China-Burma-India
The forgotten front of World War 2
Introduction

- CBI had two separate but related wars:
  - The Second Sino-Japanese War (1937 – 1945)
  - The War for Burma (1942 – 1945)
- However, to fully understand the impact on the post-war world we also have to look at the Chinese Civil War (1927-1937 & 1945-1950)
- Main Combatants and their objectives
  - Japan - Complete control of China as a colony; Resources and isolation of China (Burma)
  - China - Self-preservation (KMT & CCP to take control of China)
  - US – Protect China, keep her in the war, and tie up Japan there as much as possible
  - Britain – Protect India and recover Burma (preserve the empire).
  - Thailand – Support Japan (Asia for Asians).
What we’re going to do

• The emergence of modern Japan up to 1933
• The emergence of modern China up to 1937
• The runup to and Phase one of the Second Sino-Japanese War
• The Japanese strategic shift to South-East Asia and the conquest of Burma
• Japanese invasion of India
• Phase Two of the Sino-Japanese War (Operation Ichi-Go)
• The Allied re-conquest of Burma
• The end of World War Two in the CBI
• The Chinese Civil War (1945-1949)
• The impact of CBI on WW2 & the post-war world
Opening Comments

• Strategic level emphasis
• Facts vs. Opinions
• Questions
• Why was it the “forgotten front”?  
• Why am I interested in CBI?

C. W. Riffer
3d Pursuit Squadron
Flying Tigers
January 1942
• Wade-Giles vs. Pinyin Chinese (Peking vs. Beijing) (北京市)
• Names go with when they lived. Therefore,
  • Chiang Kai-shek
  • Mao Tse-tung (but often the Pinyin Mao Zedong)
• Places are updated which is a problem for us:
  - Beijing vs. Peking
  - Nanjing vs. Nanking
  - Tianjin vs. Tientsin
  - Chongqing vs. Chungking
  - Guangzhou vs. Canton
  - Xian vs. Sian
  - Shanghai vs. Shanghai
  - Kunming vs. Kunming
• Pinyin pronunciation:
  - q - ch (qurch = church)
  - x - sh (xi = she)
The Emergence of Modern Japan

- Commodore Matthew Perry “opens” Japan in 1854
- Boshin War (1868-1869) & the Meiji Restoration
  - Sonnō jōi (Revere the Emperor; Expel the barbarians) is replaced by
    *Fukoku kyōhei* (Enrich the state; Strengthen the military)
- Widespread westernization combined with very little democracy
- Satsuma Rebellion (1877) moves Japan towards increased militarization
- Three wars make Japan a “Great Power” on the world stage
  - First Sino-Japanese War (1894)
  - Russo-Japanese War (1904-1905)
  - World War One (1914-1918)
SHŌWA JAPAN

• Emperor Hirohito ascends the Chrysanthemum throne in 1926
• Period of democratization ends with move towards extreme nationalism.
• 1931-1932
  • Kwantung Army & the Mukden incident (1931)
  • Creation of Manchukuo (1932); Lytton Report (1932); Japan leaves the League of Nations (1933)
  • Japan becomes a fascist military dictatorship.
• Japanese strategic planning
  • Hokushin-ron (counter-clockwise northern strategy preferred by the Army)
  • Nanshin-ron (clockwise southern strategy preferred by the Navy)
- Eastwards movement to occupy Northern Sakhalin, the Maritime Province and adjacent areas
- Westwards movement to occupy Outer Mongolia and the Baikal area up to the Yablonovy Mountain Range
- and Advance to Irkutsk, Krasnoyarsk and Central Siberia

UNION OF SOVIET SOCIALIST REPUBLICS
The Emergence of China

- The Qing Dynasty (1611-1911)
- China’s Century of Humiliation
  - Opium Wars (1839-1842) and (1856-1860)
    - Treaty of Nanjing (“The Unequal Treaties”)
  - Taiping Rebellion (1851-1864)
    - Hong Xiuquan
    - Warlords
  - 1st Sino-Japanese War (1894-1895)
  - Boxer Rebellion (1899-1901) By the end of the 19th century most Chinese feel the Qing Dynasty has lost the “Mandate of Heaven”
The Republic of China

- Sun Yat-sen, the Xin Hai Revolution, Wang Jingwei and the Kuomintang (KMT) (1911)
- The Beiyang government (1912-1928) (Yuan Shikai)
- China becomes divided between warlords, the Beiyang government and the KMT.
- World War One, the 21 demands, and Soviet support.
- 1925: Sun Yat-sen dies and the KMT splits into a left wing under Wang (in Wuhan) and a right wing under Chiang (in Nanjing)
- The Northern Expedition (1926-1928; with a pause in 1927)
- April, 1927: Chiang initiates the Shanghai Massacre in which he expels the CCP from the KMT and executes ≈ 300 CCP leaders. He will kill another 10,000 over the next month.
The Republic of China (2)

- 1928: Chiang defeats the Beiyang government and establishes nominal control of all of China except for a few areas controlled by the warlords.
  - Wang flees to Europe
- This initiates the Nanking Decade
  - The 10 Year Civil War (1927-1937)
  - The five encirclement campaigns (1927-1934)
  - Chiang leads a modernization effort with some success.
The Nanjing Decade (1927-1937)

• Real progress in the economy, legal system, banking, transportation, industrial & agricultural production.
• Significant support from the Soviet Union. (Chiang is anti-Japanese)
• The rise of the “China Lobby” in the United States
• Chiang has now identified three enemies: Warlords, the CCP, & Japan
  • Establishes national priorities, “First internal pacification; then external resistance.”
  • In English this means first defeat the Communists, then the Japanese.
  • This will never actually change although Chiang will prove to be a realist.
• 1931 – Manchukuo established.
• A series of “Incidents” now takes place with Japan from 1932 until 1937, BUT Chiang IS FOCUSED ON THE CCP!
Run up to War

• January 28 battle (Shanghai incident)
  • Shanghai Ceasefire Agreement – May 5, 1932
• Great Wall attacks (1933 - 1934)
• The CCP’s “Long March” (1934-1935)
  • Response to the last encirclement campaign.
  • Actually a series of marches over 5460 miles and 370 days to escape the KMT
  • 10% of the initial marchers survived (≈8000)
  • Mao became the unquestioned leader of the CCP
• He-Umezu & Chin-Doihara Agreements (1935)
  • Chiang essentially cedes Northern China to Japan
  • This is consistent with his priorities
• The Xi’an Incident (1936) – Resulted in the formation of the “United Front”
  • Puts the Civil War on hold.
Zhang & Yang kidnap Chiang
Xi’an - 1936
Phase One of the Sino-Japanese War

• Lugou (Marco Polo) Bridge Incident (July 7, 1937)
  • Kwantung Army engineers a war without authorization
  • General fighting flairs up
  • Japanese capture Beijing and Tianjin (July – August)
• Japanese government orders a stop (no control over the Army)
Battle of Shanghai

• August – November 1937
• Chiang decides to fight (Declares a “War of Resistance”)
  • Largest and bloodiest battle of the war (>1M men involved in the fighting)(7:3)
• China shoots down 85 Japanese planes while losing 90 (1/2 of it’s Air Force)
• China loses ≈250,000 men, Japan loses ≈100,000
• The ferocity of Chinese resistance catches Japan by surprise BUT the Chinese lose many of their best troops (esp. officers – 70%) in this battle.
• Japan reorganizes in China
  • Creates the Central China Area Army
  • The Army & Government now agree to finish off the Chinese
• Every 20th century war has an iconic picture
• Battle of Shanghai
The Burma Road

• As a result of the Japanese invasion of China in 1937, Britain decides to build a road in the colony of Burma to provide a lifeline to China.
• Built by 200,000 Burmese & Chinese laborers and completed in 1938.
• 717 miles of the toughest country imaginable
The Battle of Taiyuan

- Knowing the Chinese were seriously stretched in Shanghai, Japan decided on a second simultaneous assault on Shanxi from Chahar in the north-west.
- Battle lasted for September until November.
- A clear Japanese victory giving them access to the coal fields at Datong.
- This ended Chinese resistance in the north.
Nanjing

“Nanjing is the capital of China and the capture thereof is an international affair; therefore, careful study should be made so as to exhibit the honor and glory of Japan and augment the trust of the Chinese people,..... therefore protect and patronize Chinese officials and people, as afar as possible.”
Nanjing (2)

- Japan’s goal; take Nanjing and thereby win the war.
- Chiang decides to save the best part of his army at the expense of losing Nanjing.
- Therefore he ordered a retreat. This left Nanking in the hands of 100,000 untrained and poorly equipped soldiers.
- Surrender deadline of December 10.
- Chinese evacuate on December 12 (which becomes a rout)
- The PANAY incident & the Allison incident
- Japanese enter Nanjing on December 13.
The Nanjing Massacre (Dec – Jan 1938)

• What caused the Japanese Army to conduct this massacre?
  • Prince Asaka?
  • Failure of the Chinese to surrender “as promised”?
  • Armed citizens?
  • Hirohito’s August 1937 proposition on Chinese prisoners.

• Results: up to 300,000 (?) civilian deaths, at least 20,000 rapes.

• This horrific war crime has been a source of friction between the two countries ever since.
How not to end the war?

• With the capture of Nanjing, the war should be over. However, Prime Minister Konoe overrode the army (!) and decided to pursue the war to a final conclusion.

• Konoe delivers a set of “non-negotiable” war aims (January 1938)
  • As expected, Chiang rejects these out of hand.
  • Konoe then announces “Total Victory” as the only acceptable outcome.

• In May 1938, Konoe issues the National Mobilization Law which put Japan into a wartime economic state

• Result: A war which Japan expected to win in six months will now rumble on for eight years.
Taierzhuang (Mar – Apr 1938)

- Japanese drive on Xuzhou in northeastern China. (Rail & Grand Canal junction)
- Japan brought 40-70,000 troops; major error. China had between 100-400,000.
- Again, stiff resistance surprised the Japanese and they were finally forced to retreat.
- Japan lost 11,000; China 20,000.
- But, a clear Chinese tactical victory.
- This was a major Chinese moral booster but it did not stop the overall southern push of the Japanese army.
Yellow River Flood (June 1938)

• Chiang has retreated to Wuhan.
• Japan decides to capture Wuhan and win the war (again).
• To stop them, Chiang decided to destroy the Yellow River dikes in front of them.
• Result:
  • ≈500,000 dead Chinese civilians, another 3M lose their homes
  • Japanese lose 8000 men and simply go around the flooded area.
  • “..largest act of environmental warfare in history.”
• This decision will prove to be a tremendous recruiting tool for the CCP later in the war.
Yellow River Flooding and the Battle of Wuhan
Battle of Wuhan (June – Oct 1938)

• Japanese objective: To force Chiang to negotiate (surrender).
  • Wuhan had become the de facto capital of the ROC
  • Japan throws everything it has into this battle.
  • Emperor highly involved, demands immediate total victory.

• Battle results in a major Japanese tactical victory but Chiang escapes to Chongqing and refuses to talk.
  • 1M Chinese fighting 350,000 Japanese
  • Japanese had their usual advantage in artillery, armor, and aircraft (2.5::1)
  • Losses: China – 400,000, Japan – 140,000

• But another Chinese strategic victory. (Washington?)
1939 – Slugging it out

• Battle of Suixian-Zaoyang (April – May 1939)
  • Japan attempts to expand control westwards from Wuhan
  • 113,000 vs. 220,000 Chinese (losses: 21K vs. 28K)
  • In spite of the use of poison gas, Japan is completely unsuccessful

• 1st Battle of Changsha (Sept – Oct 1939)
  • Japan decides to attack from further south to isolate Chongqing from the sea
  • 100K vs. 240K Chinese (losses: 40,000 each!!!)
  • The assault was a complete Japanese failure.
1939 – Slugging it out (2)

• Battle of South Guangxi (Nov 1939)
  • Japanese amphibious landing on the south coast of China successfully isolates Chongqing from the sea.
  • 100K vs. 150K (losses: 8K vs. 23K)

• Chongqing can now be supplied only by the Indochinese railroad, the Burma Road, and the “Hump”.

• However, China’s successes in 1939 cause the US and Britain to start seriously looking for ways to help them.
The 1939-1940 Winter Offensive

• Japanese strength was dispersed as a result of the 1937-1939 battles
• Chiang’s objective was to use his manpower advantage to attack “everywhere” to prevent any future Japanese gathering in force for future offensives.
• A total of 10 offensives involving 550,000 troops initiated in Dec – Jan. Offensive severely hampered by poor training and logistics.
• Japan caught completely by surprise but quickly responded by bringing in 850,000 troops from elsewhere to respond to each offensive.
• Chinese losses were ≈70,000, Japanese just over 20,000. By April Japan had recovered all lost ground. A clear Japanese victory.
• HOWEVER, the huge number of troops Japan brought in to deal with the offensives stayed in China for the rest of the war, a clear Allied strategic victory.
By the End of 1940 (Summary)

• With the agreement of Vichy France, Japan has invaded Tonkin in Indochina and cut the Kunming-Hai-Phong rail line. (Burma Road and the “Hump” are now the only way to get stuff to Chiang.)

• Japan occupies much of northern & coastal China but is struggling to administer it
  • Adopts a “Points & Lines” policy and turns much routine administration over to the newly named collaborate “Government of National Salvation” (Wang)

• Chiang has retreated to Chongqing (his new capitol) and has retained much of his army (he has successfully traded space for time)
  • Chiang has 3 million troops, Japan has 1 million in China (≈ ½ their total army)

• The CCP is becoming more active in the north thereby becoming a source of much frustration for the Japanese. Between June ‘39 & May ‘40, the CCP attacked Japanese forces at least 7000 times inflicting 64,000 casualties.
We Salute the
CHINESE REPUBLIC
On her Birthday OCTOBER 10TH

China - the First of our Allies to fight Japan,
China - in spite of war, struggling victoriously
toward Democracy as we did 150 years ago.
HELP HER TO FIGHT BRAVELY ON!

UNITED CHINA RELIEF
Member Agency of the National War Fund