

Japanese Occupation of China and Sino-Japanese War 1937-1945

Sources: China 1900-1976, Stewart;

Key points to ponder:

Japan's motives

How Japanese encroachment increased national identity in China

Who gained - GMD or CCP

Relations with the USSR (again)

Role of the US

JAPAN AND CHINA 1931-1937 - not examined

Prior to this period, Japan had made solid inroads into China:

1915 Japan's 21 Demands

1919 gaining the German Concessions in Shandong

Much control in Manchuria with The Old Marshall seen as a pro-Japanese warlord.

Increasing anti Japanese sentiment as China is unified under the GMD.

Japan's economy suffering with global economic slowdown in 1929, makes Manchuria an attractive target, rich in minerals and arable land.

Led to the **Mukden Incident (1931)** where the Japanese commander in Korea sent troops to Manchuria to team up with Japanese army units already there to take final control from China.

Chiang Kai Shek (Jiang Jieshi) could not hold back Japan - he was busy trying to control the CCP - so ordered his general (by now the Young Marshall) to retreat to behind the Great Wall. Japan set up Manchukuo.

China appealed to the League of Nations who agreed that Japan should not have sovereignty. Japan walked out of the League of Nations and carried on intimidating China on its own soil.

Japan attacked Shanghai in 1932, with air raids and sea attacks. A war ensued costing \$1.3bn. International outrage brought a truce. Japan did not gain Shanghai but tightened its hold on Manchuria.

Japan continued to make ground in China.

The Treaty of Tanggu 1933 handed control of Manchuria formally to Japan.

1935 Chiang agreed to remove all Chinese troops from Hebei province.



This led to the Xi'An incident (see other notes). NB Stewart thinks the the reason Jiang (Chiang) wasn't killed was due to Soviet influence as the USSR thought Jiang was the person China would mobilise behind against the Japanese. Ie he was the best known figurehead.

THE OUTBREAK OF WAR with JAPAN 1937

This war is hugely significant on the world stage:

1. It can be said to be the first war of the 2nd World War
2. It led to the CCP gaining control of China
3. It led to the US being involved in WW2 and thus aided the defeat of Japan and Germany

Why war now? Japan continues to want to dominate North-East China but, now, Chiang (Jiang) will not make any more concessions (he has agreed to the Second United Front and its focus is Japan).

Summer 1937 Marco Polo Bridge Incident - of the **Double Seventh Incident** - 10 miles west of Beijing Chinese and Japanese troops clash whilst on night exercise. 26th July, China was given an ultimatum to withdraw all forces from Beijing, Japan attacked neighbouring towns killing every civilian in Donzhou.

China sends troops North.

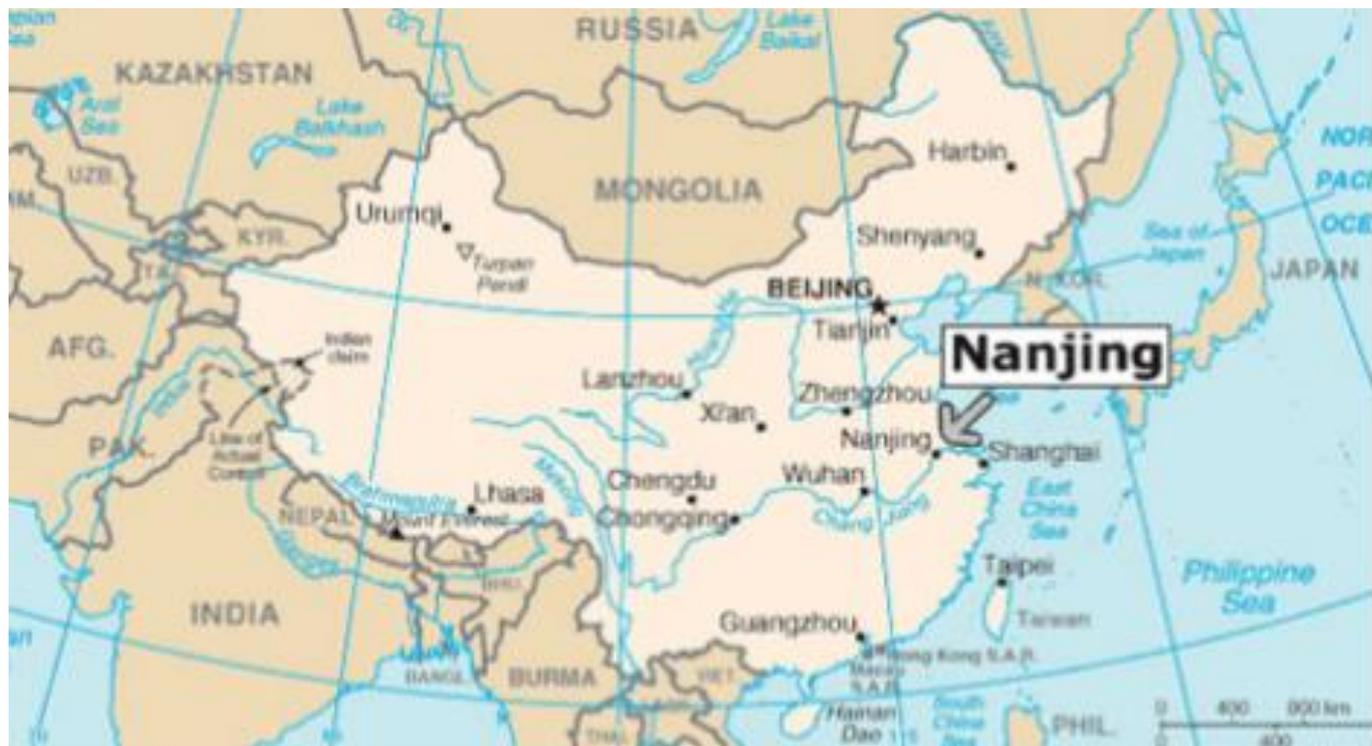
Jiang, instead of giving concessions announces 'the limits of endurance have been reached'; Zhou Enlai for the Communists attend a National Conference to discuss the situation and Mao declares 'resistance from the whole nation'.

Jiang decides to attack the Japanese in **Shanghai. August - November 1937**

Note that Jiang's best German trained troops were in Shanghai.

He decided to attack Japanese ships by air but due to a typhoon instead hit Shanghai killing many civilians and devastating the French quarter.

Bitter fighting led to 250,000 Chinese losses and 40-70,000 Japanese. Both sides much worse hit than expected BUT Japanese air supremacy saw the Chinese withdraw, preparing to blockade any advance on **Nanjing (the current capital)**



The Rape of Nanjing - December 1937- January 1938

The Chinese could not hold Nanjing and fled to Wuhan, leaving just 90,000 troops to defend the city.

13th December the Japanese entered Nanjing and committed as many atrocities as one can imagine. Men and women - regardless of age - children and babies were tortured, mutilated, killed. No final numbers have been agreed on but 300,000 people may have lost their lives. The Japanese have never fully accepted the horrors of this time.

(The Rape of Nanking: The Forgotten Holocaust of WW2 - Iris Chang)

Japanese advance

Fighting continued, Japan made ground from the North and up the Yangtze (Chang Jiang) Valley, aiming for Wuhan. See map.

There was a small victory under the well organised Li Zongren but few and far between.

In 1938, Jiang ordered the dams holding the Yellow River (Huang He) to be blown.

See map....Yellow River is above the Yangtze so aim was to hold back the attack from the North.

It was successful in this regard but it was done without warning and 4000 villages were flooded, leaving thousands drowned.

This policy of 'scorched earth' was played out many times in China with the GMD retreating but destroying assets as they left so as to leave nothing for the Japanese. This may have been tactically sound but highlighted how badly the GMD were doing and increased **domestic distrust of the GMD**.

Wuhan falls in October, Canton (Guangzhou) too. Jiang now has no trading ports under his control.

BUT no surrender, he retreats to Chongqing.

The Russian Angle

Stalin sent planes to help Jiang and the Nationalists in 1938. Why does he help the Nationalists when he wants to spread Communism with the CCP?

There were also clashes on the Manchurian border with Russia with Russian Red Army forces. This did little to slow the Japanese advance in the short term but, particularly the situation in Manchuria, is important.

Japan had signed an anti-Comintern (anti-Russian) Pact with Germany and Italy in 1936 and thus was provocative in these Red Army interactions. Japan was hoping to be key in an attack on Russia from Asia. Japan was defeated in these initial fights and again in 1939. At this point, Japan reconsidered its Russian strategy.

But Japan cannot consolidate its gains

Japan tries to consolidate via 'puppet' regimes like in Manchuria, partially successful in Nanjing and Inner Mongolia. They never take over China entirely nor oust Jiang from Chongqing.

When US attacks Japan in 1941, 34 out of 50 Japanese fighting divisions are in China hence their China strategy had a negative impact on their outcome in WW2.

What about China - by 1938....

China is left without unity once again.

The Nationalists (GMD) is based in Chongqing

Japan controls chunks of North and East China and continues sporadic attacks.

CCP is based in Shaanxi (NB whilst the Yanan years are cited as 1935-45, the CCP leadership moved there in 1937. The Sino-Japan war is 1937-1945 which are the key years for Mao to consolidate power. Jiang is pre-occupied and has been 'put in charge' of the Second United Front against Japan after the Xian Incident 1936)

The CCP during the Sino-Japan War

These years, as noted above, were a time of growth and consolidation for Mao and CCP.

From 1937-1945 the party's membership grew from 40,000 to 1.2 million

From 1937-1945, the Red Army grew from 22,000 to 880,000.

The army was not only strong in the North but also in old strongholds in the South, The New 4th Army.

Although the CCP were not the 'lead military' in the war with Japan, they made significant guerilla attacks in the North. They were not large scale but were easy wins with which to stoke the propaganda machine. Eg the CCP capture several Japanese soldiers and a tank which can be photographed and celebrated. Meanwhile, the GMD are losing battle after battle, withdrawing rapidly and demolishing its own country in its scorched earth policy. The 'people' started to think the CCP might be the answer.

It was not plain sailing. The Hundred Regiment offensive in 1940 saw the Communists launch a full frontal attack on Japan which, whilst causing casualties to the Japanese caused worse casualties for the CCP and civilians. It also caused the Japanese to in their normal brutal way - The Three All campaign "Kill all, burn all, loot all"

The CCP also suffered at the hands of the GMD when Jiang attacked the New Fourth army in 1941 for operating below the Yangtze. 1000s of communists were killed but the New Fourth was not crushed, they regrouped. More useful propaganda.

Japan and the rest of the World - how it helped end the war

US had been 'on side' with China for many years (since WW1?).

US also viewed Japan with increasing concern especially as she signed a Tri-Partite agreement with Germany and Italy in 1940.

To try and force Japan to moderate her aggression in China, US had put sanctions on scrap metal and in 1941 (after Japan took French Indo-China - modern day Cambodia and Vietnam), on oil too.

The Dutch and British placed sanctions on Japan too stalling its war effort.

This led to Japan targeting the Dutch East Indies for its raw materials and to avoid interference, in 1941 Japan struck Pearl Harbour in Hawaii, then declared war.

Jiang realised Japan now in trouble and he also had US help.

US help was in the form of **supplies** (7,000 tonnes per month) to Chongqing.

However, how to do that?

Burma was held by the Japanese which was the 'land route'. The Hump was used - flying in over the Himalayas! - until a new road through North East India (Ledo Road) was constructed in 1945.

Find a good map!

US help also in the form of personnel, a fluent Chinese speaking US Chief of Staff, Lieutenant General called Joseph Stillwell. Jiang and he did not get on, Stillwell regarding many GMD leaders as incompetent. Still, he succeeded in regaining control of Burma, hence easing supply issues in Aug 1944. Jiang forced him out in October 1944.

US help also came in air assistance from General Chennault. He wanted to build the 14th US Air Force and slowly increased the number of air squadrons from 1943-44. With the arrival of super bombers B29s, Japan felt threatened in Manchuria and launched a full scale ground attack on Nationalists in 1944 (the first since 1938).

The Ichigo Offensive 1944

Japan attacked Chinese cities such as Guilin and Liuzhou. No defense was made. The Chinese armies were inept and under resourced as Jiang deliberately kept armies weak if distrusted their leaders. Loyalty got resourced, not competence. Many Chinese recruits were seriously ill with malnutrition, TB etc.

The Japanese occupied vital airfields but were very stretched and US was advancing to Japan through other parts of Asia. China was no longer important.



What was important about this offensive? Not the victory but the fact it shone on light on the inadequacies of Jiang's leadership.

This was not just the Chinese becoming disillusioned with Jiang. The US leadership were increasingly dissatisfied and in July 1944 sent the Dixie Mission to make contact with the CCP. They were impressed with the energy and organisation of the CCP, especially in comparison to the KMT. Jiang did not have time to prove otherwise as, in 1945 the Japanese surrendered.

Interesting aside - The Cairo Conference 1943

Roosevelt of the US proposed a Four Policemen theory of global peacekeeping in 1943. These were UK, US, USSR and China.

In 1943 they were pictured together in Cairo.

This grouping was the precursor to the United Nations and why these 4 are permanent members of the United Nations Security Council

This also explains why the US were so supportive of Jiang Jieshi.

Interesting that the USSR was supportive of Jiang when truly they were supporters of CCP. Or were they simply trying to keep the peace with the US?

