper

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

The battle for China : essays on the military history of the Sino-Japanese War of 1937–1945 / edited by Mark Peattie, Edward Drea, and Hans van de Ven.
p. cm.
Includes bibliographical references and index.
ISBN 978-0-8047-6206-9 (cloth : alk. paper)
1. Sino-Japanese War, 1937–1945—Campaigns—China. 2. China—History, Military—1912–1949. 3. Japan—History, Military—1868–1945. I. Peattie, Mark R., 1930– II. Drea, Edward J., 1944– III. Van de Ven, Hans J.
DS777.53.B337 2011
940.54'251—dc22 2010042047

Typeset by BookMatters in 10/12.5 Sabon

2 *The Dragon's Seed*

ORIGINS OF THE WAR

MARK R. PEATTIE

The seeds of the conflict can be found as early as the nineteenth century,[1] rooted in the soil of imperial China, an agrarian bureaucratic empire whose institutional inadequacies at a time of gathering economic, demographic, and technological change complicated its efforts to preserve domestic tranquility within the country and made difficult China's resistance to foreign encroachment from without.[2] Lacking strong allies and firm control over its border regions and peoples, and suspicious as to the nature and intentions of foreign powers standing on its frontiers and approaching its coasts, China was unable to halt the pace and scale of the incursions on its sovereignty and territory in the last three decades of the nineteenth century: Japan's invasion of Taiwan, 1870–1871; Russia's occupation of the Ili Valley in Xinjiang Province in 1879; the loss of Annam to France in 1885; and, most painful and serious, the calamitous war with Japan over Korea, 1894–1895, in which Chinese forces were defeated on land and sea and after which Korea was stripped from China as a tributary, and Taiwan, the Liaodong Peninsula, and the Pescadores were ceded to Japan. After that, further humiliations followed one after another: French demands to adjust the Sino-Annamite border; Germany's seizure of Jiaozhou Bay on the southern coast of the Shandong Peninsula; British demands for an offsetting port at Weihaiwei on the northern coast of the same peninsula; French demands for a leasehold at Guangzhou on the southern China coast, demands that provoked a British expansion into the Kowloon "New Territories" opposite Hong Kong. Most of these new foreign enclaves were surrounded by zones and spheres where each foreign controlling power held exclusive rights for extractive industries and modern communications.

Then with the opening of the new century had come the disastrous decision of the Qing court to encourage and support the spasm of antiforeign violence led by the Boxers, an initiative explicable by the depth of popular

resentment at thirty years of foreign humiliation of China. At all events, the utter defeat of the court and the Boxers by coordinated foreign military expeditions ended in the Boxer Protocols, which, among other punitive stipulations, authorized foreign troops, including the Japanese, to be stationed at key points from Peking to the sea.

It has been customary in Western literature to view the Boxer upheaval in terms of a traditional émeute and China's punishment under the Boxer Protocols as the nadir of China's fortunes in its modern history. Yet, stirring the ashes of China's defeat, historians have come to see the Boxer upheaval as less a rebellion than a serious episode in China's military history—a war between China and the West, one that gave voice to a new Chinese patriotism, the beginnings of a nationalism essential to the resistance to the Japanese invader forty years on. In the meantime, however, it cannot be denied that control over China's borderlands had been further weakened; its ports, rivers, and economic resources had fallen under foreign control; and a legacy of national resentment had accumulated that would bear bitter fruit in the new century.

Japan's Encroachments in China, 1894–1915

The encroachments by Western powers on Chinese sovereignty had been undertaken by nations half a globe away whose full strategic reach was checked by time and distance. Japan, on the other hand, had been a fellow Asian neighbor. But Japan's own modern transformation in the latter half of the nineteenth century had brought with it a new and aggressive attitude toward national expansion, an outlook framed by the tigerish demands of Japanese self-interest. Convinced that Japan's national security depended on an outer cordon of satellite territory on the Asian continent, Japan's political and military leadership had sought to control events on the Asian mainland, beginning with the Korean peninsula.[3] Once Japan's strategic priorities shifted in the late 1880s from passive defense of the Japanese coastline to an active political and military presence on the continent, it acquired a lethal potential. By the last decade of the century, Japan had been on a collision course with a belated Chinese determination to defend its position in Korea. The disasters that had overtaken China's armed forces during the Sino-Japanese War of 1894–1895 had not only led to the loss of territories mentioned above but emboldened Japanese policies on the continent and strengthened Japanese contempt for China's capacities.[4] Yet by the decade that followed the punitive humiliations of the Boxer Protocols, Japan came to play a significant role in the Qing Dynasty's effort to save itself through reform while at the same time maneuvering to gain a dominant position on the China mainland.

While the Qing had suffered a string of humiliations that had dem-

onstrated how inadequate were many of its institutions, particularly its armed forces, these defeats had led not to a collapse of the monarchy but to a rally of sorts in the last decade of its existence, 1901–1911. And it was the empress dowager, arch symbol of Chinese conservatism, who now gave her approval to a program of radical reform that progressive Chinese intellectuals had advocated without success for nearly twenty years.

Among the many reform projects was the reorganization, reconstruction, and modernization of the nation's armed forces. For the most part, the archaic structures of the traditional Manchu military forces were abandoned and new, more modern armies were raised by local power holders but officered by young men with a greater sensitivity to the nation and to foreign threats. Of these "New Armies"[5]—more efficiently organized, better trained, armed with more modern weapons, and given a more professional command structure—undoubtedly the best was the Beiyang Army of Yuan Shikai, governor of metropolitan Zhili Province. Established as part of the reform program of the imperial government, the Beiyang Army was perhaps the most important military development between the suppression of the Taiping Rebellion in the mid-nineteenth century and the formation of the Nationalist Army by Chiang Kai-shek in the third decade of the twentieth century. In relation to the archaic Manchu military formations of the past, the Beiyang Army was an admirably modern force.[6]

But what provides particular interest in this survey of Sino-Japanese interactions in the first decades of the twentieth century is the fact that in training, discipline, and organization the Beiyang Army was modeled on the Japanese military. Japanese influence was particularly pronounced in the development of the Beiyang Officers Training Academy, which Yuan Shikai established at Baoding. In addition to dispatch of military students to Japan for advanced training, Yuan brought Japanese instructors to Baoding to teach at the academy.[7] Given the fact that, in these years, the Japanese army represented the cutting edge of military professionalism in East Asia, Yuan's use of Japanese expertise was a logical outcome of the dynasty's belated program of modernization. For its part, the Japanese military had an obvious interest in shaping and guiding the most powerful land force in China, the nearest thing to the existence of a Chinese national army. This pattern of Japanese penetration of Chinese military institutions was to continue through the subsequent warlord period and well into the 1930s.

During the first decade of the twentieth century Japan came to exert a major influence—for good and ill—on the course of events in China. Japan also came to serve as a model for Qing reforms in education, administration, and military professionalism and, at the same time, as an incubator of anti-Qing revolutionary sentiment among the thousands of Chinese students who had been sent to Japan to study in Japanese universities. Japan

thus played the role of earnest instructor in the practice of modernity while at the same time harboring chauvinists and adventurers who saw China only as a field for personal ambition and national expansion. It was on this uncertain foreign terrain that Sun Yat-sen, the exiled anti-Manchu radical, took up the cause of revolution, trying to building a revolutionary organization, working out a revolutionary ideology, and gathering funds from overseas Chinese for his revolutionary cause. In these years, Sun worked with a circle of Japanese friends—idealists as well as ultranationalists—whose main appeal to Sun was their pan-Asianist vision of Asian friendship and cooperation against a common enemy, Western imperialism.[8]

As we know, Sun's plans for the overthrow of the monarchy were overtaken by events. Weakened by foreign interventions and even more by the fraying of political legitimacy and cohesion, the Chinese imperial system collapsed in 1911, in part through Sun's active agency. Although Sun, upon his return to China, was elected to the provisional presidency of the republic established at Nanjing, the new power holders were those former Qing army officers who set themselves up as provincial military governors. Under these conditions, Sun soon relinquished his position to Yuan Shikai, the one leader with sufficient power, skill, and experience to quell civil war and avoid foreign intervention. In these unstable conditions, Japan perceived new opportunities for expansion in China, especially in Manchuria. Indeed, Japanese military projects to separate Manchuria from mainland China began as early as 1912. Although these initiatives were blocked by the civilian government in Tokyo, belligerent elements, both within and without the Japanese government, continued to agitate for bold and aggressive policies in China.[9]

Until the outbreak of World War I, the Japanese government kept these elements in check because it recognized that adventurism might clash with Western interests in China. Looked at another way, under the nineteenth-century treaty system, China had been able to limit the rapacity of any single treaty power by the rivalry and the antagonism of all the others. But with Western attention focused on the war in Europe, Japan took advantage of China without such an impediment. In 1914 Japanese troops occupied the Shandong Peninsula as part of an Anglo-Japanese expedition to eliminate German interests in East Asia and the Pacific, following which Japan's dominant position on the peninsula was confirmed in later Sino-Japanese negotiations. Then, early in 1915, Japan presented its notorious Twenty-one Demands, brazen in their attempt to provide Japan with hegemony in China as a whole and devious in the manner in which they were delivered to the government of Yuan Shikai.[10] Exposed to international scrutiny and blocked by international pressure, the demands and their aftermath nevertheless illuminated the scale of Japanese aspirations in China. Although those aspirations may have been largely economic—a

bid for exclusive access to China's resources—their political consequence was titanic, for they provoked the first great tremors of Chinese nationalism, setting off mass rallies, anti-Japanese boycotts, and impassioned protests to the world by Chinese students, intellectuals, and political leaders. Even those Chinese who had reason to hope for Japanese amity and assistance now saw such hope betrayed. Yuan Shikai, for example, had begun his attempt to reestablish the monarchy with the not unfounded expectation that Japan would supply material support for his quixotic effort. But Japan's withholding of both funds and recognition played a significant part in the collapse of his schemes.[11] For his part, Sun Yat-sen, desperate for outside support for his embattled republican effort, compromised Chinese integrity on more than one occasion in his dealings with the Japanese. He was, however, to be repeatedly disappointed in his efforts to gain their support, though to the end he never resigned himself to the harsh fact of Japanese intentions in China.[12]

To Japanese advocates of a "forward policy" on the continent, the fragmentation of China after the fall of Yuan Shikai appeared to provide fertile soil for political and military maneuvering to achieve more gradually what the Twenty-one Demands had failed to do at one stroke. For Chinese patriots everywhere, Japan was now clearly seen as China's single greatest foreign menace, a view that would last through the next three decades of civil war and invasion. Where in the nineteenth century China had been an arena of European imperial competition, it now became the battlefield between two contending regional forces: an emerging Chinese nationalism and an explosive Japanese expansionism.[13]

The Institutional Dysfunctions of Japanese China Policy

It would be a mistake, however, to see Japanese policy in China working as a smoothly running juggernaut, guided by a single, clearly fixed plan devised over the decades. On the contrary, there were simply too many Japanese actors and would-be actors on the China stage to effect such a coherent policy. As Marius Jansen has observed, "The scene was full of busy figures. China adventurers, professional patriots, agents of the military and economic establishments, all known to each other, and all contacting the same Chinese, and yet each seeing his purpose in a different way."[14] Thus, buffeted by contending interest groups, Japan's China policies tended to lurch from one objective to another.

To begin with, structural and political weaknesses within Japan confused the development of a clear-cut policy. First among these debilities was a lethal flaw in the modern Japanese constitutional system. It centered

on a link between a theoretically supreme imperial throne, supposedly the source of all political legitimacy and authority, and an ill-defined locus of political responsibility. It meant that any institution in the Japanese state could, if it had sufficient practical power, pretend to act in the name of an inviolable emperor and thus assume a supreme decision-making role. With one critical exception, however, no institution could claim an actual constitutional right to do so. The exception was the armed services' "right of supreme command," which made the services directly responsible to the emperor and not to civil authority. It thus gave the army and navy the legal authority to act and speak in the name of the imperial throne. As the throne was not constitutionally responsible to any other institution within the Japanese state, the services could theoretically act as they pleased, without check or interference from civil government.[15]

Early in the history of modern Japan, when civil and military authority in Japan were informally combined in the persons of the *genro*—the senior military and civilian leaders who, as young samurai activists, had founded the modern Japanese state and who went on to become its elder statesmen—the malevolent consequences of this flaw were not apparent. As the *genro* gradually disappeared from the Japanese political stage because of age, infirmity, and death in the first decades of the twentieth century, their functions were split between other institutions—the political parties, business, the civil bureaucracy, and the military—and the possibilities for chaos, particularly in Japanese military and foreign policies, became obvious and ominous. Of those institutions contending for power on the new political landscape, the armed services, by virtue of their claim to the delegation of imperial authority, held the strongest position.

In the immediate postwar years, the political parties capitalized on the declining political muscle of the civil bureaucracy and acquired a measure of political legitimacy and authority. Yet the political parties were soon riven by factionalism; tainted by corruption, greed, and an innate selfishness; and hampered by a failure to cultivate a mass constituency. Without mass support and unable to present the Japanese people with any vision of public good, and incapable of dealing with the principal crises of the 1920s, both foreign and domestic, they found that their fortunes rested on political sand. Japanese public support shifted to the one-shot solutions of right-wing nationalists and the increasingly strident demands of the Japanese armed services.

The Japanese military was also often incapable of planning and acting as a smoothly integrated machine because of factionalism and interservice rivalry. The army and the navy had different strategic priorities, different institutional cultures, and different claims for public and budgetary support, disputes that prevented them from shaping a coherent Japanese strategic vision. First and foremost, fundamental disagreements divided

the two services over long-range strategic priorities. The army was focused on Russia and the navy on south China and Southeast Asia. The attempt to rationalize these differences and to develop a joint military/foreign policy had begun in 1907 with the drafting of the first Imperial Defense Policy. This policy was a three-part document prepared by the armed services and formally sanctioned by the emperor, but neither this first policy statement nor its subsequent revisions (in 1918, in 1923, and 1936) ever resolved the basic difference in strategic priorities between the two services.

In the 1907 policy statement, the army set forth its basic strategy of not allowing an enemy to violate Japanese soil and its corollary,[16] an outward-radiating definition of Japan's territorial security from which the army drew up plans for forward offensive operations on the Asian mainland. Military operations called for quick, decisive victories in the opening battles of any war in order to guarantee Japan's negotiating position at the end of the conflict. This doctrine of "rapid war, rapid decision" (*sokusen sokketsu*) was an essential element of the first Imperial Defense Policy of 1907.[17]

Within each service, rival factions and fiercely contending bureaucracies hampered coordination. In the army, the factions were regional, generational, ideological, and personal. The oldest rift went back to the feudal origins of the army and the tensions between its three most powerful domains—Chōshū, Satsuma, and Hizen—which had overthrown the old feudal order in the mid-nineteenth century. Over time, with the dominance of the Chōshū Clique in the upper ranks of the army, the bureaucratic tensions became generational as younger outsiders entered the officer corps. These men were contemptuous of the lingering influence of the aging Chōshū Clique. More familiar with the new military technology that emerged from World War I, they were impatient with the unwillingness or inability of their superiors to prepare the army for modern warfare, and they fumed at the apparent incompetence of political party governments to deal with the problems of social and economic inequity in Japan.[18] Some younger staff officers pressed for a thorough modernization of the army and the nation's preparation for total war, by the 1930s seen largely as against the Soviet Union. Others, believing that Japan could not win a technological race against any of the great powers, turned to a restoration of the Japanese fighting spirit and the indoctrination of all ranks in the inevitable victory of a Japanese "Imperial Way" (*Kōdō*).

Adding to policy and organizational dysfunctions was the considerable autonomy of Japanese field armies on the Asian mainland, especially the Kwantung Army, headquartered at Port Arthur in the Kwantung Leased Territory. Established in 1906 for the defense of the territory and for the protection of Japanese lives and property in Manchuria, which in practice largely meant defending Japan's South Manchuria Railway, the Kwantung "Army" was originally little more than one division in strength (10,000

men plus six battalions of an independent railway garrison). In 1919, it had been divested of its administrative role in order to concentrate on its defensive responsibilities. By the 1920s, however, its ambitious staff officers espoused an aggressive expansion of Japanese interests in Manchuria. Emboldened by a military command system that allowed the army—and its field units—to be accountable only to the Japanese emperor, the Kwantung Army exhibited increasing operational independence from civilian control and even from the directives of central army headquarters in Tokyo.[19]

To only a slightly lesser degree the same stance was taken by the army's other field force in China: the China Garrison Army.[20] Originally composed of about 900 men and termed the Tianjin Garrison, the China Garrison Army was stationed in north China as a result of the diplomatic protocols following the Boxer Rebellion.[21] Over time, with each new political and military upheaval in China, the Japanese army strengthened its protocol force in Tianjin, until, by the mid-1930s it had grown to 4,000 men. Its staff adopted the same activist coloration as their colleagues to the north in Manchuria and became far more involved in intelligence operations and in plans for offensive preparations in north China than with the mere protection of Japanese life and property there.[22]

Finally, there was the Japanese Naval Landing Party in Shanghai. Its origins lay in the placement of the navy's gunboats on the Yangtze River beginning in the late nineteenth century. Over the next two or three decades, the Japanese navy had drawn from this small river flotilla a number of naval landing parties (*rikusentai*)—naval infantry—which could be put ashore when Japanese communities and businesses appeared to be threatened by violence in times of Chinese upheaval. In 1932, the largest of these riverine infantry forces, that in Shanghai, was given a permanent presence ashore, adjacent to the Japanese quarter in that city. It developed close ties with the Japanese community, particularly with Japanese paramilitary groups in the city, and in so doing became the fist for an emerging Japanese belligerence in Shanghai.[23]

The autonomy of these field forces on the Asian continent also benefited from a commander's prerogative to move a subordinate unit within his own theater of operations in the interests of security. This privilege was the right of "field initiative" (*dokudan senkō*). While the emperor's approval was required for the transfer of units from one field command to another (say from the Kwantung Army to the Tianjin Garrison), none of these commands needed to obtain imperial approval for the shifting of units within its own jurisdiction. Indeed, the potential for abuse of this privilege by aggressive officers in the field was manifest.[24] Japanese garrisons on the Asian mainland thus provided flashpoints for potential Sino-Japanese conflict and thus contributed significantly to the fractured nature of Japanese policy in China.[25]

Japanese Military Attitudes toward China

China's abject military defeat in 1894–1895 had accelerated Japanese contempt for things Chinese. Japan's general understanding and sympathy toward China had reached its nadir by World War I, when China's cultural reputation survived only among specialists in Japanese academic institutions and among small numbers of Japan's intellectual elite. China was now seen as a stage for the personal ambitions of various Japanese radical idealists and expansionists, as a resource base for Japanese industry, as a lucrative field for the profit of Japanese capital, and as territory for the ever-expanding requirements of Japanese national security. But in none of these perspectives did the need for specialized knowledge of China appear to be pronounced. The Foreign Ministry and the army's field commanders in China had the greatest contact with China, and while each developed a core of China specialists, with only rare exceptions did China hands reach high rank in the army and the foreign service. The highest echelons in both services were essentially occupied by generalists whose expertise was focused on the institutions of the modern West rather than on the "backward" countries of Asia.

Japanese businessmen believed an expanding economy required dependable markets and sources of raw materials abroad, and these in turn were originally seen as best secured by Japan's full participation in a liberal, capitalist, international system. But Japanese policies during World War I and the postwar trend to autarky badly hurt Japan's international export trade. Thus Prime Minister Shidehara Kijurō's, "whole China policy," according to Akira Iriye, "can be characterized as an attempt to reduce obstacles in the way of selling more goods to China."[26] Shidehara (a generalist, not a China specialist) and his allies in the Foreign Ministry offered an alternative to the bludgeoning approach of the Japanese military in China but still sought Japanese domination, not partnership. But even China sympathizers and experts in the Foreign Ministry found their efforts to halt the tide of Japanese belligerence overridden by Japanese military field commanders.[27]

An assessment of the Japanese army's understanding of China presents a picture of sharp contrasts. On the tactical level, it is clear that both the Tokyo high command and the two field armies in China had detailed information on Chinese units and their movements. This was in large part due to the effectiveness of Japanese signals intelligence in China. A codes and ciphers office (*angohan*) was established within the Intelligence Bureau of the Army General Staff in Tokyo in 1927 and for a critical period, 1930–1936, was part of its China Section. By the early 1930s, branch signal intelligence offices were set up at various places in Manchuria and later elsewhere in China. Because of the ease with which these field units broke Chinese

military code systems, the China Garrison Army was able to learn the composition, strength, and activities of Chiang Kai-shek's forces. For its part, the Kwantung Army was able to read 70 percent of the secret communications between the major warlords in north China, a fact that gave the two Japanese field armies a tremendous advantage and almost always enabled the Japanese military to take the initiative against Chinese military forces.[28]

No doubt some useful political intelligence was also gathered by Japanese field units in China.[29] Yet, by and large, in the decade before the outbreak of the war, incredibly, the Japanese armies in the field and the high command in Tokyo failed to appreciate the one critical strategic development in China: the gathering pressure of national hostility to the belligerent Japanese presence on the continent. It was a myopic blunder of stunning proportions, one that was fundamental to the origins of the war.

There were several reasons why this blunder should have occurred. First, as in the case of the Foreign Ministry, the generalist in the Japanese army, not the specialist, and certainly not the China specialist, was the one who had the decisive voice in the making of Japanese military policy in China. Second, although it has been customary to write of the implacable nature of the army's interests in China, recent scholarship has made it clear that the outlook and activities of army officers active in China policy were often shaped by their individual bureaucratic interests.[30] The officers assigned to legations, the General Staff, or the Kwantung Army served up a disparate range of perspectives and opinions, views usually shaped by their parochial concerns. In the early 1920s, for example, when the army's approach to China was comparatively passive, playing one Chinese warlord off against the other, the Japanese military adviser to each warlord was intent on presenting to the army high command only the interests of that warlord, as it affected the career interests of the adviser himself.

In consequence, the Japanese army failed to develop a comprehensive expertise on China, even though certain officers had served lengthy tours in China and even though some of those officers gathered accurate intelligence during the 1920s and '30s. Indeed, early in the 1920s, a number of military attachés in Peking developed realistic perspectives on the rise of Chinese nationalism. But too often such opinions were rejected or ignored by their superiors, who were generalists with little interest in China matters. Moreover, most Japanese military men serving in China who regularly associated with Chinese—those appointed as military advisers to various Chinese warlords and those who were attached to the army's Special Service organs in China[31]—were usually exposed to the most venal and corrupt elements in China. They remained blinded by their own attitudes and prejudices, which were, in turn, shaped by what they saw around them. Too often, they saw the Chinese as greedy individuals, unable or unwilling to care about the welfare of their nation. In this view, China's would-be

leaders were luxury loving, corrupt, and uninterested in anything other than advancing their own positions and their private concerns.[32] The rough state of the Chinese countryside confirmed Japanese prejudices that the Chinese were a poor, ignorant, superstitious, and dirt-ridden lot, oppressed by greedy and rapacious landlords, lacking any aspects of advanced civilization, and incapable of anything more than a brutish existence. Only a few officers—like Major Ishiwara Kanji, who served in central China in the 1920s—were perceptive enough to realize the possibilities of Chinese progress and the ominous danger of eventual Chinese retaliation to Japanese bullying. The vast majority of officers, even those in the China Section of the General Staff's Intelligence Bureau, smugly spoke of *chankoro* (Chinks), and their knowledge of China, even of its military geography, was stunningly limited.[33]

The Rise of Chinese Warlordism

If the structure of Japanese institutions involved in the making of Japan's China policy can be termed dysfunctional, the nature of Chinese institutions in the post-imperial contest for power in China was chaotic.[34] Those military figures like Yuan Shikai held power by the force of their armies but could claim no legitimacy to rule. They were men trapped in a period in Chinese history when the traditional sources of political legitimacy had collapsed with the monarchy and had not yet been replaced by the legitimacy of popular will based on ideals of public welfare and patriotic principles. For their part, the civilian politicians who had emerged with the republic may have held various visions of a new political order but had no military power with which to realize them. Such conditions explain the collapse of Yuan Shikai's quixotic attempt to assert his control by claiming a throne for himself. They also illuminate the difficulties of Sun Yat-sen in trying to forge a republic based on his famous "Three Principles." After the failure of the Second Revolution of 1913, aimed at reestablishing republicanism, Sun fled once more to Japan and there tried to reorganize his political party, the Kuomintang, into a tighter political structure dedicated to fighting Yuan Shikai's betrayal of the republic. But over the next few years, in his new obsession with "democratic centralism," Sun himself failed to grasp the significance of the rising tide of anti-Japanese sentiment in China. Upon his return to China in 1917, Sun threw himself into the emerging warlord-parliamentarian struggles and endeavored to set up his own military government at Guangzhou. But the weakness of his position at Guangzhou in relation to the warlord power holders there led him to take positions that compromised his revolutionary ideals. Desperate for material support for his faltering cause, he offered

Japan access to Chinese resources far beyond anything that Japan had as yet demanded. Such accommodations may have been impelled by Sun's attachment to the pan-Asian visions of his Japanese contacts as much as by the difficulties of his position,[35] but, critically for China, they undoubtedly helped to deepen the interference of Japan in Chinese affairs.

That interference had continued unabated even after the failure of the Twenty-one Demands, largely through the agency of Japanese finance. With a booming trade free of international competition during World War I, and with a large capital surplus, Japan was in a position to use that capital as wedge to accomplish in China much of what the demands themselves had failed to achieve. Premier and former marshal Terauchi Masatake saw money as the avenue to an alliance with the group of warlords who had entrenched themselves in Peking—and through them to control the course of events in north China. His willing tool was Premier Duan Qirui, who entered into a military alliance with Japan, imported Japanese military instructors, and accepted a huge loan, largely for military assistance to the northern militarists arranged by Terauchi's secret agent, Nishihara Kamezō. On the surface these schemes seem to have provided Japan with the freedom of action in China that had been envisioned in the Twenty-one Demands and to have lessened official Chinese opposition to the Japanese occupation of the Shandong Peninsula at the opening of World War I. Indeed, Marius Jansen has called them "the most ambitious, coordinated and expensive plans Japan yet had for China."[36]

But they ultimately came to naught. The outburst of Chinese popular anger in May of 1919 over the failure of the Versailles Peace Conference to repudiate the secret treaties confirming Japan in its wartime gains in Shandong shook the government to its core and ultimately led to the abandonment of Japanese claims to the peninsula. The loans, moreover, did Japan little good. Japan had wasted its accumulated surplus on warlord allies who were little more than "elaborately decorated and plumed political birds of passage"[37] and in the process inherited a renewed Chinese resentment toward Japanese efforts to collect interest on their loan.

For China the Nishihara loan, by supplying money to the militarist groupings in Peking, helped to perpetuate a pattern of warlord satrapies and thus delay the country's unity and stability. The identification of the complex and shifting alliances of the various militarist groupings that evolved in China during the 1920s and the marches and countermarches against each other can be of interest in this chapter only insofar as any of them significantly affected Sino-Japanese relations at the time. Essentially, by the middle of the decade, north and central China were left divided under contending warlord factions. The Peking-Tianjin area and Shandong had fallen under the control of the Fengtien Clique of Zhang Zuolin, "the Warlord of Manchuria," quondam bandit and military governor of Muk-

den (Shenyang), who came to be known as the "Old Marshal." Although Manchuria was his home territory, Zhang had given every indication that his ambitions were national in scope. Principally opposed to the Fengtien Clique was the Chihli Clique, which held Hubei and Henan provinces under Wu Peifu, a former Beiyang Army commander. Some have seen the collision between the Fengtien and Chihli cliques and their factional allies in 1924 as a critical process in China's eventual unification since, by their very destructiveness, they opened the way for the emergence of Chinese nationalism. Arthur Waldron, specifically, has seen the "destruction and disruption caused by the wars of 1924" as "indispensable pre-conditions" to the Nationalist revolution that followed.[38]

Be that as it may, these were conflicts that led to increasing involvement in Chinese affairs by the Japanese military. Against the background of the shifting fortunes of warlord conflict it is possible to discern an emerging Japanese strategy to achieve a dominant position in the country. Ever since Yuan Shikai and the Twenty-one Demands, the conviction of Japanese leaders, civilian and military, had been that the nation's interests in China generally, and in Manchuria specifically, were best served by the establishment of an informal hegemony over the country rather than through an attempt to establish direct imperial rule,[39] which after World War I was, in any event, now excluded by the Washington treaties. To achieve such indirect control, Tokyo concluded that it was necessary to identify a power holder (or military faction) best positioned to unify the country and then to influence that power holder through his increasing dependence on Japan for material and political support. Arthur Waldron probably gets it right when he asserts that "Tokyo hoped for . . . a Chinese government at once strong enough to keep order, abide by the treaties, and unify the country, yet weak enough to conform to Japanese wishes."[40] Waldron might have added that Tokyo's minimum requirement, short of indirect control over greater China, was a leader in Manchuria through whom Japan could work to protect its interests in the region. Initially, Tokyo believed it had found such a power holder in the person of Zhang Zuolin. For that reason, in the second Chihli-Fengtien War of 1924, Japan had backed Zhang against his Chihli rivals with money, weapons, intelligence, and advisers, support that was critical in Zhang's eventual victory.[41] But Waldron asserts that the Chihli defeat and the collapse of the central government at Peking, brought about through assiduous Japanese support for Zhang and his Fengtien Clique, produced widespread disorder and subsequently a firestorm of antiforeign anger—hardly the pliable situation for which Japan had schemed.[42] What Japan should have learned after the fiasco of the Twenty-one Demands, and had to learn repeatedly, was that Japan's formula for a dominant position in China—a united China submissive to Japanese dictates—was impossibly self-contradictory.[43]

In the south, meanwhile, from 1921 to 1924, Sun Yat-sen at Guangzhou had begun to reorganize his increasingly radical political forces. As part of the process, Sun had begun to establish ties with the Comintern, the one foreign element that seemed favorable to his cause at a time when his repeated proposals for Western assistance to China's reform and reconstruction had been ignored. Worse, his hopes for the mobilization of a northward military expedition to unify China had foundered amid a rupture with local warlords, and he was once more forced to flee to Shanghai. Returning to Guangzhou in 1923, he had renewed and strengthened his ties with the Chinese Communist Party while strengthening his ideological and political control over his own party apparatus, the Kuomintang.

Looking beyond his tightened management of the Kuomintang, Sun continued to cherish the vision of a united China under his revolutionary government, an objective that he concluded was attainable only with the establishment of an indoctrinated party army that could march northward to defeat the warlord cliques in Peking and unite the country. The forge for such an instrument was to be the Whampoa Military Academy. Opened in 1924, with Chiang Kai-shek as superintendent, the academy was to be staffed with Soviet advisers, and the faculty was to be composed largely of Japanese-trained officers.[44]

The establishment of the military academy, with its emphasis on ideological training and the inculcation of military discipline, was Sun's last major accomplishment before his death the next year. He was succeeded in the leadership of the party and the party army by Chiang Kai-shek, graduate of Yuan Shikai's military academy, a member of Sun Yat-sen's party, and "a figure of some importance in the shadowy area between Shanghai business and revolutionary politics."[45] Chiang had inherited Sun's vision of a military campaign to bring the northern military warlord cliques under control and to unify China. What is more, he commanded the National Revolutionary Army, which could undertake such an effort.[46]

Out of the chaos and confusion of political and military factionalism in southern China, Chiang Kai-shek, by skill, ruthlessness, and political acumen, had emerged to seize the leadership of the national revolution aiming to rid China of the evils of warlord factionalism and imperialist exploitation. Its spearhead was the Northern Expedition, begun in 1926 to unify China. The Kuomintang armies marched north and east to the great cities of the Yangtze River Valley, at first with the active participation of the Communists and the left wing of the Kuomintang. Once his armies had arrived in Shanghai, Chiang turned on the Communists and, in a bloody campaign of suppression, eliminated them as a political force in urban China for two decades. Held up briefly in late 1927 in Shandong by a clash with a Japanese field force there, the Northern Expedition surged on to Peking, which Chiang occupied in 1928, though he made Nanjing his capital.

In this review of the origins of the Sino-Japanese conflict, the complex narrative of the events surrounding the Northern Expedition of 1926–1928—the explosive force of the antiforeign May 30th Movement, the emerging split between the left and right wings of the Kuomintang, the ineffective efforts of Stalin and the Comintern to control the tumultuous developments provoked by the campaign, and the abortive efforts of Mao Zedong to stimulate peasant uprisings and urban rebellions—can be bypassed since they have been so expertly treated elsewhere.[47]

At all events, the character and import of the Northern Expedition has been best encapsulated by Hans van de Ven, who has seen the campaign and those who opposed it as fostering a culture of violence, as bringing about military fragmentation, and as fostering bitter personal rivalries. In this light, van de Ven has argued, the "unity" that the expedition had supposedly achieved at Nanjing by 1928 was in fact illusory. Chiang Kai-shek had ridden to power through his control of the most effective military forces in China, and in the combat that led up to his occupation of Nanjing he had demonstrated both uncanny political acumen and bold decision on the battlefield that had kept his rivals and opponents off balance. But maintenance of his position depended as much on the networks of support that he had cultivated among his warlord allies, business allies, and even allies in underworld circles.[48]

Factions and Regionalism in China at the Outset of the "Nanjing Decade"

Thus began the "Nanjing Decade" of 1927–1937, ten years of administrative organization, economic growth, political factionalism and infighting, and the grueling task of holding the country together at a time of warlord rivalry, Communist insurgency in the interior, and the rapacious inroads of Japanese field armies on China's borders. While there was indeed a central government with a central army during these years, Chiang's practical authority rested on his skill in balancing and manipulating the interests of an uncertain coalition of warlords and factions within the government and the army. Although a number of the regional military figures held nominal positions in the central army, they were bound to the central government only by what they regarded as their own personal interests at any given moment. Having been in the thick of the warlord fighting of the 1920s and, having contended with Chiang Kai-shek for power in those conflicts, most regarded themselves as equals, and many still harbored national ambitions. By no means were they willing to submit automatically or permanently to the will of a central government. The tenuous nature of Chiang's relations with these individuals and factions

was to be an ongoing drag in his efforts to contend with an increasingly belligerent Japanese presence in China.

The most prominent of the warlord figures may be briefly identified as they were positioned in China at the outset of the Nanjing Decade. In Manchuria, there was Zhang Zuolin, bandit chief and battle-scarred veteran of the 1920s. Waiting in the wings was his son Zhang Xueliang, known as the "Young Marshal," who was to take over his father's control in Manchuria after Zhang Zuolin's assassination in 1928. Feng Yuxian, the famed "Christian General" consolidated his control of northern Henan Province in 1927, though he publicly declared his support for Chiang Kai-shek's Kuomintang that year.[49] Yan Xishan, a veteran of the warlord struggles of the 1920s, had entrenched himself in Shanxi Province by the end of the decade.[50] Song Zheyuan had been given an army command by his patron, Feng Yuxian, but eventually allied himself with Chiang Kai-shek and was given command of the Twenty-ninth Army in Chahar. Although most of these military men had been rivals of Chiang Kai-shek at various times in the 1920s, since Chiang controlled the largest military force in China, none contemplated a major and open military challenge to his authority.

Also complicating the political scene at the outset of the Nanjing Decade was a shifting collection of party alliances, bureaucratic factions, and economic groupings, some closely allied with Chiang Kai-shek, some working to thwart him, others moving in between these polarities, and all taking his time and energy to balance, mollify, or intimidate. There was the "C. C. Clique," which held powerful positions in the government; there were members of the Shanghai banking and financial community; and there were a number of powerful members within the Kuomintang. Among the last, the leading figure was Wang Jingwei, intimate associate of Sun Yat-sen, the most important figure in the party after Chiang Kai-shek himself, and, at various times, ally and rival of Chiang. An eloquent and mercurial advocate of civilian leadership for China, he was not averse to enlisting support of regional military figures to achieve it. His efforts included attempts to found a rival national government in Peking in 1930 and the creation of an active opposition to Chiang in 1931. Both failed, but they made it clear to Chiang that Wang was an opposition figure to be reckoned with. This led to an uneasy collaboration at the outset of the 1930s whereby Wang held the presidency of the Republic while Chiang remained supreme military commander and thus had a free hand to deal militarily with the Chinese Communists, now entrenched deep in the mountain fastnesses of Jiangxi Province.

To Chiang Kai-shek, the Communists—eventually and particularly Mao Zedong—were the greatest threat to China and Chiang's dominant position in China. Undoubtedly, Chiang held this view because he saw that both their ideology and their objectives were not only radically dif-

ferent from his own but also total in scope. Thus, they would not compromise and could not be compromised. They could only be exterminated, an objective that Chiang Kai-shek in Nanjing would pursue with single-minded determination during the 1930s, even as Japanese field armies battered at China's doors.

But more than anything else in the Nanjing Decade, Japan and Nanjing's policy toward Japan were the chief determinants of the tortured course of Chinese politics in the 1930s. On the one hand, the general aim of the Japanese field armies in China was to try to forestall the sort of national unity Chiang Kai-shek was trying to forge. It was an effort that exploited the fissures of Chinese regionalism and, through bribery, subversion, and intimidation, attempted to pull suitably pliable Chinese regional leaders out of the orbit of Nanjing's authority. On the other hand, it was the decade-long effort by Chiang Kai-shek to delay, circumvent, and compromise by every means short of war these Japanese efforts to dismember China piecemeal. To undertake this task, Chiang concluded that it was essential first to achieve domestic peace and stability, a condition that called for the extermination of the Communist insurgency. Only then could a final stand be made against the Japanese aggressor. But this very policy of "pacification first, then resistance"—fighting fellow Chinese while negotiating with the foreign invader—was to so arouse public indignation during the decade that it threatened to pull China apart. To that extent, Chiang Kai-shek's troubled mission was to find himself in a race with the progress of voracious Japanese military ambitions in China on the one hand and an emerging confrontation with an enraged Chinese public on the other.

Japan's Seizure of Manchuria and Its Consequences, 1931–1932

In the late 1920s a series of economic crises in Japan led to social and political unrest, which seriously distorted the direction of Japanese foreign policy. In the first half of that decade, the nation's economy had been stimulated by the government's public investment following the Kantō earthquake of 1923. By 1927, however, Japanese financial crises, including a series of spectacular bank failures and the impoverishment of rural communities due to the collapse of rice prices, later exacerbated by the onset of the world depression, dealt a sequence of blows to Japanese domestic markets and to the export trade that, in turn, led to widespread unemployment in Japan. By the beginning of the 1930s, the Japanese public had lost confidence in the nation's industrial leaders, in the fairness of the international global economy, and in the ability of the established political

parties to rescue the nation from economic disaster.[51] To many at the reins of government, overseas expansion offered the solution to overpopulation, unemployment, economic depression, and security concerns. On the continent, the Japanese military ambition enjoyed its greatest freedom from interference by the civil and military authorities in Tokyo. The consequent belligerent expansionism of Japanese field armies challenged the wave of resurgent Chinese nationalism in the late 1920s.

As Chiang Kai-shek's military expedition to unify China had moved north in 1927, fighting a continuing struggle against Communist efforts to derail it, the Japanese field units in northern China and Manchuria had taken alarm at the potential threat to Japanese interests on the mainland. In the spring of 1928, the civil government had dispatched 5,000 troops to protect Japanese nationals in Shandong Province, which lay directly in the path of the northward-sweeping Nationalist forces. In this volatile environment any spark could set off a conflagration between the two sides. Indeed, the belligerent actions of the Japanese commander at Qingdao had ignited just such an explosion at Jinan in a firefight with Nationalist forces outside the city. Japanese units had then occupied Jinan, which they held until 1929, when a settlement was negotiated.[52]

Behind such aggressive initiatives of the Japanese army to block or deflect Chiang's Northern Expedition was Japan's overriding concern for the preservation of its special strategic and economic position in Manchuria. The three institutions that shared power in the region—the army, the Foreign Office, and the South Manchuria Railway—all parleyed with warlord coalitions in Peking to secure formal recognition of Japanese interests in the region, but they had little success by the late 1920s.

For the army, particularly for its field force in Manchuria, the Kwantung Army, the preservation and expansion of those interests could only be guaranteed by the separation of Manchuria from Chinese control. In the latter half of the 1920s, the army began to work with the Manchurian bandit leader Zhang Zuolin to check the Northern Expedition's advance toward Manchuria. But to the younger activist staff officers in the Kwantung Army, Zhang's national ambitions made him unsuitable as an acquiescent Manchurian puppet. The officers came to believe that only violence could remove him as an obstacle to Japanese designs on the region. They assassinated Zhang by blowing up his private train in Manchuria in June 1928, hoping to create a chaotic situation that would force the high command in Tokyo to authorize the Kwantung Army to occupy the region. Zhang's murder, however, failed to create the pretext for direct military intervention, and thus the schemes of the plotters were temporarily blunted. The conspiracy was the most dramatic attempt to date by Japanese field armies to hijack Japanese foreign policy on the continent.[53] Its failure did not inhibit others whose intrigues drew motivation from

growing friction between the two nations over the status of Manchuria, over Chinese boycotts of Japanese goods, especially in the Shanghai area, and over recurring minor but violent incidents in China.

The Japanese Foreign Ministry vainly attempted to minimize the discord. But a rising tide of national sentiment in Japan, propelled by right-wing agitation in the Diet, the press, and the public, subverted efforts for a peaceful resolution. In Manchuria the Kwantung Army, beginning in 1929, actively worked to destabilize the situation. These machinations for a Japanese takeover in Manchuria were set in motion by the brilliant, visionary, and charismatic chief of the Kwantung Army's Operations Section, Colonel Ishiwara Kanji, who believed that outright occupation of Manchuria was essential to Japan's existence and was a vital strategic barrier blocking the southward expansion of Soviet influence.[54]

Though the Japanese high command in Tokyo was not privy to the details of the Ishiwara's conspiracy, it was certainly aware of his general intent and that of his Kwantung Army staff colleagues.[55] Although opposed to any extreme and violent initiative by the Kwantung Army, Tokyo did little to clarify its policy because it too had drawn up contingency plans to seize Manchuria at some point. The differences between the headquarters in Tokyo and Port Arthur were largely over timing and scope. Concerned that army headquarters in Tokyo might restrain or postpone the execution of its plans, in September 1931 the Kwantung Army staged an incident involving an explosion on the South Manchuria Railway tracks just north of Mukden, and used this Chinese "atrocity" to justify the seizure of the Mukden barracks and arsenal. Two years of meticulous tactical planning enabled the Kwantung Army (outnumbered twenty to one) to rapidly expand its operations despite belated efforts by Tokyo headquarters to rein them in. Justifying its actions on the grounds of operational security and the principle of "field initiative," the Kwantung Army quickly overran most of Manchuria. The "Manchurian Incident"—as the army called it—also led to a consensus within the Japanese military that insubordination by the Kwantung Army—while not total—had generally succeeded, because it had provided the Japanese military with a proconsular position in Manchuria from which it could not be easily dislodged by any Japanese government.

But military conquest of Manchuria by such a relatively modest force did not ensure that Japan could keep or manage it. Facing the heavy administrative demands of holding a vast new territory, the conquerors therefore created the Japanese client state of Manchukuo, nominally ruled by Henry Puyi, the last of the Manchu emperors. A bizarre attempt to give the whole scheme some legitimacy in the eyes of the Chinese, the takeover utterly failed to achieve such status. Yet, in its general outline, this method of working through pliable local leaders of an ostensibly autonomous state came to characterize Japanese administrative policy in conquered China for the next decade.

The Japanese takeover of Manchuria soon created more adverse comment in Western capitals than Tokyo had anticipated. To distract international attention from Manchuria, the Japanese Special Service organ in Shanghai now began to stir up anti-Japanese protests in Shanghai. The subsequent disturbances soon lurched out of control, and in January 1932 the commander of Japanese naval forces in the city called out the local Naval Landing Force, joined by vigilante elements from the Japanese community, to "maintain order." These forces met unexpectedly fierce Chinese resistance, forcing the navy to call for reinforcements in the form of two army divisions. During the two months of combat that followed, the Chinese Nineteenth Route Army and Fifth Army fought on without reinforcements and without the backing of any national mobilization by Nanjing for a general struggle against the Japanese aggressor. For its part, Japan became increasingly uncomfortable with the close foreign scrutiny of the massive destruction its forces were inflicting on this international city. At the personal insistence of Emperor Hirohito, the Japanese theater commander undertook to limit his operations in Shanghai. A cease-fire in May established a demilitarized zone, and all Japanese units, except the Naval Landing Force, withdrew.[56]

As Marius Jansen recounted years ago, Japan's Manchurian adventure drew international opprobrium in the form of the critical report of the Lytton Commission of the League of Nations, which called upon Japan to withdraw from Manchuria. This condemnation of Japan by the Western powers in turn led to Japan's stormy withdrawal from the League in 1933 and to a wave of popular support in Japan for overseas adventures as an antidote to the economic and social crises at home.[57]

For Nationalist China, the loss of Manchuria was disastrous. Worse than the loss of Manchurian customs and tariffs was the fact that China's long northern border with the Japanese puppet state of Manchukuo became a porous divide across which Japanese goods flowed into China without hindrance. But the most pernicious effect on the Chiang Kai-shek government was the damage done to Chiang's great effort to achieve national unity, seen by Chiang as the indispensable requirement to all reform and national progress. Chiang's unwillingness or inability to commit what forces he had to confront the Japanese conqueror in Manchuria and Shanghai created violent pressures within China—outraged public opinion and the suspicion and hostility of his rivals in China both within and without the Nationalist party—that threatened to topple his regime.

Further Incursions: Japanese Designs on North China

With twenty-twenty hindsight one can see that the latest round of Japanese bullying of China also potentially provided Chiang's Kuomintang

regime with a symbol for rallying Chinese public support. Ominously, moreover, the Japanese "pacification" of Manchuria and the end of the fighting in Shanghai did not extinguish the flash points for Sino-Japanese hostility. In the fall of 1932 several of these burst into flame. Skirmishes took place at Shanhaiguan, an historic Chinese coastal town at the eastern terminus of the Great Wall where, under the terms of the Boxer Protocols, the Japanese maintained a small garrison. There a series of clashes broke out between the garrison and the forces of a local Chinese warlord. The first two clashes were settled locally and peacefully, but the third, on New Year's Day 1933 and apparently instigated by the Japanese garrison commander, led to fierce fighting and eventually drew in a Japanese infantry division and significant Japanese naval forces. Under such pressure the Chinese withdrew south of the Great Wall, and the Japanese took possession of the south gate of Shanhaiguan. China protested the affair to the League of Nations but failed to convince the powers to intervene, and thus the crisis ended, but not before Japan had added this humiliation to the growing list of injuries inflicted on China.[58]

Ignoring the danger of possible escalation, the Japanese army insisted that the security of Manchuria, now described as Japan's lifeline, required the creation of a buffer zone to the southwest of Manchuria to deflect assertive and irredentist Chinese nationalism. Furthermore, Manchuria was not the treasure house the staffs of the Kwantung and Tianjin Garrison armies expected. Hence, the officers began to covet the resources of north China—its coal and iron in particular—to make up the difference. Assessing the chances for the success of another incursion, these officers rationalized that north China was still a collection of contending warlord fiefdoms and thus vulnerable to Japanese intimidation, subversion, and bribery.

Misguided assumptions about territorial security, material ambition, and political opportunism all combined to impel Japan forward into north China and Inner Mongolia after the conquest of Manchuria, heedless of any Chinese response. As in the case of Manchuria, the basic objective was the creation of a Japanese-dominated buffer zone from which Nationalist influence was to be driven out. The basic strategy would be to instigate and then work behind movements for regional autonomy, a process supplemented by the activities of the army's notorious Special Service organs: agitation, subversion, and constant political warfare to further fragment Chinese authority in the region.

The first of Japan's fatal steps to move beyond Manchuria's western borders was the decision of the Kwantung Army to "round out" its possession of Manchuria by occupying neighboring Jehol Province. The prospect of this new Japanese incursion had been widely rumored in China on the eve of the Japanese attack. Zhang Xueliang, in command of the largest

Chinese forces in Jehol, had sought Chiang Kai-shek's commitment of central army units in repelling the imminent Japanese assault. But Chiang, in the midst of an anticommunist campaign in Jiangxi, had demurred, limiting his support to the public rhetoric of resistance. Zhang himself committed only his weakest troops to the defense of Jehol. The result was another Chinese disaster when two Japanese divisions invaded the province in February 1933 and routed Zhang's units, which fled in panic and disorder. The Japanese conquest of Jehol appeared to leave Peking and Tianjin open to Japanese assault and, in so doing, created a firestorm of popular protest against Chiang's policy of "pacification first, then resistance." Yet Chiang held firm to his course in the face of maneuvering by his rivals and fierce criticism from the public.[59]

Although Chiang Kai-shek may have held to his policy of dealing with his domestic enemies first, the appetite of Kwantung Army extremists for further gains in north China was unabated. The result was a series of sharp battles along the Great Wall as Kwantung Army units sought to seize and hold certain passes critical to the Chinese defense. In this fighting the intermittent efforts of moderates in Tokyo headquarters were sporadically more effective in restraining the belligerent operations of the Japanese field army than the fierce but poorly coordinated resistance of Chinese regional and central army units. As part of an emerging pattern in the Japanese army's strategy in China, the army's Special Service branch in Tianjin attempted to support the Kwantung Army's ground operations by efforts to provoke popular unrest in Hebei against the Nanjing regime, but without great success.[60]

Then, in May 1933, the Kwantung Army broke through Chinese defenses on a broad front and, spilling over the Great Wall at various points, once more threatened Peking and Tianjin. Chiang Kai-shek, faced with a military debacle and aware of a looming political crisis, sought a truce that would stave off both outcomes. He appointed subordinates to carry out the negotiations in order to make it appear that any agreement with the Japanese invader would be local and temporary. For their part, officers of the Kwantung Army, who were once more acting on their own or at least in advance of Tokyo headquarters, carried out the negotiations, not Japanese consular representatives in China. The subsequent Tanggu Truce of May 1933 was in every important way a major humiliation for China in that it created a 5,000-square-mile demilitarized zone over a large portion of Hebei Province south of the Great Wall from which Nationalist military units were to be immediately excluded. Under the agreement Japanese forces would "voluntarily" withdraw to the Great Wall on a timetable of their own choosing.[61]

The Tanggu Truce marked the first surge of Japanese military power into north China. It also opened the way for massive Japanese political

and economic inroads into the region. Worse, the Japanese penetration of Hebei Province followed and confirmed a divide-and-rule strategy that the Japanese had pursued in Manchuria: the separation of large areas of Chinese territory from Nationalist control by fostering puppet regimes in that territory obedient to Japanese dictates. It can be argued, of course, that Chiang Kai-shek had staved off worse disaster. Peking and Tianjin had not fallen. The negotiations had been localized, Chiang Kai-shek's name had been kept clear of the agreement, and its most sensitive terms had been kept secret. Most important to Chiang's policy of dealing first with his internal enemies then with the external aggressor, the temporary cessation of combat in north China allowed him to turn back to his extermination efforts against the Communists.[62] But the damage to his cause was profound, and the precedent it established was ominous.

Japanese Aggression and Nanjing's Defensive Strategy, 1933–1937

The narrative of Sino-Japanese relations from the Tanggu Truce of 1933 through the spring of 1937 is dominated on the one hand by the efforts of Japan's field armies to detach north China from Nationalist control though violence, agitation of anti-KMT unrest, and subversion. Yet, on the other hand, it is marked by Chiang Kai-shek's endeavors to keep the Japanese field armies at bay through compromise, delay, and defensive operations while he directed the energies and forces of his Nationalist government in a series of campaigns against the Communist enclaves within China's borders.

Throughout these four years, the Japanese Foreign Ministry played an ambiguous role. Intermittently, Japanese diplomats tried to step in to settle differences between the two countries through talks with Nationalist representatives in Nanjing, raising hopes in both capitals when they did so that a lasting Sino-Japanese rapprochement might be possible. But the Japanese field armies, at once impatient with the pace of such negotiations and alarmed that they would result in a strengthening of Nationalist authority in the very provinces that they were trying to detach, repeatedly blocked prospects for a real settlement. At other times, the Foreign Ministry seemed to fall in step with the designs of the Japanese military, a tendency notably epitomized by the infamous Amau (Amō) Statement of 1934, which attempted to set forth a Japanese "Monroe Doctrine" arrogating Asian affairs to Japan and warning Western nations that Japan would not tolerate any Western material or moral support for the Nanjing regime.[63]

Alarmed that negotiations with the Nationalists would strengthen Nan-

jing's authority in north China, the Kwantung Army provoked a number of violent incidents in Hebei and Chahar provinces in late 1934 and early 1935 designed to embarrass both Nanjing and Tokyo. For its part, the Nanjing government, in dealing with these events, was hampered by the virulently anti-Chiang faction in Guangzhou, which continued to snipe at Chiang's efforts to find an accord with Japan. Chiang, distracted by his efforts to crush the Communist forces retreating on what became famous as the "Long March" in June 1935, authorized his minister of war, General He Yingqin, to enter into negotiations with the commander of the Tianjin Garrison, Lieutenant General Umezu Yoshijirō. The final agreement, on June 10, represented a capitulation of the Nationalists to Japanese demands on a grand scale: the withdrawal of all Kuomintang Party organs and all Nationalist military forces from Hebei Province entirely, not just from the demilitarized zone.

Although the He-Umezu accord provided the Tianjin Garrison Army with a freer hand in Hebei, the Kwantung Army, not to be outdone, now pressed for increased control in Chahar Province. This was part of a scheme promoted by Colonel Doihara Kenji of the Mukden Special Service organ to accelerate Japanese penetration of neighboring Inner Mongolia, which was to be organized into an "independent" puppet state to be called Mengukuo (Mengjian). Less than two weeks after the He-Umezu arrangement, Doihara made his move, presenting the new provincial governor, Qin Dechun, with a whole range of demands designed to put an end to Nanjing's military and political presence in Chahar. With Kwantung army units on his border and without any sign of rescue from Nanjing, Qin folded and signed the agreement with Doihara.

These two "agreements" of 1935 drastically undermined the prestige of the Nationalist government and, worse, weakened its government in north China.[64] Conversely, their divide-and-rule arrangements had given Japan a dominant position in north China, particularly in Hebei and Chahar provinces.[65] Encouraged by the ease with which they had forced the agreements on a nonresisting Nationalist regime, the Japanese field armies kept pushing along their provincial frontiers to pry them totally out of Nanjing's control. The various Japanese incursions after the humiliating accords of 1935 demonstrated to a widening circle of Chinese people that even acceptance of Manchukuo as an accomplished fact would not halt Japan's southward assault on China's borders. Such a realization contributed to the growing and ultimately explosive pressure for a change in Nanjing's policy toward Japan.

Aiding and abetting Japanese subversion and intimidation of Chinese officials in north China was a campaign of economic warfare carried out by the Japanese field armies in those provinces as part of a program to dominate the region economically as well as politically. One of the most

injurious elements of this effort was the smuggling of cheap goods into north China, particularly along the coast, in order to evade Chinese tariffs. Because the Nationalist government simply had too few men to staff its customs stations, this activity, which the Japanese euphemistically termed a "special trade," often flourished openly and brazenly. In Hebei Province, such smuggling was carried out with the tacit approval of the Kwantung Army. Not to be outdone in this shadowy enterprise, the Japanese navy gave protection to smuggling operations based in Taiwan and carried out on the south coast.[66]

This "special trade" had a number of serious consequences for China. It badly undermined the authority of the Nationalist government in those provinces where it was carried out. Just as serious, it substantially weakened Chinese customs revenues, which in previous years had provided the central government with almost half of its income.

Further, the smuggling trade injured legitimate business in north China. As a consequence, in a number of cases, failed Chinese businesses were quickly bought up by the Japanese, thus tightening Japan's economic grip on the region. With the weakening of Chinese economic institutions in north China, the Japanese military, particularly the North China Garrison Army, advanced schemes for the exploitation of the resources and markets of the region.[67]

Inevitably, these Japanese economic inroads added to the rising tide of anti-Japanese feeling in the country, heralded by a wave of protest in the Chinese press. In this popular crisis, Wang Jingwei, as foreign minister and chief of the Executive Yuan, took the brunt of public criticism, while Chiang Kai-shek endeavored to stay out of the spotlight. Only by threatening to resign, along with a number of other Kuomintang leaders, was Wang able to compel Chiang to share the burden of public anger at the current policy of appeasement. Then, in October 1935 after an attempt on his life, Wang was hospitalized and obliged to relinquish his governmental and party posts.

In this new situation Chiang was obliged to assume all public responsibility for the government's relations with Japan. Stubbornly, however, he clung to his policy of pacification before resistance.

For the time being, Chiang's ability to sustain this policy continued to rest on a careful balance of political interests in China, particularly with those lesser but powerful military figures, the regional warlords like Feng Yuxian and Yan Xishan. But among these Zhang Xueliang, still smarting over Chiang's decision not to contest the Japanese invasions of Manchuria and Jehol, was a potentially disruptive military figure. Recognizing this and seeking to forestall any rash move by Zhang to strike at the Japanese and create a conflict that Chiang could not control, Chiang appointed Zhang as chief of the anticommunist headquarters at Xi'an,

Henan Province. Chiang obviously believed that this assignment would both isolate Zhang and compel him to participate in Chiang's campaign against the Communists. It was to be a fateful and mistaken decision for Chiang Kai-shek, one that would make Zhang Xueliang a pivotal figure in the dramatic redirection of Chinese policy.

Throughout 1935 the two Japanese field armies in China continued their machinations, interference, and intimidation for the purpose of destabilizing Nationalist authority in north China and pressuring Chinese officials and regional warlords like Song Zheyuan to join in a Japanese-dominated autonomy movement. The chief instigator of these activities was Colonel Doihara of the Mukden Special Service organ. The range and audacity of the provocations of Doihara and his associates in the Kwantung Army were remarkable: the arrest of Kuomintang officials on Chinese territory (particularly in Peking and Tianjin) by Japanese military police; the Japanese demands that Nanjing suppress all anti-Japanese sentiments in the press throughout the country; unannounced, provocative flights by Japanese military aircraft over Peking and Tianjin; marshaling of large numbers of Japanese troops along the borders of Hebei Province; and a host of other lesser provocations. In these endeavors, the two Japanese field armies were blind to the realities and consequences of their actions. Convinced that they were themselves fighting Communism and corruption in China, they were, in fact, arousing hatred by the Chinese masses.[68]

If Doihara and his superiors had believed that these measures would soon bring about the collapse of Chinese resistance to Japanese efforts to dominate north China, they were soon disabused of that notion. By the end of 1935 their outrages had ignited a powder keg of public anger, the "National Salvation Movement," which found its voice in the burgeoning student demonstrations and massive protests calling for an end to China's civil war and for nationwide resistance to Japanese aggression. The scale and intensity of this national outburst had several important consequences. To begin with, although Chiang Kai-shek had drawn into his own hands unprecedented military and political power in the past half decade, his room for maneuver and accommodation in pursuit of his Fabian policy of delay toward Japan was now all but eliminated. Similarly, the regional warlords on China's northern borders fronting Japanese occupied territory no longer had the option of further concessions toward Japan, lest their own military forces rebel or defect.

For the Japanese, the spasm of Chinese national hostility came as a rude shock. The hard-line extremists in the Kwantung and North China Area armies were now confronted with the failure of their policy of manipulation and intimidation of regional Chinese military leaders to achieve Japanese domination of north China. Faced with the prospect of enormous street protests and newly obdurate Chinese regional leadership resisting

both threats and blandishments, Japanese field commanders now had to choose between abandoning their dreams of controlling north China through pliable Chinese clients or simply resorting to violence and crushing all Chinese resistance by force.

At this juncture—late November 1935—moderates in the Tokyo high command belatedly intervened to rein in the strong-arm strategies of Colonel Doihara and his colleagues in the field. Recognizing that his schemes and the provocative activities of the field armies had failed to achieve their purpose, the Army General Staff ordered them halted and recalled Doihara in semidisgrace. Taking advantage of this pause in Japanese pressure, Nanjing, after an intense round of negotiations with Japanese field commanders, worked out an arrangement that established a semiautonomous Hebei-Chahar Political Council, to be headed by Song Zheyuan; the council would retain a significant degree of Nationalist authority in the two provinces.

There were, as well, other developments that delayed the progress of Japanese belligerence in China. The first of these was the humiliating collapse of the Kwantung Army's territorial schemes. Throughout 1936, Japan had been able to exploit a string of minor but recurrent Chinese provocations for short-term tactical advantage, but to Japan's long-term strategic detriment.[69] Then, in November of that year, Kwantung Army adventurism in Inner Mongolia backfired. Trying once again to gain secure borders for Manchukuo, the Kwantung Army staff backed an anti-Chinese Inner Mongolian separatist movement. The Kwantung Army supplied a Mongolian prince with weapons, equipment, and Japanese advisers, expecting to carve out still another "autonomous region." Within a week, however, Nationalist forces smashed the invasion and drove the Japanese and their puppet forces ignominiously from Suiyuan. The Japanese government, humiliated by the reckless initiative of its field army, attempted to cover it up by denying any official Japanese involvement in the debacle.[70]

The Young Officers' Rebellion of 1936 and the Return to a Tokyo-Directed China Policy

Setbacks on the Asian continent were not the only elements altering the direction and pace of Japanese policy in China. Even more important was a sudden shift in early 1936 in the pattern of political and military power in Tokyo away from civilian and military extremists and back into the hands of less ideological and more cautious officers and officials. It is true that right-wing elements and disaffected company-grade officers in Japan staged a series of assassinations and attempted coups d'etat between 1931 and 1936. There is absolutely no evidence, however, that

such extremists were ever in any position of direct influence in the making of Japanese China policy by either the civilian government or the armed services during these tumultuous years. The established conservative order was too firmly established for that. But there were high-ranking officials, particularly in the army, who were known to bear sympathy toward their ideologically zealous subordinates and who, in order to advance their own careers and agendas, were ready to make their support overt should some dramatic occasion arise.

The denouement of this military radicalism was the 26 February 1936 Incident, a mutiny by radicalized officers of the army's First Division who occupied strategically located buildings near the Imperial Palace. Within a few days their hopes crumbled before the angry denunciations by the emperor and the obdurate hostility of the mainstream army leaders who suppressed the rebellion.[71] There followed a sweeping purge of the rebels' supporters and sympathizers within the army, particularly from among its higher echelons, opening the way for a takeover of key General Staff positions by officers committed to innovation, modernization, and renovation in the army. Henceforth, responsible officers and civilian officials—not wild-eyed ideologues, hot-headed junior officers, or the members of a single political party dictatorship—made major Japanese policy decisions regarding China from 1937 to 1945.[72] Nor, indeed, was Japanese military policy in China initiated by Japanese field armies, now kept under careful watch by the high command in Tokyo, though the Army Ministry and the Army General Staff were still rent by dissension and conflicting viewpoints about the China situation. In short, the suppression of the Young Officers' revolt did not steer Japan onto a collision course for war with China.

The Spring of 1937: The Redirection of Japan's China Policy and China's Turn to War

In the spring of 1937 a sudden and surprising shift came about in the strategic priorities of the Japanese army. The origins of the shift lay in the emergence in the mid-1930s of a powerful Soviet military presence in northeast Asia. This new development rapidly altered Japanese army perspectives on China. Some officers in the Tokyo high command, like Colonel Ishiwara, now argued for Japanese policies that encouraged, not thwarted, Chinese unity. In this new outlook, the former policy of divide and rule in north China was to be discarded and all sordid and selfish maneuverings and other acts of "imperialist aggression" in China avoided. Only by bringing China into a cooperative relationship through a policy of "benevolence" *(jinai)*, Ishiwara argued, could Japan really prepare for a confrontation with the Soviet Union.[73]

Others disagreed, of course. The army's senior leadership remained seriously divided over its China policy. Under Ishiwara's influence, the General Staff was persuaded of the need to avoid a full-scale war with China and to concentrate instead on a massive rearmament and modernization program as part of Japan's preparations against the Soviet Union. But there was a formidable group of hard-liners—on the General Staff (some located, ironically, in Ishiwara's Operations Division), in the Army Ministry, and in the Kwantung and China Garrison armies—that constituted a powerful and intransigent voice in the shaping of the army's China policy. These "hawks" had no compunction about using force against China and thought any "coddling" of China would be injurious to Japanese military prestige and would only encourage Chinese intransigence. Besides, they argued, if past experience was any guide, the Chinese would quickly collapse once actual fighting began.[74] Theirs was still a powerful and intransigent voice in the shaping of Japan's China policy.

Drafted principally by the General Staff, the army's latest war plans under the 1936 revision to national defense policy now viewed north China as a strategic rear area in the event of operations against the Soviet Union. It was assumed that as long as the Kuomintang remained weak and China divided, the prospects for full-scale war with the Nationalists were unlikely. To maintain that situation, it was critical that frictions and incidents with China be avoided if possible. If anti-Japanese outbreaks in north China did occur, the Tokyo high command wanted them contained. In early 1937, the General Staff had formally declared that its China policy was to be one of "promoting mutual assistance and co-prosperity" and of the abandonment of plans to separate north China from Nationalist control. For its part, the Army Ministry now called for the dissolution of the Japanese puppet regime in East Hebei.[75] Already, in March of the previous year, the cabinet of Prime Minister Hirota Kōki had adopted a conciliatory policy in its recognition of a unified China and its opposition to diplomatic coercion under the threat of military force.

One does not need to endow Hirota, Ishiwara, and other like-minded Japanese figures of influence and authority with an aura of overnight clairvoyance or benevolence to recognize that the new course they proposed was the only China policy—short of a sudden and complete abandonment of the Japanese presence in China—that retained even a shred of common sense in July of 1937. Whether the army's new obsession with the Soviet "threat" was also rational must be the subject of a different study. At all events, as Edward J. Drea makes clear in chapter 4, the Japanese Army's de-emphasis on preparations for the possibility of military operations in China was matched by a significant increase in Japanese troop strength along the Manchurian-Soviet border.

Even Japanese units in north China were instructed to undertake train-

ing programs directed toward a mastery of tactics deemed necessary to deal with the imminent possibility of operations against a Russian enemy. In this new perspective, to many in the Tokyo high command, a possible war with China was regarded as an irritating distraction, to be dealt with summarily since the Chinese were without military capability, but to be avoided if possible.

But in China, the pace of growing national fury at Japanese aggression had at last overtaken these belated Japanese steps to halt the slide to war. To a great extent, developments in China in 1936–1937 caused that nation's Japan policy to spin out of the hands of Chiang Kai-shek. True, Chiang still held as his central priority the consolidation of his power and the elimination of the Communists, the last overt challenge to his authority. From Chiang's perspective the National Salvation campaign and the demands for a frontal assault against the Japanese presence in China were dangerously premature. Though he was in no position to make further concessions affecting China's sovereignty, he could and did strike at those heading the national protest movement, arresting some and threatening others. Such repressive tactics only increased the fires of public anger. Ominously for Chiang, Zhang Xueliang and Yang Hucheng, appointed by Chiang as commanders of the anticommunist headquarters at Xi'an, now publicly voiced their support for the National Salvation Movement. Alarmed, Chiang Kai-shek flew to Xi'an in December 1936 to demand that Zhang and Yang support him in his final drive to wipe out the Communists in their remote base in Shanxi Province. But his two commanders had had enough. Their earlier efforts against the Communist enclave had failed, and they had less to fear from Chiang Kai-shek than they had from the furnace of national indignation.

Misjudging the situation, Chiang thus walked into a hornet's nest. Arriving in Xi'an, he was suddenly arrested by his two hosts, who presented him with a number of demands before he could be set free. Chief among these was Chiang's public support for the National Salvation Movement, an end to the civil war against the Communists, and the redirection of Nanjing's Japan policy toward national resistance. With little choice, Chiang agreed to these terms. Zhang Xueliang set Chiang free, released news of the agreement, and accompanied Chiang back to Nanjing to the tumultuous acclaim of cheering crowds. For its part, the National Salvation Association welcomed Chiang's return to power and joined with the Communist Party in calling for a united front against the Japanese occupier.

The die was now cast, though the Japanese may have been slow to realize it. The tug-of-war between Tokyo and Nanjing over north China appeared no longer amenable to negotiation or compromise. It is hard to see how war could have been avoided in 1937, or at least within the next several years. In this there is great and tragic irony. The tragedy in the drift

to war in China and Japan in the spring of 1937 is that of an incongruence in the perceptions and timing of the policies of the two countries. While Japan, for reasons that may have been entirely self-interested and delusional, was prepared now to moderate its near half century of aggression in China, its change of attitude was a half century too late. The Nationalist regime, understandably endowed with fifty years of indignation, now began to assume an increasingly adamantine, vengeful, and uncompromising stand against Japan.[76] The spark set off outside Peking on the night of 7 July1937 was much like those numerous minor military frictions in the Sino-Japanese relationship in the past that had been quickly extinguished through negotiation. But this time it could not be doused through compromise, and, fanned by the national determination of an aroused people, it burst into flame.