War Crimes of Circumstance and Convenience

by

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Where to begin?
My thesis advisor and *michishirube*, Professor Bill Johnston, who decided to take me on even with the grueling schedule of being a department chair, and exhorted me to answer his questions with “substance and strength.” I never knew I had so many grammar mistakes until you pointed them out: thank you. Professor Cecilia Miller, my academic advisor, who supported me way beyond mere academics, with invaluable advice on all sorts of Interesting Things.¹ My other readers, both student and professor, who have the pleasure and pain of reading my work as well.

Kudos to the College of Social Studies as a whole. The tutors and fellow students of my class showed me how engaging education could be, especially after certain dismal courses in freshman year led by professors whom I shall not name. My comp group comrades deserve extra mention: Aldo, Alex and Andrew. You guys made the impossible possible: the pace at which we churned out comp sheets ensured that comps was relaxing and even (dare I say it) enjoyable. We never did go to that strip club, did we.

My long-suffering family. Thank you for being patient during my long silences, and always allowing me to make my own choices. Above all, Dad, thank you for impressing on me your IRR: Integrity, Responsibility & Respect. Without integrity in my research, responsibility for my words, and respect for history, this project could not have come into being. I doubt I can ever repay you guys, and I’m not even referring to the exorbitant Wesleyan tuition that always increases at twice the rate of inflation.

My roommates and housemates through four years of residence, Matteo, Renee, Lena, Aussie, Rika, Maiko and Zhaoxuan, have displayed inhuman patience with my dirty rooms and lame jokes.

Finally, a big thank you to the DOTA people who provided me with excellent mental support whenever I felt like I needed a break, which was often. I had toyed with the idea of listing players based on their degree of team play, but ultimately scrapped it due to space concerns (and that I might lose some friends by doing so). The best times were those with Bach and Zhaoxuan, my Hi-Rise buddies; their “mutual abuse” made the games that much more fun.

¹ Yes- deliberately vague words of no particular interest and an unnecessary footnote. Cheers, I’ll miss you both as advisors.
On March 2, 2007, barely half a year into his term, Prime Minister Shinzo Abe of Japan made a controversial statement concerning so-called “comfort women,” women who had provided sexual services for the Japanese Imperial army. In the face of claims that some of these women were sex slaves and not prostitutes, Abe asserted that there was no evidence proving that any of them had been coerced. In doing so, he directly contradicted the surviving women’s firsthand testimony, as well as documents unearthed in military archives. Although Abe recanted his words by reiterating a 1993 apology which acknowledged the culpability of the military, the fact that events which occurred more than half a decade ago can still directly cause political upheaval at any time is extremely troubling.

The flap over the comfort women is not an isolated incident. Time and again, influential Japanese officials have displayed a willingness to use and distort history for political purposes. Yasukuni Shrine, where Class-A war criminals are enshrined among others, is a popular tool used to defray area relations, most notably by former Prime Minister Koizumi Junichirō. The current governor of Tokyo, Ishihara Shintarō, has gone on record claiming the Nanjing Massacre to be fiction. Of course, Japan is not the only nation with skeletons in the closet that politicians are loathe to exhume. Turkey hides the genocide of the Armenians, and China rarely

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speaks of mass death under Mao Ze Dong. History can encompass everything; despite this people often pick and choose among the events of the past to their own liking. And yet history must be dealt with, for it is part of the collective memory of a nation, if not mankind, and all too frequently it simply disappears.

This thesis aims to address the issue of Japanese war crimes in China committed in the early stages of World War II, up to the Nanjing Massacre. Much scholarship has been done on the topic. It was an event of singular brutality that occurred during the Japanese occupation of the city. Not only can its gravity be felt in scholarly circles, with conferences and seminars devoted entirely to the massacre, but much vitriol and passion have been ignited in the general public as well, no matter their positions or beliefs. This historiography of the event is layered and complex, with massive amounts of material being published all over the world. In Japan, fierce debates and even lawsuits rage to this day between historians who seek to adequately map and interpret the Massacre, and the nationalist “revisionists” who deny or attack those claims. In the United States, the issue has recently attracted much interest with the publication of Iris Chang’s flawed but important book, The Rape of Nanking.

In contrast, this thesis takes the position of Katsuichi Honda, who asserted that “limiting descriptions of the massacres, acts of violence, and rapes to…December or just to the city limits of Nanjing is meaningless.”4 The Nanjing Massacre is simply the most public and perhaps the most brutal war crime, all the way from the start of the invasion. Stories of rape, massacre, and entire villages burned crop up again and again in the Nanjing offensive proper. The acts go beyond mere war: many of the

dead were peasants who happened to be living in the path of an invading army, affiliated with neither the Kuomintang nor the Communist Party. The situation was not simple by any stretch of the imagination: children might be hiding grenades in their toys, or rice stores might be poisoned, for example. Guerilla warfare was the only viable method many Chinese had at their disposal, against the superior firepower and strength of the Japanese. Asserting that the acts inflicted on the Chinese were committed by “the Japanese army” can be problematic: while the chain of command is strong on paper, many acts were committed by individual squads of the army, and frequently by individual soldiers.

The central question asked in this thesis is deceptively simple. What pushed these individual soldiers into such acts of brutality? They found themselves deep in enemy territory, placed there by military command, and fueled by a military culture that brooked no argument against higher orders. Yet when surrounded by the chaos of war, where every child or woman might be an enemy, or every man a soldier out of uniform, frequently troops are concerned with nothing but their own survival. In order to explain the extreme actions taken by the individual Japanese soldiers, my thesis explores the extent to which circumstances directly created by elements of the army influenced the soldiers’ behavior on the ground. An environment was created, through no fault of the common soldier, where they were forced to make impossible choices. Decisions made by the commanders complicated their situations, and in some cases actually relieved the soldiers of the consequences of their actions.

Many stereotypes and assumptions still color the history of that wartorn era. Not to say that these stereotypes were entirely false, since such assumptions have
almost always been based on grains of truth. In this case, they were often compounded by horrific experiences people on all sides endured in the war. It is important to realize that many of the Japanese soldiers were normal people, conscripted from all manner of backgrounds and classes, and thrust into an alien environment which in many ways repudiated what they had known and come to expect. The battlefield is a place that nobody can be prepared for, a chaos that induces people to act in ways they never have, and to commit deeds they had never dreamed of committing.

Perhaps the most widely-held assumption of the Japanese soldier, at least among Americans, is this: fanatical soldiers fighting to the death in the name of their Emperor. What the Americans encountered fighting the Japanese in the Pacific only reinforced this view. For every three dead American soldiers, one surrendered. But for every Japanese who surrendered, one hundred and twenty men lay dead. Their tactics, too, left little up to the Allied imagination. There were defensive gun emplacements that were entirely sealed in with concrete, allowing the Japanese soldiers within only one way out.

The use of kamikaze, too, stunned the American Navy. Not even the most extreme proponents of life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness will volunteer to become the one-way guidance system for a flying bomb, much less serve in a squadron dedicated to such missions. The Americans also witnessed scenes of battlefield frenzy in the Pacific, where thousands of Japanese soldiers engaged in concerted suicidal activity, ranging from blowing themselves up with grenades, or

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6 Ibid, 392.
hopeless charges into overwhelming gunfire. These incidents, taken together, proved to the American soldiers that the Japanese were little more than “savages and madmen.”

From the beginning, Japanese propagandists cast war as sacred: a holy war. There is nothing wrong with ideology per se, since at its most basic definition, ideology is simply a scheme of ideas. It is when ideology is used as a tool to justify certain acts, in this case Japan’s military actions, does it become questionable. The invasion of China, according to the propagandists, was neither colonial expansion nor aggressive war, but merely a Japanese Man’s Burden, if you will, to bring the emperor’s blessing on the heathens. “It is my belief that Heaven has decided on Japan as its choice for the champion of the East”, one ideologue wrote, “Asia and Europe must be united…only through war.” When a Japanese soldier received orders to take a particular military objective, the chance was treated with the utmost respect. A battle report recorded a few days before the assault on Nanjing asserted that the troops saw immense glory upon being ordered to take the high ground, and when a formal order with the emperor’s seal arrived, morale reached “uncontrollable levels.”

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Yet the picture painted above is incomplete. By citing the emperor in a report, a soldier might be able to demonstrate his loyalty, paving the way for a promotion. In a wider sense, though, the illustration chooses behavior seen in several theatres of battle, and uses that to sketch a general description of the entire Imperial army. This is the fallacy that many war veterans, on any side, cling to: that they understood what they were fighting for, understood the enemy, indeed the war itself, just by virtue of fighting. But war is so much more than battle. It is a condition, or even an environment. Many military commanders, even today, would like to believe that war is all about fighting and crushing the enemy in combat, and indeed paint such a picture to the civilians at home. Arguably more important may be the time between combat, the ins and outs of daily life on the battlefield. In China, the Japanese Imperial army faced a situation they found difficult to cope with. From the start of the war, they were already deep inside enemy territory, having invaded China. The Chinese fought in their homeland, while the Americans did not enter the Asian arena until after Pearl Harbor. Not until the end did the Europeans invade Germany proper.

As an anonymous letter writer from the Japanese side put it:

“From Hangzhou to Nanjing, we had to march a hundred miles every day, so tiring. I’ve once thought, why are we suffering so much for the empire? The conditions are bad, cars cannot move, so there is no rice from Japan. We have to cook Nanjing rice that looks like it’s gone bad, and we’ve eaten that for ten days straight. During those ten days, I thought about how dying would be better. Many people are sick. Falling sick is terrible. There are neither hospitals nor medicine, how disgusting.”

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12 Nanjin Datsha Shiliaoji (9) – Rijun Guanbing Riji ya Shuxin (Historical materials of the Nanjing Massacre (9) -- diaries and letters of Japanese imperial soldiers), ed. Wong Weixing, 23 vols., Historical Materials of the Nanjing Massacre, vol. 9 (Nanjing: Jiangxu Renmin Publishers, 2005), 373. (Continued from above) Although the writer of the letter is unnamed, it may be deduced that he was a member of the Tenth Army, which landed at Hangzhou, as opposed to the (continued on the next page)
It is foolish to believe that events will always unfold according to plan, but the extent to which things can fail to develop is truly difficult to anticipate. Notions of military strategy, taking the high ground here and the city there, are too broad to encompass everything that goes on in the thick of combat. It is often small things, such as thicker soles on boots or adequate maps, that are overlooked. Enough of these can topple an army, driving soldiers to improvise on what the commanders failed to provide, and often in ways they failed to predict. There are, of course, soldiers who kill for the sake of killing, taking pleasure in wanton acts of base violence. They exist in every army. The focus of the thesis is not on them.

My thesis is divided into three chapters and an epilogue. The first chapter provides much-needed background information and sets the stage for the events to follow. Primarily, it deals with the events leading up to the invasion of China proper, starting from the Manchurian Incident where Japan gained a puppet nation. From this brief overview, certain behavior traits of the army may be observed and generalized. The central army command, with the Emperor at the top, rarely makes the initial decisions; it is always the lower-ranked officers who set wheels in motion, and the brass who struggle to keep up. All too often, this passivity gave the lower officers the power to set the agenda for the rest of the army.

The second chapter mainly uses Japanese primary sources to sketch the Shanghai Expeditionary Force and the Tenth Army’s slog from Shanghai to Nanjing.

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Shanghai Expeditionary Force, which, as its name suggests, arrived at Nanjing from Shanghai. Both the SEF and the Tenth Army eventually came under the umbrella of General Matsui Iwane. Many of the letters and diaries cited in this chapter are from the Nanjing Offensive, the peak of which lasted two weeks or so culminating in the fall of Nanjing on the 13th. Honda notes that the number of personal accounts and military records experience a sharp rise during this period. See Honda, 141.
Their experience constituted the first time the bulk of the Japanese Imperial army came into contact with the heartland of China, and their day-to-day activities paint a compelling portrait of the environment. Compiled for the first time and published in 2005 and 2006, most of the sources used are comprised of letters, diaries and official army orders.

The last chapter adds a comparative element to the narrative, by using the Boxer Rebellion of 1900 and Operation Barbarossa in 1941. The former recounts foreigner military activity in Beijing during the wake of the uprising, and provides a situation in which the lack of central control led to chaos. The circumstances were different, but the same causal relationship can be observed. Operation Barbarossa, on the other hand, features many of the same elements of the Shanghai-Nanjing campaign in a different theatre of war, namely, Nazi Germany’s assault on Soviet Russia. For the purposes of this thesis, secondary sources concerned with the brutalization of warfare are used. The process by which soldiers’ minds adapt to the sudden change in environment represent an aspect that is sadly lacking from the current scholarship on Japanese war crimes.

Finally, threads from all three chapters are tied together into an answer to the central question of the thesis. For most thesis writers, the conclusion is the end of their work. I have included an epilogue that discusses two largely unanswerable, but still vitally important questions that arose from my work on the topic. First, how can such situations be prevented, and secondly, is there truly a role for ideology in the heat of war.
The bulk of the primary sources used in this thesis are taken from Chinese translations of Japanese army letters, diaries, and orders. All translations of quotations from Chinese to English are my own. In the footnotes, the pinyin transliteration of titles have been used, with a literal translation of the title appended in parentheses. Not all sources in the bibliography have been explicitly cited in the thesis; some served as background reading or were discarded prematurely, as my direction changed in the early weeks.
In which the stage is set

Invading another country is serious business. In a democracy such as the United States of America, simply moving to the brink of such a conflagration requires a long and tortuous path. The President and both houses of Congress have to be in formal agreement, usually with public opinion firmly on their side. The military cannot make a move without formal civilian authorization, and their budget is controlled by Congress as well. In comparison, the Japanese invasion of China followed quite a different route. Even if obvious differences in political culture, time, and circumstance are to be granted, the way the invasion was handled left much to be desired, especially in hindsight. In fact, one might argue that Japan did not invade China per se, but rather found itself invading China. This spontaneous element would plague their efforts in China greatly.

Foundations

The structure of the Japanese government helps to illuminate how a major war could break out without the level of deliberation one would find in a democracy. First and foremost, pre-war Japan was a constitutional monarchy, with an emperor who ruled by literal divine right. Reporting directly to him were the various organs of the government: the army, navy, and both houses of the Diet.\footnote{The Japanese parliament is usually called the Diet. Japan based their government structure on Germany.} The lower house was
elected by male suffrage. None of the organs were answerable to each other, thus investing absolute power in the hands of the emperor, at least in theory.

In practice, this meant the army could take unilateral action regardless of the opposition by civilian leaders. As long as the emperor granted permission, even retroactively, elements of the army could even instigate operations on their own, without bearing any negative consequences. This was seen in the Manchurian Incident in 1931. After the rogue officers carried out their operation, then-Prime Minister Wakatsuki sent an urgent message to the secretary of *genro* Saionji, elder advisor to the Emperor:\(^{14}\):

> “I am not being kept informed by either the Foreign Ministry or the Army Ministry…Under these circumstances I am quite powerless to restrain the military. How can his majesty’s military act without his sanction? What can I do? Maybe I should not be talking to you like this, but can you do anything?... I am in serious trouble.”\(^ {15}\)

Moreover, while the army and navy ministries were allowed to participate in foreign policy decisions, the civilians in the Foreign Ministry were not privy to any military secrets.\(^ {16}\)

In fact, the army wielded a virtual sword over the head of the civilian government just by virtue of the nature of their place in society. By ordering the War Minister to be withdrawn, they could dissolve the civilian cabinet. From 1913, every

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\(^{14}\) The *Genro* were elder advisors to the Emperor, separate from the formal political structure. In the thirties, Prince Saionji was the only one still alive (Lu, 11).

\(^{15}\) Bix, 236-237. Message was sent in September, 1931. The Wakatsuki administration fell in December of the same year, to be replaced by Inukai Tsuyoshi’s.

\(^{16}\) David John Lu, *From the Marco Polo Bridge to Pearl Harbor; Japan's Entry into World War II* (Washington,: Public Affairs Press, 1961), 9. The War Office is a separate organ from, e.g. the General Staff Office. These organs frequently had differing opinions of conduct. The former preferred engagement with China, while the latter advised against it, preferring rather to focus their attention on the Soviets (16-17).
War Minister had to be an actively serving general, who would be much more loyal to the current army leadership than a retired officer. Consequently, this power had been exercised twice in 1937, toppling two cabinets and reminding the population of the power of the army, should it ever choose to flex its muscles.

The February 26 revolt in 1936 underscored the volatility of the army, specifically, the tendencies of junior officers to tread their own paths. In some ways, this event foreshadowed the atrocities which were to happen a few years hence. It highlighted the ironclad obligation of Japanese soldiers to blindly follow orders, even if there was no proof that the orders had originated from anywhere other than their immediate superior. The British military attaché in Tokyo at the time interviewed some of the rank and file enlisted to be in the uprising, and didn’t think that “they knew what they had been involved in.” Japanese soldiers were taught to do just that. Written in their code was an admonition that read, “A subordinate should never fail to respect and obey his superior…even when the latter’s orders may seem unreasonable.”

When one speaks of influence in the pre-war Japanese government, one would not have to look much farther than the army. They were an autonomous body with blindly loyal followers. Combined with the passivity of the Emperor, the supreme commander-in-chief, this did not bode well for tight control during wartime. One of

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18 Arthur C. Brackman, *The Other Nuremberg: The Untold Story of the Tokyo War Crimes Trials* (New York: William Morrow and Company, Inc., 1987), 128. Moreover, evidence was introduced in the Tokyo Trials that the military had assassinated two Premiers in 1930 and 1932. Each had tried to cut the army’s budget. In 1936, an attempt was made to murder the Premier in power, but did not succeed.
19 Harries and Harries, 185.
20 Ibid.
his biographers, Herbert Bix, described Emperor Hirohito as a commander who essentially allowed his subordinates free will, and only involved himself substantially when operations were well under way. This would be the case in military operations as varied as Pearl Harbor, Manchuria, and the Battle of Okinawa.  

The branch of the military most intimately involved with the invasion of China was the Kwantung Army. It took its name not from the Kantō region of Japan, but rather the region of China of the same name, ceded to Japan after the Sino-Japanese War. As such, its base of operations was quite far from the main army leadership in Tokyo, and its responsibilities included defending the continental borders of Japan, as well as the South Manchurian Railway, which also belonged to the Japanese.

The Kwantung Army has become notorious for its unilateral activities leading up to the invasion of Nanjing. Two of these, the assassination of Zhang Zuo Lin, a major Chinese warlord, and the Manchurian Incident, were instigated by members of the division. The third, the Marco Polo Bridge Incident, is much more controversial.

**Manchuria and Manchukuo**

The Manchurian Incident allowed Japan its first major foothold in China: the establishment of a puppet state fueling the Japanese war machine. Even before the Incident itself in late 1931, there had been rumblings concerning the attractiveness of Manchuria to the Empire.

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21 Bix, 2 & 501.
In January, Matsuoka Yosuke, a Diet member and former director of the South Manchurian Railway, stated that “[Manchuria and Mongolia are issues] which directly concern the existence of our country. They are the lifeline of our nation. I believe it is so for national defense and also in an economic sense.”\(^{22}\) Manchuria possessed immense reserves of natural resources, which contrasted directly with Japan’s own “negligible mineral resources.”\(^{23}\)

The Kwantung Army made its move in September. It was not sanctioned by generals in Tokyo, the War Minister, or even the Emperor.\(^{24}\) This is not to say that the Kwantung Army operated in secret. War Minister Minami had briefed Hirohito on the plans of “certain young officials” to seize Manchuria by force, and that those same young officers had been very critical of the foreign ministry’s diplomatic efforts.\(^{25}\) Minami sent a message to the Kwantung Army the same year, stating, “The Kwantung Army is to refrain from any new projects, such as becoming independent from the main army and seizing control of Manchuria and Mongolia.”\(^{26}\)

It is testament to the audacity of the Kwantung Army that they accelerated their plans upon learning of Minami’s message, through another channel, via telegram. The messenger, General Tatekawa Yoshitsugu, was an officer with influence in the Kwantung Army, and they took pains to execute their plans early to

\(^{25}\) Bix, 231.
avoid implicating the officer in the Incident. If the officer managed to deliver Minami’s rebuke before the Manchurian Incident was executed, he would have been viewed as acquiescing to the plot, and the Kwantung Army would lose an ally.

Two colonels in the division carried out the Manchurian Incident itself on September 18, 1931. A bomb was detonated near a section of the South Manchurian Railway, and used as a pretext to launch an attack on the Chinese garrisons less than a kilometer away from the bomb site. As the picture shows, damage to the rails was extremely minor, or even non-existent. However, it was enough for the officers to trigger a conflict in which the Kwantung Army seized the neighboring Chinese barracks and advanced into the population centers of South Manchuria, all within twenty-four hours of the attack. The Chinese commanders ordered their garrisons not to engage, even though they outnumbered the Japanese significantly.

The Wakatsuki administration in Tokyo fell shortly after the Manchurian Incident. The new cabinet, led by Inukai Tsuyoshi, decided to take a supportive yet duplicitous stance towards Manchukuo. They indicated that “the maintenance of public order in Manchuria and Mongolia will be entrusted to the Empire”, and that Imperial army divisions in the area would be strengthened accordingly to provide

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27 Bix, 232.
28 Tsuzuki, 276.
29 Image is in the public domain. Japanese characters in bottom right read “Broken piece of the rail”.
30 Bix, 235.
However, in order to avoid conflict with international laws and agreements, the cabinet took care to couch the language of the policies in the form of independent actions taken by the state of Manchukuo. The League of Nations formed the Lytton Commission to ascertain the facts of the matter, resulting in the publishing of a report which identified Japan as having committed unwarranted aggression. In February 1933, the Japanese delegation withdrew from the League of Nations.

In the six months it took the Commission to prepare its report, Japan had established a formal monarchy in Manchukuo, with the “Last Emperor”, Henry Pu Yi, presiding over the state. To the end, Pu Yi argued that he had been a mere puppet, that he had only “led” Manchukuo due to the Japanese holding the power of life and death over him. Both Arthur Brackman, an American historian of the Tokyo Trials, and Sadako Oagata, a Japanese historian of the Manchurian Incident, concluded that Pu Yi’s role in Manchukuo remained murky due to his stellar performance at the Tokyo Trials. Neither the prosecutor nor the bench could come to a solid conclusion regarding his status.

Documents seized at the Foreign Ministry after Japan’s surrender indicated the figurehead nature of Pu Yi. In November, 1932, a secret Kwantung Army directive stated their thinking clearly: “Officials of Manchukuoan lineage shall

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32 Ibid.
33 Brackman, 162.
outwardly assume charge of the administration as much as possible, while officials of Japanese lineage must satisfy themselves by controlling its substance.”

Manchukuo provided excellent support to the Japanese empire. Being a resource-poor nation, the rich natural resources of the Manchurian region were a boon to the rapidly developing industries of Japan. In addition, trade beyond its borders generated wealth for the nation. By the end of the 1920’s, China had already provided 13 percent of all Japanese imports as well as 20 percent of its exports. With political control over the new fake nation, full advantage could be taken.

Where was China in all of this? With a hostile invading force constantly encroaching on her borders, instigating firefights and occupying immense tracts of land with vital natural resources, one would assume that China would at least attempt to retake the territory. At the time, though, there was no unified China which could have repulsed the Japanese, even though the Kwantung Army was dwarfed by the standing Chinese garrisons. Tokyo had refused to formally commit reinforcements to strengthen Manchukuo, to avoid the diplomatic consequences of engaging in actual war.

The Nationalist Kuomintang (KMT) government, established in 1912 and now under the leadership of Chiang Kai-Shek, was much more occupied with the Communists than with the Japanese, considering the former to be worthy of more attention. In order to concentrate on the Communists, Chiang signed the Tanggu Truce in 1933. Essentially, this truce legitimized the Kwantung Army’s takeover of Manchuria, and created a buffer zone between North China and Manchukuo.

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34 Ibid., 156. Quotation is verbatim.
35 Ibid., 71.
humiliating treaty allowed the Kwantung Army freedom of movement within China’s borders.\textsuperscript{36} Meanwhile, the Communists, not being bound by the truce, garnered support by uniting disgruntled Northerners and by conducting guerilla attacks on the Japanese. Their promises of land reform also appealed to the peasants, who were desperately poor, and often had their land taken by the Japanese.\textsuperscript{37}

\textbf{Into North China}

Policy and political developments in both China and Japan set the stage for hostilities in North China. In 1936, Chiang Kai-Shek was unhappily confronted with the Xi’an Incident. Elements of his own KMT kidnapped Chiang and held him hostage. One of the chief conspirators was Zhang Xue Liang, the son of Warlord Zhang Zuo Lin, who had been forcibly relieved of his Manchurian command by the Japanese Imperial army. In order to restore what he viewed to be his rightful territory, he felt that a united front was needed between the KMT and the Communists.\textsuperscript{38}

Three years before, Chiang had followed a policy of appeasement when signing the Tanggu Truce, which had angered many, even in his own party. The Xi’an Incident convinced him that he could use war with Japan to his own advantage. The USSR supplied the KMT with arms to be used against the Japanese.\textsuperscript{39} Crucially,

\begin{flushright}
\textsuperscript{36} Bix, 272. \\
\textsuperscript{37} Ienaga, 90. \\
\textsuperscript{38} Harries and Harries, 205. \\
\textsuperscript{39} The KMT were supported by a curious motley of patrons, each with their own reasons. The Nazi Party supplied them with uniforms and other material support, seeing them as a bulwark against Communism. The Soviets, on the other hand, wanted to hasten the bourgeoisie revolution as part of historical materialism, and in any case did not consider a ragged band of peasants to be “Communists”, since in Marxist theory, Communism was the end stage, after the withering away of the state. They thus supported the KMT with weapons in the hopes of bringing about the next stage, which was the
\end{flushright}
Chiang could co-opt the leading claim to popularity of the Communist Party, which at the time was defense against the invaders. Chiang thus signed a peace treaty with the Communists.\textsuperscript{40} While this momentous event had many consequences, such as the Communists gaining legitimacy through the affirmation of their anti-Japanese operations, the key result at the time was the formation of an united front against the invaders. They agreed that their civil war would come second to repelling the Japanese.

Meanwhile, many factions in Japan had warmed greatly to the idea of Manchukuo, the faux political state, and the increased economic resources found in the general area of Manchuria. Consequently, they began to look farther afield, into North China. Harada Kumao, the same secretary who had received the despairing message from former Prime Minister Wakatsuki, wrote that the Kwantung Army had held the following opinion in 1933:

“The natural resources of Manchuria are far exceeded by those in North China. There are limitless deposits of iron and coal in Shanxi province. If we are careless, these resources will end up in English or American hands. Talking about “international morality” and allowing others to always get the jump on us will give Japan the short end of the stick. In our view, taking North China is vital to Japan.”\textsuperscript{41}

In July 1936, Premier Konoe affirmed that “…North China is vital, especially for our economic development.”\textsuperscript{42} A small advance into either North China or Mongolia would yield substantial amounts of coal and iron for the Japanese war machine.\textsuperscript{43}

\textsuperscript{40} Hanneman, 54.
\textsuperscript{41} Ienaga, 68.
\textsuperscript{42} Ibid., 69.
One month later, Foreign Minister Hirota Kōki laid out a wide-ranging policy designed to take advantage of this agreement in purpose between the civilians and the Kwantung Army. The “Criteria for National Policy” and the “Foreign Policy of the Empire” dictated that Manchukuo was to be strengthened and the same pattern of puppet regimes to be replicated throughout North China. These policies were to be the precursor to the later ideas of the Greater East Asian Co-Prosperity Sphere. They noted that there should be a “coalition” between Japan, Manchukuo and China, where North China would be a “special region” due to its economic significance.

During the Pacific War, this was indeed how the occupied territory was organized: in December 1937, a puppet government was established in Beijing, while the Nanjing one was set up in March of the following year. A plan by the president of the Southern Manchuria Railway described the economic mechanism by which this political takeover would take place. Central banks would be set up in those cities, tying the currency to the Japanese yen, in order to quickly link the captured territory to the Empire.

These methods sound good only on paper. Ienaga points out that if one were to look at a map of China, one would see that Imperial army control extended only to the major cities and railroad lines. The rest of China’s countryside, with its miles and miles of farmland, small towns and villages, remained free. Moreover, the move to link currencies failed quite miserably. When the Kwantung Army first invaded

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44 Bix, 308.  
45 Beasley, 195.  
46 Ienaga, 73.  
48 Ienaga, 73.
Manchuria, they were able to seize the provincial silver held by local banks, and could easily assimilate the local currency structure into the larger central system. For North China, however, the local silver had already been spirited away or sealed off, and the Manchukuo pattern could not be immediately repeated. Tsuzuki commented that “it is symbolic of the war in China that the Japanese army not only failed to confront the main Chinese forces but also failed to win the currency war.”

Marco Polo Bridge

Matters came to a head with the Marco Polo Bridge Incident in July 1937. Like the Manchurian Incident, the fracas at the Marco Polo Bridge provided an opportunity for invasion. Unlike the Manchurian Incident, however, it has never been conclusively proven who was responsible. Some historians have pointed out that the Japanese had a definite motive, and simply replicated their previous actions in a similar style, in order to provide a pretext for further military action against the Chinese. Others point to a message intercepted from the American naval attaché in Beijing, which read, “According to reliable information, radicals…will begin firing at Japanese army at 19.00.” The “radicals” mentioned might well have been Chinese radicals, perhaps Communists who wanted to bolster their claim to legitimacy.

As with 1933, this incident started with violence in the night. Shots were fired at Japanese troops conducting nighttime maneuvers, and shortly thereafter a private was deemed to be missing. The Japanese garrison then demanded that they be

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49 Tsuzuki, 320.
50 The Marco Polo Bridge is commonly called “the Lu Gou Bridge” in China.
51 Benson and Matsumura, 79.
52 Harries and Harries, 201.
granted free access to the town, to search for the soldier, although he did turn up a while later completely unhurt.

If this incident had occurred in 1933, the Chinese might well quietly withdrawn their forces. This was 1937, however, and Chiang was no longer interested in appeasement, but rather the preservation of his own neck and political future. The day after the Marco Polo Bridge Incident, Chiang wrote in his diary that “The time has come now to make the decision to fight”, and made a public pronouncement that China had reached her “final critical hour.”

In Tokyo, as in Kwantung, nobody was in a mood to back down and avoid further conflict. After three or four years of sustaining anti-Japanese sentiments over Manchukuo, Premier Konoe decided that the KMT and the Communists had to be taught a firm lesson. He announced that the “Chinese must apologize…for the illegal anti-Japanese actions.” In some ways, Konoe had to adopt such a position. At the time of the Marco Polo Bridge Incident, his cabinet was barely a month old, and he had to ingratiate himself with the army. At the same time, Bix points out that unlike the Manchurian Incident when the Emperor and the cabinet reacted to every new development, in 1937 they actively pursued whatever advantage they could garner for the Empire, once the chances presented themselves.

It was only to be expected that the army would have similar opinions as Konoe, but far more to the side of immediate action. The soon-to-be director of military intelligence, General Honma Masaharu, declared that the Soviet army was

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53 Ibid., 202.
54 Sims, 206.
55 Hanneman, 55.
56 Bix, 319.
“down-and-out” and could not interfere with any Japanese military action.\textsuperscript{57} His analysis was reasonable, since Stalin had recently inflicted one of his infamous purges on the USSR army. A month before, Marshal Tukhachevsky had been executed on false charges.\textsuperscript{58} At about the same time, Tojo Hideki, the Chief of Staff of the Kwantung Army, had expressed his feelings of the whole situation to the army vice-minister and the vice-chief of the General Staff:

“Judging the present situation in China from the point of view of military preparation against the Soviet Union, I am convinced that if our military power permits it, we should deliver a blow first of all upon the Nanking regime…”\textsuperscript{59}

Given their past histories, it was quite rare for the civilian and military branches, as well as the radical elements of Imperial Japan, to be in one mind about war. China had her own unholy alliance between the Nationalists and the Communists, and were spoiling for a fight.

**Rapid Escalation**

Within three days of the Marco Polo Bridge Incident, the strength of the Japanese Imperial army in the area had already swelled to 20,000 men and a hundred aircraft.\textsuperscript{60} The emperor had been informed that even if full-scale war broke out, it would be over in a matter of months. It quickly became clear, however, that the existing forces were too weak, and thus to achieve immediate victory, a dramatic

\textsuperscript{57} Harries and Harries, 206.
\textsuperscript{58} Ienaga, 82.
\textsuperscript{59} Harries and Harries, 207.
\textsuperscript{60} Tsuzuki, 285.
increase in military presence would be needed.\textsuperscript{61} Within eight weeks, there were 200,000 men in China.\textsuperscript{62}

Before the end of July, both Beijing and Tianjin had been occupied. The ease of which they fell perhaps lulled the Japanese into believing that the rest of China would be similarly easily overrun. Until then, the Japanese offensive had been limited to areas where transportation was simple and supply lines strong. These two aspects ensured the quick takeover of the two cities. The Chinese responses were underpowered as well, with only a smattering of troops being offered as defense; Beijing was abandoned as the overwhelming Japanese forces approached the city.

Activities in China also contributed to the ever expanding war. At about the same time as the fall of Beijing, a massacre occurred in Tongzhou, an eastern suburb of Beijing. Since the Japanese garrison had moved out to take the city itself, a contingent of Chinese collaborator security forces rebelled. They attacked the undefended Japanese civilian population and slew a handful of military officers left behind, as well as 223 of the 385 Japanese and Korean residents, including many women and children.\textsuperscript{63}

In response to the Tongzhou massacre, Prince Takamatsu commented to his brother the Emperor that “the mood in the army today is that we’re really going to smash China so that it will be ten years before they can stand up straight again.”\textsuperscript{64} The stage had been set for a full-scale, albeit undeclared, war between China and Japan. The conflict in North China became the Second Sino-Japanese War. By

\textsuperscript{61} Bix, 320.
\textsuperscript{62} Harries and Harries, 210.
\textsuperscript{63} Bix, 322.
\textsuperscript{64} Ibid.
September, 1937, the War Minister informed his commanders that “our present situation is completely different from any the empire has experienced before. We must bear in mind that this war has become total war.”

Into a quagmire

Shanghai fell in early November 1937. The Japanese army suffered 9,115 dead and 31,257 wounded, compared to the almost 250,000 Chinese killed. With the city vanquished and immense numbers of troops and refugees streaming west to Nanjing, the field commanders ordered their reinforced troops, comprised of the Shanghai Expeditionary Force and the Tenth Army, to pursue. Their original mission was to take Shanghai, adding to the number of Japanese-controlled ports. Instead, the troops ignored directives from Tokyo and arbitrarily decided to push 180 miles inland to Nanjing, mainly on foot.

There was no overarching plan in the beginning to take Nanjing, the capital of China. For all intents and purposes, the push westward was a decision made on the spur, without careful planning. The military generals had thought that military operations would be restricted to an area where the Imperial army’s supply lines were short, secure, and well controlled, and where the terrain was well-mapped and well understood. This was certainly the case in the earliest stages of the war. Manchuria was easily accessible from the Japanese colonies in Korea by train; Tianjin and Shanghai were ports. Nanjing would be the first conquest that resided deep inland,

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65 Ibid., 325.
66 Ibid., 332. 250,000 includes both civilians and defending soldiers.
67 Harries and Harries, 207.
surrounded by many minor villages and towns that met the incoming Japanese troops with ordinary Chinese citizens, undefended by KMT soldiers, for the first time.

The soldiers of the Shanghai Expeditionary Force, “consisting mainly of poorly disciplined reservists in their late twenties and early thirties”, were thrust headlong into this hostile new environment. Their experiences would illustrate powerfully the consequences of poor planning, as well as the atrocities that would flourish.

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68 Bix, 323.
While it is clear that the architects, if one may even call them that, of the Japanese invasion of China were flawed, the numerous difficulties the ordinary Japanese soldier encountered there, as well as the bleakness of the life he led while mired deep inside enemy territory, are a critical indictment of the whole invasion. In a country as vast as China, even the largest army can be hard-pressed to keep its forces together, especially without modern communication technologies. For the invading force encountering the rural lands of China for the first time, the experience proved to be seriously debilitating.

In fact, the charge inland was much less a grand military action than a hot pursuit, where the Japanese soldiers chased Shanghai refugees and Chinese soldiers towards Nanjing. There are obvious problems. Armies are not the ideal vehicle for such operations, especially on foot and over two hundred miles. Saitō Jirō, a first-class private with the Shanghai Expeditionary Force, described his platoon’s dilemma in a diary entry:

“Since we had no maps, and we didn’t know where the main divisions were, we did not know where to proceed. We must be such a lonely and solitary army, if we are guided only by our compasses and the tracks of those gone before! On the road, we heard gunfire, and thought it was enemy stragglers. Orders came, and we halted our progress. After a while we confirmed it was from a friendly troop, so we felt confident in advancing again. “

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69 Nanjin Datusha Shiliaoji (9) – Rijun Guanbing Riji yu Shuxin, 166.
This was on the 22nd of November, less than three weeks before the fall of Nanjing, and his squad was expected to press on towards the enemy’s capital, guided only by the movements of their comrades and tracking enemies as if they were huntsmen instead of soldiers. Presumably the high-ranking officers in their command posts had maps, but the individual platoons did not.

It was also extremely easy for groups of soldiers to become separated from the main divisions, whether due to enemy fire, or because of the presence of a Chinese village, which represented food and shelter for the under-equipped Japanese. In fact, the impact the villagers had on the invasion can hardly be underestimated. Many of the peasants, like the invading soldiers, sought just to survive, political alignments or national loyalties aside. They had to contend not only with the Japanese, but also the power struggles between the KMT and the Communists, even though the two parties had officially formed a united front against the Empire. The Imperial army was invading a country itself torn by a civil war.

And then there was winter.

One might have thought that history had provided telling examples of armies marching in the cold months of the year. While it is true that the Chinese winter did not offer the same punishing rebukes as Russia’s did to Napoleon and Hitler, the climate was cold enough to greatly impede the progress of the advancing troops. The Imperial army captured Nanjing on the 13th of December; by that time, winter had started to set in, and many soldiers had already seen their first Chinese snowfall. The temperature was near freezing, and conditions were only made worse by the frequent
rain that drenched the land on and off through late November and early December. Towards the latter, it snowed.

Up until the first days of December, supplies could still be easily ferried to the troops by boat. A supply officer identified the city of Danyang as the turning point, after which the supply situation became steadily worse. Danyang is a major city on the Yangtze River, the longest river in China, and it was simple for the divisions to set the place up as a supply depot. The officer, Kisaki Hisashi, complained of their command’s desire to push on towards Nanjing, which resulted in him receiving an order to move out on the same day that the supply convoy reached Danyang on the 3rd of December. His squad was thus unable to resupply or rest. To add insult to injury, his wireless radio broke down soon after, robbing him of the ability to call for further supplies.⁷⁰

In fact, even if his radio had been working, it is doubtful that supplies could have reached any troops on the march. Even before Danyang, road conditions gave much grief to the soldiers. Saitō’s squad found a newly built road on the 20th of November. Due to a combination of heavy rain and shoddy construction, the general condition of the road had deteriorated so that horses fell through bridges and men became stuck in the mud.

Meanwhile, it was so cold that none of them sweated even though it took great effort to slog through the countryside.⁷¹ The platoon of Kurosu Tadanobu had more than ten horses collapse due to the poor road conditions, and they had to halt and

⁷¹ Nanjing Datusha Shiliaoji (9) – Rijun Guanbing Riji ya Shuxin, 164.
spend most of the day trying to extricate their mounts, which could not get up by themselves.\textsuperscript{72}

Needless to say, if the relatively agile mounts of the cavalry could not pass through the quagmire of the Chinese countryside, the slow-moving supply convoys had no chance of ever reaching the divisions, themselves ever pushing forwards. One of the effects this had was the lack of good winter clothing available to the soldiers. Saitō and his platoon had to find wool jackets because they did not have any.\textsuperscript{73}

Azuma Shiro, a veteran famous for publishing his diary in which he recounted war crimes, asserted that the first thing he and his comrades did when chancing upon a village on the night of 6th December was to snatch the blankets off the villagers, even before searching for food. He lamented that they were “forced” to massacre that village to the last man before they made camp, because their deaths made his slumber feel safe.\textsuperscript{74} Did they have any realistic alternatives? Had they been equipped with winter supplies, they might have gone through the night simply by making camp in the countryside and establishing a defensive perimeter. As it stood, they were forced to rob the villagers of their blankets simply to survive: their lack of adequate support propelled them into a confrontation with the village, of which there was no simple way out.

**Requisitioning**

But a far greater consequence of the supply lines’ failure was basic sustenance. Simply put, the troops did not even have enough food to feed

\textsuperscript{72} Ibid., 298.
\textsuperscript{73} Ibid., 169.
\textsuperscript{74} *Nanjin Datusha Shiliaoji (8) – Rijun Guanbing Riji*, 417.
themselves. This gave rise to the practice known as requisitioning. Some might call it “living off the land”, but in reality it was nothing more than robbery. Ogawa Sekijirō, a chief of judicial affairs in the Tenth Army, put it this way:

“Wherever we went, what we missed most were sleeping supplies. Like sleeping supplies, food is something that is essential for a camp, and both of these were usually forcibly requisitioned. This is something that is already taken for granted. Whenever we arrive at a new place, we go requisitioning immediately without hesitation. Every squad is the same, using guns to escort Chinks to the town for requisitioning. Perhaps a few soldiers might wander here and there, looking for needed supplies. Often they would use the name of requisitioning to pillage and loot.”

Ogawa’s experiences are by no means unique. Quite often, their hardships were made worse by the retreating Chinese soldiers, who often adopted a scorched earth policy.

Two days before the fall of Nanjing, Rear Admiral Yamada Senji noted that “…the village was extremely desolate and barren, and with the destruction wrought by Chink troops, there was nothing to eat there. Everybody complained of hunger.” Since multiple divisions marched through the same stretch of China in a disorganized mass, a village could expect to be plundered more than once. As a result, even requisitioning gave the Japanese soldiers only barely enough food for themselves. Two days after the fall of Nanjing, however, Yamada’s diary still asserted that “every squad is suffering a headache from the problem of low supplies.” Not even the taking of the enemy capital ameliorated the widespread logistical problems.

These are all problems that could have been remedied, had the division leaders felt it necessary that the supply convoys moved together with the bulk of the

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75 Nanjin Datasha Shiliaoji (9) – Rijun Guanbing Riji yu Shuxin, 388.
76 Ibid., 2-4.
army, or at least paid more attention to logistics. But right after the fall of Shanghai, morale was high, and the field commanders desired to strike while the iron was hot. Ensuring the adequate provision of their troops would have decreased their chances of success. Azuma’s orders, for example, were to “ignore small groups of enemies” in favor of the larger prize—the enemy capital.

Far better to quickly subjugate the enemy than to wind up in a protracted war. As it was, even rear guard troops like Saitō’s had to live off the land. As can be expected, requisitioning was not a peaceful affair. Their targets were “pitiable citizens of a defeated country,” remarked Corporal Meguro Fukuji. A diary entry from 5th December reads: “Went requisitioning this afternoon. Burnt 17 Chink houses, killed the locals.” Not all soldiers were as offhand as Meguro. Kondō, in the same squad, called their “requisitioning from every house, burning one village down, killing innocent people…unbearable.” Along the way, heading from Shanghai to Nanjing, he saw “many corpses of enemy troops and civilians.”

Lieutenant General Sasaki Tōichi found his troops using stagnant water from ponds to slake their thirst. For him, the cold climate was a blessing, since the cold of winter prevented too many cases of diarrhea from occurring. This further suggested that the higher officers were much more concerned with how their soldiers’ fighting ability would be affected in the short run, than with any long-term effects. Diarrhea

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77 Bix, 332.
78 Nanjin Datusha Shiliaoji (8) – Rijun Guanbing Riji, 412.
79 Nanjin Datusha Shiliaoji (9) – Rijun Guanbing Riji yu Shuxin, 83.
80 Ibid., 103. Meguro’s diary entry did not refer to Kondō by his full name, just by his family name.
81 Ibid.
82 Nanjin Datusha Shiliaoji (8) – Rijun Guanbing Riji, 320.
would disable a soldier when they needed to push on, while other diseases would take time to incubate, by which they would have already taken the enemy’s capital.

The 66th Regiment was less lucky with regards to casualties. Two men died of complications after drinking presumably fresh water.\(^83\) The only safe water could thus only be taken from the natives, usually from village wells or water storage. At times, water, food and clothes were not the only supplies the soldiers took from the villagers. When none of the above was available, human ingenuity still found a way to defend against the biting winds. By stealing the structural beams and thatched roofs from the houses, camps could be warmed. Ogawa, the judicial officer, observed that “in order to receive warmth, everything, including houses, was used for fuel and fire.”\(^84\)

The Japanese soldiers soon found that they could trust no one, not even the few Chinese who either appeared supportive or harmless, when they went requisitioning in villages. Private First Class Makihara Nobuo encountered a Chinese villager who could speak Japanese. “…after he got close to us he started firing. How hateful.”\(^85\) They had good reason to suspect strong, healthy youths in villagers of being enemy stragglers or soldiers out of uniform, but the elderly were hardly guileless either. After pulling a pair of old Chinese from their beds, Private Ohara Kōtarō went into the storeroom and found a cache of grenades and ammunition.\(^86\)


\(^84\) Nanjin Datusha Shiliaoji (9) – Rijun Guanbing Riji yu Shuxin, 406.

\(^85\) Nanjin Datusha Shiliaoji (8) – Rijun Guanbing Riji, 545.

\(^86\) Ibid., 651.
Had they left the old couple alone, the weapons could well have been put to use on Ohara’s squad.

In other words, what the Japanese soldiers found in China was an extremely hostile and shifting environment, where the most seemingly well-meaning Chinese could turn out to be an assassin, and where soldiers hid among villagers. In short, guerilla warfare par excellence. Much of the popular attitude against the Japanese is obvious and understandable: an invading army that has rampaged its way across China at a degree far more intense than General Sherman across Georgia is hardly the sort of company that would merit a warm welcome from the locals. None of the interactions that the soldiers had with the Chinese seem positive, or even remotely friendly. Even against the people that posed no threat, menial work was still found for them to do. Ogawa wrote down this observation:

“There were some squads in full gear, some sort of special squadron. Since they were so tired, they brought along Chinese people. Not only did they have them carry their bags, they even let them carry ammunition, helmets, and the like. The Chinese people numbered almost as many as the Japanese. Somebody remarked that the scene looked like ‘the night march of a hundred ghosts’, making one wonder if they were really a squad in the Japanese army or if they were actually all Chinese. I have said that there is nothing more pitiful than the citizens of a defeated country. In this sort of situation they can only obey, or die. If they try to escape they will be shot.”

There is a strong implication here that Ogawa had seen cases where Chinese civilians had been executed, due to an unwillingness to obey Japanese soldiers. He is one of the more learned voices from the Tenth Army, having graduated from the Faculty of

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87 Nanjin Datasha Shiliaoji (9) – Rijun Guanbing Riji yu Shuxin, 405. His tone in this diary entry is more or less resigned.
Law at Meiji University.\textsuperscript{88} It is telling that he did not refer to the use of Chinese civilians as packhorses, or their execution if suspected of disobedience, as crimes.

This is in stark contrast to his painstaking handling of rape and assault cases within his division, as compiled in later diary entries. These acts he referred to as definite crimes. There he even wrote his superiors protesting against the dropping of charges against alleged Japanese rapists, arguing for a full and thorough investigation.\textsuperscript{89} This suggests that the former conduct, forcibly enlisting Chinese civilians as porters, was commonplace and accepted, and not viewed as a crime by internal affairs. Rape and assault, meanwhile, were considered to be major offenses, yet amnesty could be and was granted for them, as evidenced by Ogawa’s frustration. This gave a certain implicit legitimacy to such deeds.

Even for platoons with judicial officers, though, their insistence on due process for soldiers accused of war crimes often meant that few of the cases could ever reach trial. Ogawa himself became so focused on obtaining due process for his cases, leading his commander to complain about his working pace.\textsuperscript{90} War moves too fast for a full, peacetime-like investigation to occur, and frequently there are simply no witnesses, only victims—and a Japanese army investigator cannot go door to door interviewing Chinese citizens, for obvious reasons.\textsuperscript{91}

\begin{thebibliography}{99}
\bibitem{88} "軍人データベース サクラタロウDB" (Soldier database, sakuratarou database), available from \url{http://purunus.main.jp/index.php}; Internet; accessed 10 December 2006. Meiji University is one of the “Tokyo Six Universities”, known throughout Japan for their highly selective admissions and quality education.
\bibitem{89} \textit{Nanjin Datusha Shiliaoji (9) – Rijun Guanbing Riji yu Shuxin}, 392.
\bibitem{90} Ibid., 420.
\bibitem{91} Paraphrasing a memorable line in \textit{The Economist}: “The advantages of being able to speak more than one tongue are so obvious that they scarcely need spelling out…Investigators covering atrocities in darkest China…might not have to ask, ‘Anybody here been raped and speak Japanese?’” See “Monoglot Britain: God’s Worst Linguists”, \textit{The Economist}, 16-22 December 2006.
\end{thebibliography}
Eventually, officers just dispensed with the trouble of searching through villages. After Private Takeshima received orders from his superior, directing that any suspicious villages be burned to the ground, his troop delighted in setting fires everywhere.\textsuperscript{92} Not all platoons had the luxury of a discipline officer such as Ogawa in tow to at least moderate the actions of the soldiers. Azuma’s squadron, for example, lost its entire command structure due to attrition. One lowly commander was the only surviving officer. From the February 26 revolt in Tokyo the year before, it can be seen that commands were to be obeyed absolutely, no matter their content, so long as there were no countermanding orders. Azuma’s situation was no different. When the commander asked for a Chinese woman to be given to him for pleasure, nothing could be done to stop him or his cohorts from committing rape, as Azuma distastefully noted in his diary.\textsuperscript{93}

Captives

If the emphasis on requisitioning all their supplies from the locals created enough opportunities for soldiers to engage in illegal acts, the whole business became even direr when the notion of captives came into play. As they neared Nanjing, increasing numbers of Chinese soldiers chose to surrender rather than flee or fight to the death, compounding the problem.

Unlike some Japanese who could proclaim to die for the sake of their Emperor, the Chinese soldiers had nothing even close to such a belief system. After

\textsuperscript{92} Nanjin Datusha Shiliaoji (8) – Rijun Guanbing Riji, 688.
\textsuperscript{93} Ibid., 415.
all, their highest superior, Chiang Kai-Shek, had just left Nanjing, leaving them to the Imperial Army. The Japanese found themselves flooded by captives in large numbers, yet another situation that their planners had not anticipated, and thus wholly unprepared for.

Not all would-be captives had been taken into custody. Rear Admiral Sasaki bluntly described the treatment given to many would-be surrendering Chinese soldiers during the fall of Nanjing, and implied that the sentiments expressed were not uncommon:

“There were streams of soldiers coming to surrender, thousands of them. The excited soldiers ignored orders and killed every one of them. Thinking back to all the blood spilled by my comrades as well as these ten days of adversity and pain, even I wanted to ‘do them all in’. Currently, we do not even have one grain of rice left. Even though there may be supplies in the city, my troops cannot possibly carry supplies just for prisoners of war.”

He knew, however, that even if they had made the soldiers prisoners of war, their failed supply lines could never have supported such an influx of hungry mouths. The day before Nanjing fell, Second Lieutenant Amano Saburō commented on the hopelessness of the captive situation: “Since our supply lines could not keep up, the captives had not had food to eat for the past week, and there are more and more of them.” When food was found for the captives, they often fought each other out of sheer hunger. Nevertheless, immense numbers of captives were eventually held by the Japanese occupiers, packed tightly in small buildings. Rear Admiral Yamada’s platoon packed a stunning 14,777 captives into a school building a day after Nanjing.

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94 Ibid., 320.
95 Nanjin Datusha Shiliaoji (9) – Rijun Guanbing Riji yu Shuxin, 75.
fell, and “whether they were killed or set free”, “[the consequences of each choice] would [have been] difficult to contemplate.”

Exact statistics on the number of captives succumbing to hunger or their harsh conditions may not be known. With that many “citizens of a defeated country” packed together, disturbances had a high chance of occurring, whether planned or spontaneous. On 16th December, one day before the Nanjing entrance ceremony where General Matsui would formally enter the city, a fire broke out in the Tenth Army prisoner camps. A third of the barracks housing the Japanese soldiers were burned down as well. In order to prevent further such incidents, three thousand of the captives were executed.

Far worse were the measures taken to ensure that the ceremony on the 17th could proceed smoothly. Colonel Gyoza Morozumi, then serving under Rear Admiral Yamada, received orders to dispose of all prisoners in order to eliminate any possibility of disorder. Both officers rejected the orders, refusing to use such drastic measures against unarmed men. Morozumi noted that high command “forces one to obey”, and they had no choice but to carry out the orders. “Tanaka Saburō” (pseudonym), a member of the Yamada Brigade, described how his unit, by itself, “took care” of perhaps 13,500 people, using an encirclement of heavy and light

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97 Nanjin Datusha Shiliaoji (9) – Rijun Guanbing Riji yu Shuxin, 3.
98 Ibid., 32.
99 He was a Colonel in 1937, by 1939 he had been promoted to Lieutenant General. The profile of Morozumi can be found at http://purunus.main.jp/dnum/4242.
100 Nanjin Datusha Shiliaoji (9) – Rijun Guanbing Riji yu Shuxin, 16. Morozumi did not specify what or who “high command” was.
101 Ibid., 17.
machine guns.\textsuperscript{102} Yamada himself wrote how they spent the entire day of the 18th struggling to complete their assigned task. They failed, and had to spend the following morning winding up, cutting into their scheduled departure time.\textsuperscript{103}

Division Commander Nakajima Kesago summed up the Shanghai Expeditionary Force’s policy towards prisoners in general:

“For the most part, it is our policy not to take prisoners, so we have decided to tidy up. If we capture a group of one thousand, five thousand, or ten thousand, we can’t even divest them of their weapons. It’s just that they completely lose the will to fight and come after us in big groups, and even though they are safe, once they do make a disturbance, finishing them off is a problem...Even so, since it is just after our victory, we are quite unable to implement things very quickly. From the beginning, I never imagined that we would have to deal with it in this way, so the staff officers are extremely busy.”\textsuperscript{104}

Besides the predetermined policy of “take no prisoners”, it is also quite clear that what they encountered in Nanjing was far beyond what the policy originally envisioned. One can speculate how such a policy might have contributed to the mobility of an army on the march, but the army planners do not seem to have extended its implementation towards actual occupation.

And these were only the formal prisoners of war, “treated” with official army policy, through official army clean-up operations. One could well argue that during the period where the Japanese divisions occupied Nanjing, they held the entire city captive.

\textsuperscript{102} Honda and Gibney, 239-246. The pseudonym was assigned because “Tanaka” gave Honda a personal interview, and requested that his identity be kept secret. His account corresponds to what both his superiors, Morozumi and Yamada, record in their respective diaries.

\textsuperscript{103} Nanjin Datusha Shiliaoji (9) – Rijun Guanbing Riji yu Shuxin, 3.

\textsuperscript{104} Diaries of Japanese Imperial Soldiers, 281; Honda and Gibney, 195. The diary was publicized by Nakajima’s son.
The Nanjing Massacre

The rampage across Chinese countryside from Shanghai to Nanjing peaked at the Nanjing Massacre. Like estimating the total deaths of the event, trying to judge the exact length of the event shifts focus away from the substance of the Massacre. It is enough to know that the rate of atrocities petered out only two months after the entry, and that mass death conducted by Japanese soldiers occurred.105

A reason why the Nanjing Massacre has received so much more focus, both in scholarly literature and the popular media, than the daily activities of soldiers elsewhere in the campaign or the secret biological experiments, is due to its concentration. Similar to the infamous Bataan Death March or the atomic bombings, the Massacre featured immense brutal and sustained death in a specific and largely limited locale—the capital of China.

Another factor lies in the presence of foreigners through much of the event, many of whom either kept diaries or worked for media agencies. For the atrocities committed in the Shanghai-Nanjing charge, the only sources were either Chinese or Japanese. As James McCullum, a missionary, wrote, “what happened here happened in all the cities between here and Shanghai and in Wuhu and every little village and town and hamlet that has been occupied by Japanese troops. Only there were foreigners here who reported and objected and told the story to the whole world.”106

To the foreigners, that the Massacre was a harrowing event might be an understatement. Dr. Robert Wilson of the University of Nanjing hospital called it

105 Suping Lu, They Were in Nanjing: The Nanjing Massacre Witnessed by American and British Nationals (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2004), 102
106 Ibid, 276.
“the modern Dante’s Inferno, written in huge letters with blood and rape.” Many of them were familiar with Japan, and others had lived there. John Magee, a Yale-educated minister, struggled “to reconcile the Japan [he] knew and the savagery [he] witnessed.”

Their accounts betray much of the psychological damage that they suffered as the Massacre wore on. When Archibald Steele of the Chicago Daily News entered the city, he “found it necessary” to drive over piles of corpses five feet high, already much compressed by trucks and tracked vehicles. Soon after witnessing the mass killings, he wrote in another article that “he had to listen to the wailing and sobbing of women pleading for the return of sons and husbands they will never see again.”

The sources published by survivors and foreign witnesses are a veritable whirlwind of death and violence. The secretary of the YMCA, George Fitch, wrote that “old men and old women, babes in arms and babes unborn were not spared.” The foreigners reported many cases of rape against women of all ages, day after day. Looting, meanwhile, was also extremely common, and was not limited only to Chinese housing. Even the Safety Zone set up in Nanjing by foreigners offered scant protection. If John Rabe, a member of the Nazi Party, happened upon an act of brutality, he could stop it with his swastika badge. But he was only one man, and the accounts of foreigners and survivors fill up entire volumes.

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107 Ibid., 89.  
108 Ibid., 112.  
109 Ibid., 20.  
110 Ibid., 21.  
111 Ibid., 36.  
112 Ibid., 37.
Official Japanese responses to the never-ending reports of atrocity hew closely to what Ogawa Sekijirō, the Japanese chief of judicial affairs, experienced when he tried to take his investigations into army rape and plunder to his superiors. There were substantial censorship policies in place which silenced those wishing to publicize what was happening in Nanjing. Hundreds of Japanese cameramen and reporters were in the city, but they were all prohibited from quoting foreign news sources or discussing massacres, rapes, or anything out of the ordinary.\footnote{Bix, 335.}

The foreigners in the Safety Zone submitted reams of reports, complaints, and records to the Japanese authorities in Nanjing daily. These disappeared like a rock thrown into the sea. W. Plumer Mills, a clergyman with the American Northern Presbyterian Mission, was “forced to the conclusion that the Japanese army either cannot or will not effectively control its troops”, while the British Consul noted that “military lawlessness continues due to lack of any centralized control.”\footnote{Suping Lu, 278.}

In truth, all the reports filed with the Japanese Embassy could have had little real use. The civilian workers could do nothing about the army, and frankly they “were terrified by the military, and could do nothing except forward these communications through Shanghai to Tokyo.”\footnote{Brackman, 185.} The reports forwarded directly to the army had little effect as well.

General Matsui Iwane, ostensibly the supreme commander during the Massacre, was sentenced to hang by the International Military Tribunal for his responsibility for the atrocities. During the week he was in Nanjing, four days after
the fall, he did nothing concerning army discipline even though he knew of the multitude of atrocity reports.\footnote{Ibid., 183.}

During Iwane’s interrogation at Sugamo Prison after the war, he admitted that he heard that his troops were committing many outrages in Nanjing from Japanese diplomats. Yet later in the interrogation, when asked by his captor about whether he made reports about the behavior of his troops, he said, “…No, I was not asked to make a report. If there had been any such incidents, I would naturally have made a report on my own responsibility.”\footnote{Ibid., 184.} He was recalled from the commanding post later in the year into retirement. Press releases indicated that the negative publicity at the time of the Nanjing Massacre motivated the change in command, in order to tighten discipline.\footnote{Suping Lu, 279.}

\section*{Conclusion}

The Shanghai-Nanjing campaign was characterized by an absence of planning and direction, as well as a lack of centralized control and recriminations for those guilty of wanton acts such as rape. These latter factors carried over into the Nanjing Massacre, multiplied a hundredfold. Here was the enemy’s capital, ripe for the plunder, complete with its own hostage population. History may never know the personal motivations behind incidents such as the infamous beheading competition, other than that the participants treated it as a sport. The goings-on were plastered across Japanese newspapers at the time, but there was certainly no action taken against the culprits by any organ of the Japanese command.
No sources have ever surfaced, actively ordering soldiers to engage in rape and plunder. But take-no-prisoner directives such as Division Commander Nakajima’s did exist, and these spell out in great detail how all prisoners were executed. There were no provisions for retaining prisoners per se, and thus individual commanders were able to do whatever they wanted without going against orders. Arguably more important than what orders specified may be what orders did not, and in this space many things could occur.

Direction from the Emperor reinforced this no-holds barred environment as well. For the longest time, the war in China was undeclared, and only referred to officially as the “China Incident.” On one hand, this allowed Japan to continue trading with American businesses for raw materials despite U.S. laws proclaiming neutrality. More crucially, however, an undeclared war meant that Japan could refuse to apply international laws and treaties to what happened in China. These included agreements about the treatment and definition of prisoners of war, such as the Third Geneva Convention that Japan signed in 1929.

If international laws did not apply, then the dictation of what did apply would be left to the army generals. And when these generals, such as Iwane, merely turned a blind eye, the whole mess is laid wide open. Discipline, as a concept, is not limited only to military maneuvers and the ability of an army to fight. It permeates every passing moment of a soldier’s life, whether in or out of battle. In China, with the system that emerged, discipline became meaningless due to the absence of guidelines or direction. The result was quite simply the dissolution of control.

119 Bix, 326. Bix also notes other reasons, primarily theological.
120 Brackman, 249. Tokyo did not formally ratify this convention.
The Second World War is not the only conflict in China in recent memory where the problems of discipline, control, and planning led to chaos. Indeed, such situations can be relatively common even in modern warfare, whether in epic wars stretching across nations, or localized battles centering on single towns.

This final chapter examines two instances during the same half-century that exhibit many of the same features as the Shanghai-Nanjing march, in order to shed light on different facets of this thesis’s central question. The first concerns the aftermath of the Boxer Rebellion at the turn of the century, when armies from eight countries rampaged across Beijing, illustrating the dilemma of discipline, and the actions of soldiers when deprived of a clear central authority.

The second comparison deals with Nazi Germany and the brutalization of warfare, especially during Operation Barbarossa, where Hitler’s army attempted to conquer Soviet Russia. The Wehrmacht, Hitler’s army, encountered many of the same obstacles the Japanese Army faced in China. Here, the focus is not so much on the experiences of the soldiers themselves, but on the way their minds adapted to the new physical environment, and the increasing severity of their actions as a result. This represents a psychological aspect that has not been adequately explained in the prior narrative.
Boxer Rebellion

The origins of the Boxer Rebellion are well-known. At the beginning of the twentieth century, imperial rule in China chafed under foreign influence. Western countries constantly infringed upon China’s national sovereignty, as exemplified in the American Open Door Policy, which attempted to give each foreign nation its own share of the colonization pie. Since coming into major contact with the foreign powers, the Chinese had fought many wars, losing each one. In the Sino-Japanese War (1894-1895), China gave up any claim to Korea, having been forced to grant it complete independence. The two Opium Wars (1834-43 and 1856-60) inflicted humiliating unequal treaties on China, forcing it to cede territories and pay heavy reparations to Britain.

The Empress Dowager, finding herself powerless when it came to direct conflict, attempted a different solution by harnessing popular sentiment, which was in no short supply at the time. The movement chosen by the imperial authorities was the Boxers, and they had one peculiar claim to fame: they were immune to death, and were supernaturally protected from blade or bullet. Since their violent activities were limited first to Catholics and then foreigners in general, the Imperial authorities saw them as no threat to their own sovereignty, and thus had no incentive to restrain them. Indeed, local authorities had encouraged the initial organization of the Boxers as a bulwark against foreigners in Shantung province.121

In 1900, when the violence perpetuated by the Boxers reached its peak, foreigners resident in China became highly concerned about the position of the

Imperial government. Chinese Imperial soldiers were seen training with the Boxers, and the “inactivity of all the officials during the worst periods of rioting” convinced many that the Imperial Court was either powerless or actively behind the uprising.\textsuperscript{122}

The violence culminated in the siege of Beijing, where the Boxers trapped the foreign residents in the Legation Quarter. This was the embassy district, and the residents linked the compounds into a single lightly armed fortification. They were holed up from June of 1900 until August of the same year, waiting for their parent countries to mobilize. Despite their lack of supplies and adequate weaponry, the Quarter boasted very good terrain. It was impossible to shell the embassies except from very close range. The defenders took advantage of this fact.\textsuperscript{123} In the middle of August, relief arrived, but in the form of a sack. For the following two weeks troops from eight countries rampaged across Beijing and its surrounding locales, pillaging and looting.

**What Transpired**

Even before the invasion of Beijing proper, atrocities were rife once the foreign powers landed on Chinese soil. George Lynch, a Briton traveling with the Japanese, Russian and British forces, found himself giving water to some Chinese girls with broken legs in Tungzhou, a city southeast of Beijing. They had apparently jumped from a sheer drop, and “shouts of Russians mingled with screams” coming

\textsuperscript{122} Ibid., xii.
from above told Lynch all he needed to know.\textsuperscript{124} The Russians did not enjoy a very good reputation even among the other foreign armies, and fearful stories were told about them in camp describing how they shot defenseless Chinese all day long.\textsuperscript{125}

There are accounts of Chinese women committing suicide after having been raped by foreign soldiers. Luella Miner, a teacher at a Boys’ School in Tungzhou, wrote that “the Russians all the way up from Tientsin butchered women and children without mercy, and women and girls by hundreds have committed suicide to escape a worse fate at the hands of Russian and Japanese brutes.”\textsuperscript{126}

By far the most common activity of the foreign soldiers, however, was indiscriminate looting, and these instances received the greatest attention from the observers of the time, and were chronicled extensively in personal diaries as well as being published in media articles. Looting was primarily leveled against Chinese homes and businesses, but at times the Allies did the same thing against each other. In fact, the first looting Bertram Simpson, a Briton present at the Siege, witnessed was not inflicted upon Chinese, but on a Frenchman. Six British sappers came across a drunken French soldier, and plundered the silver lumps that he had presumably looted earlier from Chinese stores. Being drunk, the Frenchman could do nothing but mutter incoherently, “\textit{Sacrés voleurs! Sacres voleurs anglais!}”.\textsuperscript{127} There was little love lost between the forces that made up the armies.

\textsuperscript{125} Sharf and Harrington, 237.
\textsuperscript{127} B.L. Putnam Weale, \textit{Indiscreet Letters from Peking: Being the Notes of an Eye-Witness, Which Set Forth in Some Detail, from Day to Day, the Real Story of the Siege and Sack of a Distressed Capital in 1900 -- the Year of Great Tribulation} (New York: Dodd, Mead and Company, 1908), 326.
Private Harry Dill of the 14th US Infantry remarked that every man in his company had half a dozen watches and some ten or fifteen.\(^{128}\) The loot flowed like water. Much of what had been looted, for example precious silks or porcelain, were immediately sold to others for hard currency. Many people made a fortune either by selling what they had stolen, or simply by reselling loot.

Contrary to what some historians write, there appears to be little difference in conduct by soldiers from different countries. Jasper Whiting, an American war correspondent, wrote that the looting of Beijing was the most extraordinary and the most outrageous proceeding connected with the Boxer troubles. From his observations, it was not confined to any set of individuals or to any nationality, nor was it confined to the men.\(^{129}\) In fact, he was told that women had started it. Simpson sums up the activity in one of his letters: “…Then we came across Americans, again some French, then some Germans, until it became an endless procession of looting men—conquerors and conquered mixed and indifferent…”\(^{130}\) “The Japanese, who are supposed to be on their good conduct, have despoiled the whole Board of revenue and taken over a million pounds sterling in bullion.”\(^{131}\)

**Comparison and Analysis: Boxers**

Even at the start of the relief campaign, problems had already arisen within the eight-nation force. Nominally, the forces were under one central command, a British General. However, since the armies were composed of many different

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\(^{128}\) Sharf and Harrington, 200.  
\(^{129}\) Ibid., 222.  
\(^{130}\) Weale, 369.  
\(^{131}\) Ibid., 371.
nationalities, each with their own ranking officers, confusion was bound to occur. Lynch noted that the order of march was constantly squabbled over by the many generals, and many peculiarities occurred as a result.\textsuperscript{132} The co-ordination between the armies was especially awful. The Japanese were used to going first, traveling with their supply trains, and as a consequence, every other nation had to wait for the entire Japanese convoy, mules and all, to pass by before advancing. Meanwhile, the Americans and British had to march in the scorching midday sun.

Similar to the Imperial Japanese activity in Nanjing a few decades hence, faction dynamics had a large influence on military activity. Where squads of Japanese soldiers competed with each other in Nanjing, in 1900 forces from the different nations vied with each other to achieve objectives and to gain glory. Since each of the nations had vested interests in China, either with nationals trapped in Beijing or spheres of influence to maintain, none of the factions wanted to fall behind by any measure. Lieutenant Bernard Holbrooke of the British army wrote that “all the Powers [were] very jealous of each other, and each [had] a separate landing place.”\textsuperscript{133} The armies arrived at Beijing in separate waves instead of in one unified force, further contributing to the confusion.

One major element that allowed the atrocities to go on as they did in Nanjing was the lack of sanctions from the top, until the activities became widespread and terrible enough to attract major foreign and domestic media attention. In Beijing, similar derelictions of duty were present, and led to negative publicity on the home front as well. Whiting considered the example set by the British and American high

\begin{footnotes}
\item[132] Lynch, 27.
\item[133] Sharf and Harrington, 235.
\end{footnotes}
officials to have had a great influence on the conduct of the common soldier. He wrote that the best collection of loot obtained belonged to Lady MacDonald, the wife of the British minister, while the second-best belonged to the First Secretary of the American Legation.\textsuperscript{134} In a New York Times article published on 3\textsuperscript{rd} September 1901, Squiers, the First Secretary, was described as having returned home with “a collection of Chinese art, filling several railway cars”. The article goes on to identify the art as having been bought from missionaries and at auctions of military loot.\textsuperscript{135} To his meager credit, Squiers had no intention of keeping the art in a private collection; instead, he donated it to the New York Metropolitan Museum of Art.

Another consequence of the lack of direction was the contamination of other, relatively virtuous troops. The Indian troops originally did not do much looting, but after seeing their counterparts do so with impunity, gradually started to participate, eventually setting up roadside stations where they hawked their own plundered material.\textsuperscript{136} Arthur Smith observed “a contagious demoralization of fighting men” when they saw others behaving lawlessly.\textsuperscript{137}

After a few weeks, nations set up rules preventing looting. At first glance, laws like these were meant to stem the tide of lawlessness, but they only pushed the looting and selling into the official sphere. As Whiting wrote, items had to be purchased, but “a Chinaman will dispose of his choicest possessions for a song if he is allowed to inspect at close range the muzzle of a loaded revolver.”\textsuperscript{138} Meanwhile,

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{itemize}
\item[134] Ibid., 223.
\item[135] Hoe, 321.
\item[136] Weale, 372.
\item[138] Sharf and Harrington, 223.
\end{itemize}
\end{footnotesize}
Simpson noted that, “In consequence of this glut of silver and curiosities, a regular buying and selling has set up, and all our armies are becoming armies of traders. There are official auctions now being organized, where you will be able to buy legally, and after the approved methods, every kind of loot.”

Beijing slowly regained a semblance of order in August. To their credit, the areas of the city where Britain and Japan were assigned returned to normal the earliest, with shopkeepers opening their stores for the first time since the uprising. As for the other areas, “the French burn and shoot right and left, however, and the Germans, when asked if they had taken over the section reserved for them and temporarily held by the Russians, replied—‘oh yes; we shot about 70 yesterday.”

The Allies appeared to have very different concepts of order. Beijing became a patchwork of territories with their own laws.

There are obvious differences between the Boxer Rebellion and the Japanese invasion of China thirty-odd years later. For starters, the mission of the eight-nation alliance was primarily to relieve their nationals entrenched in Beijing, and not to conquer China. They already had lucrative trading zones within the nation, and were not planning for formal occupation. The scale of the invasion was also small; with about 50,000 total foreign soldiers. There were rapes and murders, but they numbered far less than the instances of looting that went on. Perhaps this can be attributed to the nature of the invasion: it was not meant to be a war of annihilation or

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139 Weale, 372.
141 Sharf and Harrington, 238. Holbrooke estimated that the Beijing garrison totaled about 60,000-70,000 by 1901.
occupation, and journalists of all nations swarmed Beijing. The rampant looting was thus given much attention by large media outlets back on the home front.

Enough similarities exist, however, to provide a useful comparison as to the conduct of soldiers when left to their own devices in a defeated enemy nation. As with Nanjing, the Chinese leadership in Beijing had retreated ahead of the foreign forces, abandoning the commoners left behind. Without an immediate Chinese government to parley with, or enough superiors with upright standards, the soldiers of the eight-nation alliance were free to do as they wished.

The existence of many highly individual groups of soldiers parallels the command structure found in the Japanese army. Competition inevitably arises between these groups, and when one group visibly profits from its actions, it is impossible for the others to stay put. The Russians desired silver after seeing bullion in the hands of other soldiers; they found some Chinese to guide them to the hidden reserves of the city, but discovered that the Japanese had beaten them to it, making off with cartloads of silver. They were suitably incensed, and had to resort to other sources of plunder, thus perpetuating the cycle.

The Brutalization of Warfare

So far, analysis on the actions of soldiers when deprived of suitable discipline and planning in this thesis has centered on the external causes which propelled them into their situation. The following section provides a theoretical mechanism which may describe the changing mindset of soldiers engaged in what historian Omer Bartov calls the demodernization of war.
Bartov uses Operation Barbarossa, where the Nazi soldiers spread themselves thin across Soviet Russia, as his case study. His examination of their behavior provides a compelling mechanism by which they become inured and then inclined to acts of brutality in enemy territory. A fundamental shift in the mentality of soldiers occurs when they are thrown into a stark environment like the Eastern Front or the Chinese countryside, that affects their perceptions and actions. These two environments are similar enough that key elements may be extracted from the German accounts, and placed within the context of this thesis.

There are, as with the previous example of the Boxer Rebellion, key differences that must be noted between the experiences of Japanese Imperial soldiers and the soldiers of the German Wehrmacht. Primarily, the latter were influenced by ideology to a far higher degree. It is probably a given that Germans living under the Nazi regime were “immersed in a deluge of racist and anti-Semitic propaganda.”\textsuperscript{142} The frequency at which ordinary German citizens and soldiers were subjected to indoctrination sessions was also very high, compared to the Japanese.

Whether such propaganda had a real effect on the average German soldier fighting for his life is up for debate. In the absence of any other prevailing popular ideology, the degree to which Nazi propaganda “worked” can only be measured with circumstantial evidence.\textsuperscript{143} Many Japanese soldiers publicly professed fanatical commitment to the Emperor as a way to glory and promotion; it is not unreasonable

\textsuperscript{143} Certainly, there were other ideologies present, such as Communism. The soldiers of the Wehrmacht or the “elite” SS, however, only had access to one ideology: Hitler’s Nazism. All other ideas were suppressed.
to assume the German soldier as having a similar mentality towards the Fuhrer.\textsuperscript{144} While ideology may or may not be a deciding factor in the conduct of the soldiers, another element represents a real division between the Shanghai campaign and Operation Barbarossa, and must be noted when considering a comparison between the two.

This is the scale of the whole enterprise. For all the brutality committed in China from Shanghai to Nanjing, it lasted but a few months. The Eastern Front lasted for years and across hundreds of miles. The isolation of the German soldier deep within Russian territory, with only the occasional radio broadcast, newspaper, or Soviet propaganda leaflet as their contact with the outside world, contributed greatly to their perceptions of the world during those years of campaign.\textsuperscript{145} The soldiers knew only what was going on in their immediate surroundings, and soon became inured to their actions in the war.

Bartov calls the period between 1941 and 1942 “one of the greatest paradoxes of the Second World War” for the German Wehrmacht.\textsuperscript{146} The Nazi war machine in World War II was famed for its \textit{blitzkrieg} strategies, mechanized divisions of tanks breaking through defenses, supported by the Luftwaffe. The vast majority of German combat troops, however, “lived and fought in conditions of the utmost

\begin{footnotes}
\item[144] \textit{Nanjin Datusha Shiliaoji (9) – Rijun Guanbing Riji yu Shuxin}, 393. Footnote refers to the first half of sentence, referencing Ogawa’s comments on the use of ideology by soldiers in battle reports.
\end{footnotes}
primitiveness." The Blitzkrieg, so devastating in the West, simply broke down in Russia. Perhaps one of the main reasons was the weather.

The roads could hardly be called as such, and were not paved. In the beginning stages of the campaign, the armored divisions did manage to penetrate goodly distances into Russia, but the terrain soon bogged down the tanks. The result was a mass of infantry cut off from their armor support and supply trains on one side and facing the Russian winter on the other. A German corps commander reported that “the men have been lying for weeks in the rain and stand in knee-deep mud. It is impossible to change wet clothing…Frostbite incidence is high.” Since the armor could not move, the only method of transportation was by horse, and the wretched conditions destroyed their health as well.

The summer uniforms the Germans wore provided little defense against the harsh winter, and the bitterly cold temperature caused a sort of attrition against the troops immeasurable in just numbers. The environment bred disease; soldiers contracted infections and inflammations. Added to the normal attrition of battle, many companies found themselves gutted. Some platoons were led by non-commissioned officers or even privates.

As with the Japanese, a lack of support forced the troops into requisitioning. Some degree of “living off the land” had already existed on the Western Front, but orders stated a differentiation between taking what was necessary and outright plunder. Rapes and murders were initially met with swift military retribution, but

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147 Ibid.
148 Ibid., 18.
149 Ibid., 51.
150 Ibid., 67.
as the occupation there went on, less and less were brought to justice.\textsuperscript{151} On the other hand, in the East, while German actions inflicted against the Wehrmacht itself were punished severely, activities such as plunder and murder against the Russians were not court-martialed at all.

Barely a month into Operation Barbarossa, German troops had already engaged in “the wild requisitions of cattle and poultry…from the impoverished inhabitants…[causing] extraordinary bitterness among the villagers.”\textsuperscript{152} Seldom were the offenders punished by their superiors. When requisitioning is expressly allowed, the line between criminal plundering and “living off the land” becomes blurred. Both kinds of activity, in the end, were committed at the expense of Russian civilians. Debating the degrees to which the Germans went to obtain their supplies is superfluous.

As a matter of fact, so-called “criminal orders” had been issued before the actual invasion of Russia.\textsuperscript{153} These orders consisted of commands to destroy resistance and to inflict punishment on the general Russian population if no obviously guilty targets could be found.\textsuperscript{154} These “criminal orders” were broad enough that individual commanders were able to interpret them as they saw fit. The commander of the 12\textsuperscript{th} Infantry Division, for example, ordered his men to “shoot any Russian who is found behind the front-line and has not been taken prisoner in a battle.”\textsuperscript{155} With orders like these, the individual soldier is even more empowered to take whatever

\textsuperscript{151} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{152} Ibid., 77.
\textsuperscript{153} “Criminal Orders” is a term that has been referred to by numerous sources, including the tribunal at Nuremberg. See “The German High Command Trial. Part VII. United Nations War Crimes Commission”, available at \url{http://164.11.131.30/WCC/ghctrial7.htm}. Accessed April 3, 2007.
\textsuperscript{154} Bartov, \textit{The Eastern Front, 1941-45, German Troops and the Barbarisation of Warfare}, 106.
\textsuperscript{155} Ibid., 110.
action he deems needed to stay within the very broad boundaries of his superiors. In essence, they were handed a blank check.

All this represented a return to a most primitive form of warfare. In the harsh and hostile Russian environment, severe discipline was needed to keep the gutted companies together, and soldiers took out their frustrations onto the people they encountered in battle, whether soldier or citizen. A combination of both their orders and their situation led to a deteriorating state of mind, where successive criminal behavior was not deemed to be unjust, even when they committed murder, robbery, torture and destruction.\textsuperscript{156}

\textbf{Comparison and Analysis: Barbarossa}

At first blush, the Wehrmacht encountered conditions very much like what the Japanese soldiers saw in China. Here were some of the strongest engines of war in the world, famed for their great discipline and technology, reduced to the most abject conditions. The Wehrmacht initially stormed through the enemy’s outer perimeter, only to find themselves in an environment where old assumptions did not apply, into a morass where there was no easy exit.

Many similar elements are present in both the Japanese and German accounts, enough to provide an almost parallel narrative on the surface. Perhaps the nature of the environment hewed most closely to each other. Both wars suffered from winter, consisted mostly of infantry, and had terrible logistical problems as a direct consequence. Their supply trains did not receive the luxury of detailed planning, and

\textsuperscript{156} Ibid, 69.
moreover did not mesh well with their tactics and movements. Each army received extreme orders, while at the same time the disciplinary system condoned many brutal deeds. The Wehrmacht had the “criminal orders” which legitimized many of their acts, while the Japanese had explicit orders detailing how prisoners of war were to be taken care of.

But while the underlying physical causes and factors may seem to parallel one another, there is a fundamental difference here. The Japanese war in China was not couched by official sources, whether civilian or military, in any explicitly genocidal or even racist fashion. Both Manchuria and North China were invaded for economic reasons. On the other hand, Operation Barbarossa involved a much more deep-seated ideology that tied in with the overall propaganda that permeated the entire Third Reich. This was, at the top of the command structure at least, a war of destruction, of extermination, and in some ways, of genocide.

In the Japanese case, captives were not initially massacred wholesale. Individual commanders agonized over the problem over time, and wrote about the difficulties of feeding the captives. The “kill all prisoners” order was not issued until after the fall of Nanjing, when the disparate streams of soldiers were finally united together under one roof, and the various surviving officers could compare notes. This implies that the primary motivation behind the mass slayings was neither ideological nor racist: it was by mere necessity. In contrast, the panzer divisions took care to separate their Russian captives by racial categories. They also deliberately separated Jews in their own group, to be dealt with later.\footnote{Ibid., 109.}
The most important theme that comes out of this comparison is the evolution, or perhaps devolution, of the soldiers’ state of mind in this most cruel of environments. By day, the soldiers had to withstand hunger due to their lack of supplies. At night, the biting winds made a mockery of their attempts to find shelter. Forcing men to endure these conditions over a sustained period of time, strains them in ways we can only imagine. Whereas in the initial stages a troop might have been able to take what they needed from a village without further reprisal, for example, after a few weeks of hell, putting the place to the torch became a matter of course. For Bartov, the Eastern Front was the place where the Wehrmacht finally became “Hitler’s Army,” a mere tool of destruction. For the Japanese, the end of their spontaneous charge came together at Nanjing, where it seemed as if every small incident that had happened during the previous few months across the Chinese countryside repeated itself, with a far greater intensity, and concentrated in a small area.

**Tying Everything Together**

In these pages a short but coherent narrative has emerged, of the path the Japanese Imperial army took from the beginnings of war, all the way to the enemy capital. At every turn, their actions were characterized by spontaneity. All too often, commanders had to make decisions on the spot, reacting to circumstances beyond their control, which were quite often perpetuated by rogue elements. In the Japanese army, rogues were not individual soldiers who took action on their own, usually with consequences that reflect badly on the army as a whole. On the other hand, entire
platoons or even divisions could and did act according to their own wishes, and few operations at the start of the war were initiated by orders coming from Tokyo.

In this manner, the empire gained the puppet nation of Manchukuo. The unilateral actions of the Kwantung Army precipitated the Manchurian incident, which ultimately led to the creation of the faux state. A few years later, the rich natural reserves of North China were absorbed due to the Marco Polo Bridge incident, an event that did not seem to have been planned, but still embodied much smoldering tension. In both cases all the bulk of the army did was to react to the quickly unfolding events, and they were still successful, partly due to the small scale of the events themselves.

The march towards Nanjing was initiated by various commanders acting on their own initiative as well, pursuing the fleeing refugees and stragglers from defeated Shanghai. These initiatives laid the foundations for the emergence of a decentralized war, where each platoon moved according to its own wishes, with only the broadest orders as a guideline. Combined with the incessant guerilla and rural warfare that could prove fatal with the slightest misstep, the soldiers found it in their own best interests to do everything they felt they needed to do.

If this had been a conventional war with pitched battles, all they needed to do would have been to line up in formations, charge at the enemy, and trust in the tactics of the generals to carry the day. They would only have had to contend with the range of the enemy’s rifles, and perhaps eventual hand to hand combat. Perhaps their leaders would even have a spot of good English tea in a striped tent before the battle got underway. War would have been a “civil affair”.

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But this was China, a vast, developing land with villages dotted all over the place, populated by people of all shades of the political rainbow. Old and young, male and female, some being Nationalist sympathizers, others Communists, and still many more just trying to live their lives. Late autumnal rains stopped horses and supply vehicles in their tracks, with winter freezing the troops in their summer uniforms.

Perhaps the first few days were quite pleasant for the Imperial troops, riding high on their recent overwhelming victories in Beijing, Tianjin, and Shanghai, where they killed almost thirty for each of their own dead. If the soldiers did have such thoughts, they were quickly dashed by the increasingly desperate conditions that the soldiers found themselves mired in. Experiencing the same conditions day after day made them question their very reasons for being there in the same place. Short of turning on each other or their superior officers, which did not happen, they only had one outlet with which to relieve their bitterness.

Most of the brutal acts that then transpired were not planned beforehand, nor was there a broad consensus that this was the accepted path to take. At the same time, however, there was little retribution inflicted even on the worst offenders. Again, this can be explained through the lack of central control. Platoons which experienced the most attrition had no link to formal military authority, and took revenge with impunity. Those which did have links to military justice simply did not have the time or the resources to pursue any semblances of trials, and in any case were told to drop charges, possibly in interests of military unity.

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158 Bix, 332.
159 Nanjin Datusha Shiliaoji (9) – Rijun Guanbing Riji yu Shuxin, 373.
There were exceptions to the lack of arbitrary action, of course, such as the “kill all prisoners” order. But this, too, was reactive, and not a clear policy laid out from the start like the Wehrmacht’s “criminal orders”. The Japanese “kill all prisoners” order was only issued after the captors had experienced the immense difficulties involved in keeping large numbers of captives in check. Unable even to adequately feed their own soldiers, they saw the captives fight each other for the smallest morsel of food. Small riots here and there hinted at the devastating potential of a large-scale riot, since the prisoners outnumbered their captors by a large margin. The Imperial soldiers found that they had to bow to circumstance.

What pushed Japanese soldiers to such acts of brutality in China? Like all complex issues, the answer to this central question of the thesis consists of multiple causes. Due to a severe lack of foresight, the army was propelled into an intimately hostile environment, where it underwent demodernization and fragmentation. This process did not reverse itself even at their final destination at Nanjing. In other words, the soldiers had begun with no support whatsoever from their superiors on every front, including ammunition, clothes, and food. In an endlessly hostile situation where all the available resources are held by enemies, they also suffered no recriminations even for blatant acts beyond the pale.

What Nanjing represented, then, was a gathering point for all of the previously separated columns of soldiers, each having endured similar toils and travails and committed similar acts along the way. With the generals still being largely apathetic, the stage was set for a concentrated version of the entire campaign, confined to one

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160 Nanjin Datusha Shiliaoji (8) – Rijun Guanbing Riji, 323. Supply Officer Kisaki Hisashi’s group had to ration their ammunition, with a maximum of 1/3 carrying capacity per person, ever since Danyang.
single geographical locale with a helpless population. All the previous incidents along the campaign were repeated and writ large, due to Nanjing being much more populous and prosperous than the villages. The rogue activities performed by the platoons charging from Shanghai were repeated, this time by entire divisions, with General Matsui averting his eyes from the carnage that was going on.

Added to the grief done against the civilian population was the slaughter perpetuated against the prisoners of war. These were once again due to problems of planning, exacerbated by the looting, which deprived the army of supplies needed to feed the captives. Only when news of the rampant atrocity started to truly leak out to the outside world, did central authority finally reassert itself, halting the degenerate process.
EPILOGUE

“THOSE WHO CANNOT REMEMBER THE PAST ARE CONDEMNED TO REPEAT IT” 161

War, some might argue, is a persistent condition of human nature. Since 1945, there has never been more than a month without a war.162 With all the myriad causes of war, whether political or not, that figure is not a big surprise. War by itself has not been the focus of this thesis. Rather, I have been concerned with the unthinkable acts committed during war, by otherwise discerning individuals armed with free will.

In the course of writing, a question has consistently bedeviled my efforts, one that has sadly no clear answer. Simply put, what can be done to prevent further similar offenses against humanity? Given that war will always be present in the foreseeable future, this question remains at the forefront of military study. But when one examines the history of the problem, an answer proves difficult to divine.

There is one key element that has plagued most major military offensives in history. This is the facet of human nature that discards the past even if one remembers its passing. Hubris, or overweening pride. Pride can manifest itself in many ways, and can be identified mostly in hindsight based on the actions taken by the commanders. Xerxes of Persia invaded Greece, believing that brute military strength would overcome any obstacle. Napoleon treated Russia with no especial

161 --George Santayana.
care. Hubris casts away forethought and planning, neglects the lifeblood of the army, and thrusts soldiers into situations most dire.

One would have thought that lessons learned over the course of human conflict would be internalized. It is probably safe to assume that military commanders of developed nations have studied extensively the history of war, but the same patterns crop up again and again. In the Shanghai-Nanjing campaign, the failure of logistics became most evident as the troops penetrated further into China. It would be unfair to lay the blame for the logistical void on the generals or the high command in Tokyo, since this particular conflict was instigated by lower officers, on their own initiative in many cases. The timeline shows that the commanders had no time to prepare, even if they had wanted to do so. In fact, many divisions only received their orders on the 1st of December, leaving them little time to prepare for the assault on Nanjing. There was only enough time to seize the day, and to deliver righteous justice on the enemy. In essence, this was a case study about how badly events can go pear-shaped without adequate planning.

Not so for the Germans in Operation Barbarossa. Hitler’s idea to invade Soviet Russia hardly sprang from his mind in the heat of the moment. Half a year before, he had already made clear his decision to do so, in July 1940. With so much time to prepare, and also with such a clear historical example in Napoleon, the failure of his invasion can surely be chalked up to hubris. Hitler believed his war strategies that worked so well in the West would also prevail in the East.

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163 Honda and Gibney, 139, 295.
In modern times, the most relevant example concerning hubris and the failure of planning is perhaps the American invasion of Iraq. This, too, was not an impulsive decision by individual officers. Indeed, the political structure of the United States precludes any unilateral actions by dictators or regional commanders. There is thus no excuse for the extreme lack of attention given to contingency plans, or even simply logistics itself. Logistics is the lifeblood of the soldiers; without it, soldiers have to scavenge, or face the travails of poor health care if they manage to survive.

Hubris was once again reflected in the dismal “Shock and Awe” bombing campaign in the initial stages of the war, and the abject failure of a conventional army in dealing with insurgency from multiple sides. At the time of writing, the American army is still stuck in a quagmire. The circumstances change, but the story remains the same.

The other subject that must be addressed is the question of ideology. Closely tied to the issue above, ideology is a bugbear that commentators and propagandists love to sling around, but proves to be annoyingly elusive on the ground in times of war. Political leaders use ideology to motivate their people, whether it be claims to divine justice, calls for human freedom, or perhaps racial or ethnic hate.

In the case of Japan, with all the polemics issued by ultra-nationalistic writers, as well as the very public standpoints of key government and army officials, one would have thought that these extreme ideas permeated much of the Imperial Army. Araki Sadao, a Class A war criminal who had been War Minister and an active supporter of the Manchurian Incident, wrote the following words in 1934:
“Japan conducted the Japano-Chinese, the Japano-Russian and Japano-German wars only for the purpose of maintaining peace in the Far East…In [the tradition of military arts lies] the national prestige of Japan and that is why Japan never took up arms arbitrarily.”

Other major leaders have stuck to their guns and stood by their beliefs, even until the stand at the Tokyo Trials. Quotations like these were, and still can be, very common.

But when personal documents were perused in preparation for this thesis, ideology was noticeably absent. Seldom were there claims of divine manifestos, divine right, or even obligatory references to emperors. Instead, only formal battle reports contained any attributions to the throne for glory and boosts in morale. Ogawa, the Judicial Affairs Officer, commented cynically on this issue:

“Each department believes itself to be the most important, and is concerned only with self-promotion, ignoring all other departments. Speaking more severely, not only do they shamelessly promote themselves, they also endlessly criticize and demean the acts of other departments. In the end—or perhaps it has always been so—there is a special kind of psychology on the battlefield, that each man thinks only of glory. It is somewhat ironic, or perhaps just correct, that they are just concerned about the number of citations they receive, instead of glory in the Emperor’s name, or sacrifice in the name of the nation. I think there has never been an animal so self-centered as the human. I often think that they are simply working hard for themselves, and thinking of their own advancement has become a matter of course…I have encountered many such people in this operation.”

In other words, mention of the Emperor in battle reports could well have been little more than a cheap attempt to garner recognition: a means to an end of promotion. Far outweighing the emperor in importance were thoughts of home: of family and friends, and what might happen to them were they to die.

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165 Morris, 72-73.
166 Nanjin Datusha Shiliaoji (9) – Rijun Guanbing Riji yu Shuxin, 393.
What is to be done?

On one hand, the atrocities perpetuated in China were very much the end results of a lack of planning and support. But on the other hand, similar deeds can also occur under a different regime: in Russia, where there was planning but no support, and Iraq, where there was both planning and support, at least in the beginning. While it is true that the degree of each case varies greatly, it would seem that there is very little that can be done. Any invasion with the intent of occupation, whether short-term or long-term, can get dirty extremely fast.

As it currently exists, there is a paucity of diplomacy in international and domestic affairs. A number of influential political leaders, such as George W. Bush, seem to be biased against dialogue, and view violence as a universal solution, capable of disabling both enemy states and establishing faction superiority. My thesis, I hope, has presented an argument which highlights the inherent difficulties of waging offensive war. It should also be possible to extend the lessons learned here to cases of ethnic or religious strife, particularly in those instances where chaos dominates, and there is no hand, invisible or otherwise, directing the bloodshed. In all honesty, saying “give peace a chance” does sound quite naïve in this time in history. The alternative, however, is only part of the problem.
“軍人データベース サクラタロウDB” (Soldier database, sakuratarou DB).


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