

Introduction: The Context of the War

DIANA LARY

The Unknown War

Lukouqiao, Xuzhou, Kunlunquan—these are names of legendary battles in China, battles as critical in the conflicts that gripped the world in the late 1930s and the 1940s as Dieppe, Stalingrad, or El Alamein. Zhang Zizhong, Tang Enbo, He Long, Bai Chongxi—these are names of Chinese generals whose achievements during the China War or War of Resistance (1937–45) were on a par with those of Montgomery or Patton in the European and North African theaters.

These names of battles and generals are unknown to most Westerners—as unknown as is the war in Asia itself. The Asian names that Westerners do recognize from the war in Asia—Singapore, Bataan, Iwo Jima, Hiroshima—are places where Westerners were involved and are from parts of Asia other than China. A few Japanese figures from the period have widely recognizable names—Hirohito, Yamamoto, Tojo—but on the Chinese side only the names of the national leaders, Chiang Kai-shek and his nemesis Mao Zedong, are well-known. And yet the all-out war that started in China with the Japanese invasion in 1937 and lasted until 1945 was the longest conflict of any in the warfare that then engulfed the world—World War II.

The War of Resistance was marked by cataclysmic battles, involving up to half a million men on each side. The war inflicted terrible casualties on China: soldiers killed or injured on the battlefield, and civilians killed in atrocities, bombing raids, and natural disasters. The casualties were on so enormous a scale that there could be no accurate count, though figures for total casualties of between 20 million and 30 million are widely used. This carnage is scarcely known to a world in which the Holocaust, the deaths in civilian bombing, and the Stalingrad siege are only a few of the well-known horrors of the European War. The Pacific War is known in terms of civilian casualties, above all for the bombings of Japan that ended it.

The Nanjing Massacre (1937) that came at the very beginning of the China War is now known, but not the fact that, horrible as it was, it was only one of many mass killings of civilians during the war in China.

This book is not focused on these atrocities, but neither is it an attempt to diminish or ignore them. It is instead designed to provide a regional context, to understand the situation in China in which they occurred.

Versions of the War

In a war between two countries, at least two versions of the war are guaranteed—that of the victors and that of the vanquished. They are often so different that they might not be accounts of the same events. In the case of the China War, there are multiple, conflicting versions, making the search for the truth of what actually happened during the war enormously challenging.

Within the polarized Chinese world, conflicting accounts of the war were inevitable from the start, given the widely differing experiences of the war. These conflicting accounts have been perpetuated by the still-unresolved political divisions that followed the war. The Communist interpretation is triumphalist, a history of courageous guerrilla warfare that championed nationalism, won mass support amongst the peasantry of north China, and paved the way for the Communist takeover of China in 1949. The war transformed the Communists from a tiny band of almost defeated rebels into a mass movement.¹ The Guomindang version is more muted, a story of courage and endurance through long years of Japanese assault and of efforts undermined by Communist “disloyalty” to the Chinese government. Beyond these two national-level versions are many regional and local ones—though until recently none of these were reflected in the writing of Chinese historians, given the hegemony of the two national-level discourses.

Japanese historians are deeply divided about interpretations of the war, between those willing to deal with all aspects of the war, including atrocities, and those who may be described as “atrocities deniers,” who see Japan’s major fault in having lost the war, not in its conduct of it. Producing a single overall narrative out of the pain of defeat and the recognition of atrocities committed by the Imperial Army is still impossible. Japanese historiography is distinguished by meticulous documentary research, and this careful research may come to outweigh issues of interpretation.

In the United States, the dominant accounts of the China War are of Americans—Joseph Stilwell, the Flying Tigers, the Doolittle Raiders—who served in China after the start of the Pacific War, by which time China had been at war for four years. This is still better than the coverage

of the China War in Europe, where there has been no recognizable version of that war, ethnocentric or otherwise. European historians have been almost silent on the China War, perhaps because it was part of the conflict in Asia that led to what was for Europe a more momentous happening, the demise of three empires in Asia—the British (with the exception of a toehold in Hong Kong), the French, and the Dutch. The focus for European historians has been on the fate of their colonies and on decolonization, not on the war that preceded it. Individual episodes of the war in Asia have been studied exhaustively—the Fall of Singapore, and the Chindits—but none of these episodes concerns China.

The old, conflicting versions of the war, within the Chinese world and in Japan, are beginning to give way to versions that are far less narrow and partisan. A new generation of historians is emerging, on both sides of the Taiwan Strait and in Japan, whose interest is not in a general, self-serving interpretation of the war, but in finding out what actually happened; the watchword for many Chinese historians is the one that emerged at the start of the current reforms in the early 1980s: “seeking truth from facts.” The 1980s in China saw the start of an era in which history, academic and popular, has flourished. The new history of the war deals with uplifting topics—resistance, endurance, courage, heroism—and with painful ones—atrocities, collaboration, defeat. It involves the reinstatement in the historical record of figures whose names have been anathema since the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) came to power in 1949. Chiang Kai-shek is now the subject of scholarly research, as are many other leading figures from the Guomindang. The biography sections of the huge new bookstores that are a feature of China’s urban landscape contain large numbers of biographies of men whose names could once not be spoken aloud. Even people who collaborated with the Japanese, such as Pu Yi and De Wang, are now suitable subjects for discussion and research. The one person who remains in the shadows is Wang Jingwei, his crimes of collaboration so awful that understanding is still premature.

The expansion and rewriting of national history have coincided with a revival of interest in regional history. In the Mao era, regionalism was equated with feudalism, and the study of regional history was discouraged. But official disapproval of regionalism and regional identities, in a country as vast as China, did not destroy them; they were only submerged. In the past two decades, regional history has flourished in many parts of China, alongside the revival of regional identities, regional cuisines, and regional dialects.

The combination of new historical writing and regional revival has had a major effect on discussion of the war in China. Our understanding of the war is becoming more detailed, more complex, and less universal.

The regionalized nature of the experience of the war is now very clear: though almost every part of China suffered during the eight years of warfare, the impact of the war was distributed unevenly. Some regions were horribly damaged by warfare; others survived it almost unscathed. Some regions were covered in glory as places where resistance was strong; others were covered in shame because of the extent of collaboration with occupying forces. Some places became synonymous with horror (Nanjing above all); others suffered little violence from Japanese forces. Remote regions, and places far from urban centers, suffered little direct impact. Places that came under full Japanese control early in the war suffered less than others that were devastated by fighting and by Japanese reprisals against opposition. Some provinces, especially on the North China Plain, were devastated by natural disasters associated with the war, such as the breaching of the Yellow River dykes at Huayankou (1938) and the North China famine (1941–43).

The Origins of the War

Searching for the origins of a war puts one in danger of looking for a straightforward, mechanical chain of causation, making war seem inevitable. In reality wars are seldom inevitable, up until the last minute when the aggressor makes the actual decision to open fire. In the case of the China War, the movement toward war was tortuous and dragged out over a long period; though its outbreak was predicted for many years before it actually happened, the slowness of the process, and the strengthening of Chinese resistance, made the attack in July 1937 quite shocking.

The general background to the China War lay in the rise of Japan from the start of the Meiji Restoration in the 1860s as it endeavored to become the major power in Asia and the parallel decline of China from the dying decades of the Qing dynasty. What looked in retrospect like a specific causal chain of events started forty years before the China War's outbreak, with the Sino-Japanese War (1894–95), in which Japan won the island of Taiwan and a substantial position in northeast China—a position that was much strengthened ten years later after the Russo-Japanese War. Victories in two wars fueled a sense of destiny in Japan for future expansion out of the home islands.

The 1911 Xinhai Revolution ushered in the fragmentation of China under warlord rule. For four years Yuan Shikai maintained a semblance of central control, but after 1916 China had no effective central government. This period coincided with the effective withdrawal of the West from East Asia, in the throes of the First World War, and the rapid growth of Japanese involvement in China, in terms of commercial, industrial, and infrastruc-

ture investment, especially in Manchuria, Shandong, Shanghai, and Tianjin. Japan saw itself increasingly as an imperial power, the Asian imperial power, moving toward and then beyond the status of one of the Western imperial powers. By 1910 it already held Taiwan and Korea. Further expansion seemed inevitable to many of those who held power in Japan.

In China the lack of internal unity and the inability to act as a nation, even to protect itself from foreign aggression, fomented political agitation and facilitated the rise of nationalism. Some of this nationalism was captured by the Guomindang, led by Sun Yat-sen, which had its roots in Guangdong and in overseas Chinese communities. Sun died in 1925, but in 1926 the revolutionary forces he inspired in the south launched the Northern Expedition, a campaign to fulfill his vision of the reunification of the nation. The process of reunification was only partially achieved by the Guomindang's advent of power in 1928. Nanjing did not control substantial parts of the country, which were still in the hands of regional militarists. Nor had Nanjing wiped out the Communist Party, which showed remarkable resilience against tremendous pressure and, after the Long March (1934–35), had a secure base in the northwest.

The national government in Nanjing knew from the start of its rule in 1928 that it had to strengthen and unite the country, first to fulfill the mandate of the revolution, and then to resist Japanese encroachment on further parts of China besides the colony of Taiwan and the informal empire in the three northeastern provinces constituting Manchuria. Reunification and strengthening of China were not what Japan wanted to see. Japan counted on China's continuing weakness to allow its further expansion there; if the Chinese central government became stronger, this would compromise and perhaps foil Japanese ambitions.

Even before the establishment of the Nanjing regime, Japan had made it clear that it would intervene whenever it felt its interests were threatened. Early in 1928 Japanese troops in Shandong forced the Nationalist armies that were marching north toward Beijing to throw out the last of the warlord governments to stay out of the provincial capital, Jinan, by killing Chiang Kai-shek's emissaries there (the Jinan Incident). The Guomindang (literally) sidestepped this challenge by diverting their armies to the west around Jinan. It was clear that further Japanese challenges would come soon, and that they would not be easily avoided.

The first major test of Nanjing's growing strength and unity came in 1931, when Japan launched its campaign to take over Manchuria. The takeover was easy for Japan and devastating for China. The loss of Manchuria was doubly disturbing for China: not only was China too weak to defend its own territory, but the Western powers were not going to intervene to limit Japan's ambitions. From 1931 on, it was clear that Japan was

building up for an all-out assault on China, but even the very public recognition of this menace did not stimulate the unity that China so desperately needed.

Nationalism suffused student, intellectual, artistic, and even business life in the early 1930s. Patriotic national salvation organizations sprang up throughout the country, most of them with their own journals. Underground resistance developed in occupied Manchuria (renamed *Manzhouguo*). Merchants organized boycotts against Japanese goods. The whole country cheered on the soldiers of the 19th Route Army in their valiant resistance against the Japanese invasion of Shanghai in 1932. The commander in the battle, Cai Tingkai, became a national hero, and achieved one of the highest honors in a nation of smokers—he had a brand of cigarettes named after him. But this nationalism was not enough to save the nation. China faced two immutable obstacles. The first was that there was little international sympathy for China. When China took its case over Manchuria to the League of Nations, the league did rule in China's favor, but did nothing to enforce its ruling. The second, and much more dismal, obstacle was that regardless of how individual nationalist regional power holders may have felt, they were not prepared to surrender their autonomy to Nanjing.

Chiang Kai-shek's efforts to unify the country, on the principle of "first unify the country, then resist the outsiders" (*anwei rangwai*), met with some success, but not enough to put the country in a state in which it could resist invasion. He still did not control many parts of China, he did not enjoy the respect of many of China's most talented military and civilian figures, and the Communists were still not defeated. Nor was it enough to silence Chiang's many critics who saw him as weak in his defense of the nation. In December 1936 Chiang was kidnapped at Xi'an and forced, after his release, to set up a united front, which pitted all Chinese against the Japanese.

This move was enough to cause concern in Japan that the day might not be far off when China could resist an invasion. Japan's decision to launch an all-out invasion in 1937 may be seen as a decision to act before China got any stronger, before the fragmentation that had facilitated Japan's earlier incursions was reversed. It may also be seen as a concern on the part of the Japanese government for Japan's massive investments in China, which were threatened by the rising tide of nationalism and the anti-Japanese boycotts it produced. Whatever the immediate cause of the 1937 invasion, Japan had, during the 1930s, amassed a huge military machine, armed with the latest weapons and supported by highly effective naval and air forces. The invasion aroused a tidal wave of nationalism in China. Anguished Chinese poured out onto the streets of unoccupied cities and towns. Demonstrations were held in overseas Chinese communities around the world. But

nationalism alone could not save China. Though Chinese armies in central China fought with enormous courage against the Japanese, they were too poorly equipped to fight off the invader, and without an effective air force or navy, they were unable to match the Japanese in the two areas that had become critical in modern warfare.

Regional Divisions and the War

The fragmentation of the prewar period continued and intensified after the war started. The varying wartime experiences in the different regions were shaped in part by their different prewar situations. The wide range of variation in how the different regions experienced Japanese occupation means that the war itself has left very different memories in different parts of China.

THE EARLY OCCUPIED AREAS

The regions² that came earliest under Japanese rule—Taiwan (1895) and the three provinces of Manchuria, Liaoning, Jilin, and Heilongjiang (1931)—were completely outside Chinese control for the duration of the war. There was sporadic resistance to Japanese control in these regions, but the efficiency of the Japanese administration and the lack of any real contacts to Free China, with its capital in remote Chongqing, meant that in most cases the resistance was ineffective. Those who really opposed the Japanese fled from the early occupied areas.

These regions suffered from the war, not from its direct impact but from having young men drafted, from economic exploitation, and from colonial repression. They emerged from the war in better economic shape than any other part of China, but were deeply divided from other parts by the experience of occupation, one that, in the case of Taiwan, had lasted for fifty years and almost severed the island's connections to China.

LATER OCCUPIED AREAS

The regions occupied after the war started in 1937 (and Chahar³ and parts of Hebei, which had passed out of effective Chinese control in 1935) were under Japanese rule for eight years. There was no standard experience. Some areas were horribly damaged, but others were relatively unscathed.

The great cities of northern and central China, Beijing, Tianjin, and Shanghai, all had long experience of Japanese commercial involvement and had large resident Japanese populations. Beijing and Tianjin had not developed close relations with Nanjing after the removal of the capital from

Beijing in 1928. The move had brought the city to its knees, plunging it into a prolonged crisis as it lost its *raison d'être*: government. Tianjin, as a commercial city, was less affected by the move south of the government—but neither did the city have any real connections to Nanjing. The two cities were never fully brought under Nanjing's control. They were occupied in 1937 without much resistance either from Chinese armies or from the local population. The occupation sat quite lightly on these cities. The Japanese rulers went out of their way not to disturb the cities and were rewarded with a gloomy acceptance of their presence. The arrival of the Japanese in fact gave a measure of hope to some Beijing people who had never done anything but work in government and now saw a chance to make new “careers” working for the Japanese.

The provincial cities in the northern region also slipped quite easily into Japanese control. Between 1928 and the outbreak of war, the northern provincial regions had come under only partial Guomindang control, residual warlordism and regionalism were strong, and the attachment to the national capital in Nanjing was slight. Most were run by militarists who had been, before the war, *de facto* independent of Nanjing, men such as Yan Xishan in Shanxi or Han Fuju in Shandong.

The Shanghai situation was more complicated, since only parts of the city were under Chinese control in 1937. These parts were occupied by the Japanese, at great cost to the Chinese armies who fought doggedly for them, in late 1937, and much of the city remained under foreign control until the start of the Pacific War in late 1941. Before the occupation, the Japanese were already entrenched in Shanghai, and they had extensive commercial and political capital there. This existing position meant that, as in Beijing and Tianjin, they experienced little difficulty in establishing their authority there. Those who opposed them either were defeated (the Chinese armies) or fled (Chinese civilians), in hundreds of thousands, into the interior of China.

The situation in the occupied areas outside the major cities and towns of north China was very different from that in the big cities. Most of the provinces of northern, eastern, and central China (Hebei, Chahar, Henan, Shandong, Anhui, Jiangsu, Zhejiang, Hubei, Hunan, and Jiangxi) came under Japanese occupation in 1937 and 1938.⁴ These provinces felt a heavy impact from the war. In many areas of China north of the Yangzi (Hebei, Chahar, Henan, Shandong, Northern Anhui, and Northern Jiangsu), armed resistance continued throughout the war. Sometimes this was carried out by regular army units (Guomindang and Communist) stationed in large pockets of unoccupied territory; at other times the dominant form of warfare was guerrilla activity (Guomindang, Communist, and autonomous) behind the lines. The Japanese controlled only the cities and towns, the

zones immediately around them, and the zones along the railway lines and roads. They did not control the countryside.

This was the railway politics of the earlier warlord period in an extreme form, in which warlords fought almost exclusively for the control of railway lines and junctions. Control of the railways was supremely important. The flat plains in north China enabled the power that controlled the railways almost complete freedom of movement. The main railway lines formed an A shape, with two north-south lines connected by the east-west bar of the Longhai Railroad Line. The region's waterways, most of them not navigable, ran west to east; the north-south Grand Canal had fallen into disuse.⁵ The only feasible way to travel in the region was by rail. The Japanese might not hold much of the region, but they did dominate its modern economy, its commerce, its cultural world, and its transport.

Throughout the war, Chinese guerrillas and regular armies continued to resist. This resistance provoked frequent, savage reprisals from the Japanese. The provinces on the North China Plain, always poor, suffered terrible economic deprivation caused by the dislocation of war. A huge area of Henan, Anhui, and Jiangsu was devastated by the Guomintang's last desperate defensive strategy in 1938, the opening of the Yellow River dykes and the creation of a massive flood. From 1941 to 1942, a hideous famine gripped much of the area with as many casualties—two to three million—as the Bengal famine, which occurred almost at the same time.

The Japanese occupiers of north China found collaborators in the main cities and were able to buy over a large number of Chinese soldiers who came to be known as "puppet troops," but their control was uncertain. The people of these regions paid a very heavy price for the incompleteness of Japanese control that led to a continuous process of reprisals and savage punishments meted out to those who were deemed by the Japanese to harbor "bandits" who attacked the Japanese and their puppets. In terms of civilian victims, the occupied areas of north China suffered more than any other part of the country.

In the central China provinces (Southern Jiangsu, Southern Anhui, Zhejiang, Jiangxi, Hubei, and Hunan), the former heartland of the Guomintang, Japanese control of the towns and cities was established through terror. The Rape of Nanjing, China's capital, in December 1937 made it clear to the populations in occupied areas that resistance was pointless. The Japanese relied heavily on collaborationist regimes such as Wang Jingwei's Nanjing government, but it was always clear that these regimes had no independence at all. Away from the cities there were large, strong Guomintang and Communist armies, stationed in the hills north and south of the Yangzi. These armies (the Guomintang units under Li Zongren, and the Communist New Fourth Army) were never defeated by

the Japanese. For the regions under Japanese occupation, the legacy of the war was a devastating one—a huge number of casualties, major economic damage, and a society divided between those with varying degrees of collaboration.

THE UNOCCUPIED AREAS

The mountain regions of northwest China were only partially occupied by the Japanese. In Shanxi, the prewar overlord Yan Xishan held on to partial power—he lost his capital, Taiyuan, and the eastern parts of the province—but remained as independent of the Guomindang government as he had been before the war. Yan had uncanny staying power, which kept him dominant in his province for more than thirty years.

The base areas were chiefly in north China. They expanded rapidly after the declaration of the Second United Front in 1937 and during the war. They brought to north China new systems of government and economic management that helped train a network of dedicated cadres who were to play critical roles in the struggle for national unity. The society of the main base in Yan'an, just west of Yan Xishan in Shaanxi, was greatly admired by many of the foreign journalists who visited there, and that admiration was continued in some of the scholarly writing. Current views tend to be more sober.

Given the often primitive conditions under which the base areas operated, there was quite little communication between cadres in different base areas. The general principles of socialism were understood, but there were considerable flexibility and variation as to how these principles were applied in different base areas.

The Communists had arrived at the major base area around Yan'an in 1935, at the end of the Long March, entering a province that had little connection with the Guomindang and where the main armed forces had been Manchurian troops evicted from Manchuria in 1931. Yan'an was the headquarters for the extensive guerrilla operations launched by the Communists against Japanese positions in Shanxi and further east. For both provinces, the war years were hard in material terms, but not psychologically depressing, because there was always the feeling that a real war was being waged and that the guerrilla tactics were effective in eating away at Japanese power. The Yan'an myth has dominated Communist versions of the war, at the cost of other Communist units that served at least as important a role—notably, the New Fourth Army in unoccupied areas of central China.⁶

Further into the northwest, the provinces of Gansu, Suiyuan, Qinghai, Xinjiang, Xikang, and Tibet passed through the war with little direct involvement, existing in varying degrees of autonomy from any external

control, either Chinese or Japanese. Though the first three were on the route to China's wartime ally, the Soviet Union, the land route was not sufficient to undermine the patterns of autonomy that had developed in these regions since the fall of the Qing dynasty. Chongqing did not make much headway, but neither did the Japanese. Only in the northern province of Inner Mongolia was the Japanese presence strong. There, the Mongol leader De Wang used the decline of Chinese control that predated the war as a pretext for asserting a strong ethnic movement of autonomy, though his reliance on Japanese aid to promote his Pan-Mongol movement led to his being labeled as a collaborator by Chongqing.

Much of the southern and western interior of China was never occupied by the Japanese. The provinces of Sichuan, Guizhou, Yunnan, and Xikang were known collectively as Free China, governed from the wartime capital at Chongqing. These regions became the bastions of Guomindang control, and they contributed hugely to the war effort, providing great numbers of soldiers, housing floods of refugees, and stretching their resources to the limit. There was no direct fighting in these regions, though the cities of Sichuan were visited frequently by Japanese bombers, which wreaked massive destruction. The provinces were also devastated by the economic fallout of the war, especially by the rampant inflation that accompanied the war, as the Chongqing government tried to fight a war after the loss of all the richest economic regions of China.

None of these regions had been properly incorporated under Guomindang rule before the outbreak of the war, and this meant that for some of them the war was the first time in recent memory that the state's power had reached so far. For many of the local leaders, who had relished their autonomy, it felt like an occupation—not by the Japanese but by the Chinese central government. There was also a general lack of enthusiasm for the war amongst local peoples, as the numbers and the demands of the in-comers escalated, and as conscription and inflation started to have a major impact.

PARTIALLY OCCUPIED AREAS

Parts of south China were occupied by the Japanese in 1938, including the key city of Guangzhou, and there were later Japanese campaigns into the south, but Japanese rule in the south was not as consistent or as harsh as that experienced in north and central China. Hong Kong fell at the very end of 1941, at the start of the Pacific War.

These southernmost provinces of Guangdong and Guangxi had been effectively autonomous of Nanjing throughout the Nanjing decade. When the war came, they rallied to the national cause and paid a huge price for their commitment. The war damage to Guangdong was less from military conflict itself than from the economic devastation that accompanied the

fighting, especially the loss of international trade and the loss of connections to the overseas communities whose homeland was Guangdong. Hong Kong's economy, already weakened by the collapse of world trade, declined still further, its population dramatically diminished as many of its inhabitants fled inland to unoccupied parts of Guangdong.

Guangxi suffered different kinds of losses. The province sent almost half a million men to fight in the north, and their absence was keenly felt. Other losses came from incessant Japanese bombing raids and from the 1944 invasion of the province. The poor province got even poorer. However, the influx of educated and highly skilled refugees was a boon to the province and brought it into the modern world.

Another southeastern province, Fujian, was less directly affected by the war than most other provinces, with only its major ports falling into Japanese hands, but its economy was destroyed by the virtual severing of ties to the huge communities of Fujian overseas Chinese living in Southeast Asia, and by the collapse of the tea trade.

Fragmentation and Scars

The de facto division of China into so many different regions underlines the fact that there was no functioning nationwide system of government during the war, but instead a series of discrete regimes whose shape and size often changed. The Guomindang claimed legitimacy as the rightful government of China, and it had some successes with this claim, in terms of international recognition and of the establishment of new national organizations, such as the Southwest United University (Xinan lianda), composed of the faculty and students from the major universities in occupied China. The Japanese, by contrast, never managed to establish the legitimacy of the regimes they sponsored (Manzhouguo and the Wang Jingwei government). Though they controlled most of the means of communication and all the major eastern, central, and southern cities, their control was often threatened by guerrilla activities. They found that governing China was much harder than conquering it. The CCP held numerous base areas in north and east China, but the bases had little contact with each other, and often pursued quite different policies.

Some national-level civilian organizations survived the division of China, notably the postal services, which kept going through thick and thin. Foreign-run institutions, such as businesses, missionary organizations, schools, and universities, managed to maintain ties on both sides of the front lines until the end of 1941 and the internment of all non-Axis Westerners. This sketch of the regionalized nature of the war in China gives only a glimpse of the varying impact of the war, but the variation should

not obscure the overwhelming fact that all of China suffered terribly from the war, and that it was a dismal and terrifying period with very little beyond the courage and endurance of the Chinese people to edify it. It may have been called the Great Patriotic War of Resistance, which it certainly was, but it extracted an enormous cost from which China is still recovering.⁷ The wounds of war are slow to heal; they leave deep scars. More than half a century after the end of the Second World War, its scars still seem fresh. In Europe and North America, a steady stream of films, novels, and academic studies keeps the war alive. In China, an upsurge in interest in the War of Resistance over the past two decades reveals that the wounds of that war are not healed.

So far, our knowledge of what happened in the regions of China during one of the nation's greatest crises is spotty and episodic. Our aim here is to provide accounts that help to establish what actually happened. We look at regions under direct Japanese control (Manchuria, Taiwan, Shanghai, Jiangsu, and Shandong), at regions that came only under partial Japanese control (Mongolia, Henan, and Jiangxi), and at regions that were never occupied or only occupied late in the war (Sichuan and Guangxi). The accounts are written by Chinese, Japanese, and Western scholars. This is not a comprehensive list. We have not covered some of the major cities (Beijing, Tianjin, and Guangzhou), or Hong Kong, which was occupied only in late 1941. We do not cover the Communist base areas, which have already been studied in great detail.⁸ And we do not cover all of the provinces. We have tried to lay a framework for more comprehensive study. What we do have is a range of accounts that show how different the experience of the war was in the various regions of China—and how varied were the damages done to China by eight years of occupation.

Notes

1. This version has been accepted in the West by some historians. See Chalmers Johnson, *Peasant Nationalism and the Rise of Communist Power* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1962).

2. We discuss the regions of China largely within the rubric of provinces. Though provincial boundaries changed, and though they did not always overlap with military or economic regions, they usually constituted administrative entities and were the most important unit of shared regional identities.

3. Extensive redrawing of provincial lines after 1949 took the provincial names Chahar, Xikang, and Suiyuan off the map.

4. The southern parts of Hunan and Jiangxi were not occupied until several years later.

5. Kenneth Pomeranz, *The Making of a Hinterland: State, Society and Economy in Inland North China, 1853–1937* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993).

6. Gregor Benton, *New Fourth Army: Communist Resistance along the Yangtze and the Huai, 1938–1941* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999).

7. Diana Lary and Stephen MacKinnon, eds., *Scars of War: The Impact of Warfare on Modern China* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 2001).

8. See Feng Chaoyi and David Goodman, eds., *North China at War: The Social Ecology of Revolution, 1937–1945* (Lanham, Md.: Rowman & Littlefield, 2000), and Chen Yung-fa, *Making Revolution: The Communist Movement in Eastern and Central China* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1986).