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THE WARS FOR ASIA, 1911–1949

This book shows that the Western treatment of World War II, the Second Sino-Japanese War, and the Chinese Civil War as separate events misses their intertwined causes, connections, and consequences and, in so doing, misinterprets each. The long Chinese civil war precipitated a long regional war between China and Japan that became global in 1941 when the Chinese found themselves fighting a civil war within a regional war within an overarching global war. The global war that consumed Western attentions resulted from Japan's peripheral strategy to cut foreign aid to China by attacking Pearl Harbor and Western interests throughout the Pacific on 7–8 December 1941. S. C. M. Paine emphasizes the fears and ambitions of Japan, China, and Russia, and the pivotal decisions that set them on a collision course in the 1920s and 1930s. The cascading wars – the Chinese Civil War (1911–49), the Second Sino-Japanese War (1931–45), and World War II (1939–45) – together yielded a viscerally anti-Japanese and unified Communist China, the still-angry rising power of the early twenty-first century. Although these events are history in the West, they live on in Japan and especially in China.

S. C. M. Paine is Professor of Strategy and Policy at the U.S. Naval War College; the editor of *Nation Building, State Building, and Economic Development* (2010); and the author of *The Sino-Japanese War of 1894–1895* (Cambridge 2003) and *Imperial Rivals: China, Russia, and Their Disputed Frontier* (1996). Paine coauthored with Bruce A. Elleman *Modern China: Continuity and Change, 1644 to the Present* (2010) and coedited *Naval Power and Expeditionary Warfare* (2011), *Naval Coalition Warfare* (2008), and *Naval Blockades and Seapower* (2006).

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To Anna and Steven Elleman, who have my deepest respect,
admiration, and love

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

As Robert Frost wrote, “Two roads diverged in a yellow wood and I – / I took the one less traveled by, / And that has made all the difference.” My career has not followed the typical academic track. After a ten-year PhD in Russian and Chinese history from Columbia University, entailing five years of research and language study in China, Taiwan, Japan, and Russia, I went to work in the Strategy & Policy Department of the U.S. Naval War College, which offers an MA in National Security and Strategic Studies. Half of my colleagues and all of my students have chosen either military or government service careers. Teaching or studying at the Naval War College requires a steep learning curve because none of us can remain in our intellectual or career comfort zones. As my wonderful colleague David Kaiser has remarked, the Strategy & Policy Department requires you to “think big,” to consider problems of vital national import, and to work out solutions in a world of incomplete information and insufficient time and resources.

Since the Vietnam War, history departments across the United States virtually without exception have marginalized the study of war. Yet the Vietnam War so influenced those called upon to serve in it that the Vietnam generation, which has dominated history departments ever since, has discouraged their students from studying war, diplomacy, and politics – subjects concerning the allocation and exercise of power. In 1938, Mao Zedong unapologetically wrote that “whoever has an army has power and that war decides everything.”¹ As this book will show, ignorance of the strategic effects of military operations caused millions of deaths in the twentieth century. If Japanese prime ministers, generals, and admirals of the mid-twentieth century could be returned to life, they would be horrified to realize that three generations later, their decisions

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have left Japan despised by many of its neighbors and its foreign policy hamstrung by their failure to consider the political implications of violence. The inability to see the limitations of intervening in someone else's civil war had dire consequences, not only for Japan, but also for the United States and Russia, whose leaders all thought they knew what to do about China. The failure to study war does not make wars go away; rather it positions a country badly to survive war when it comes and to commit foreign policy blunders in wars fought by others.

I have attempted to incorporate the methodology taught in the Strategy & Policy Department. The name of the department embodies a key part of the methodology: governments have national policy objectives, and the more comprehensive their strategies, the more likely they are to attain their objectives. It is useful to analyze wars in terms of policy and strategy to see whether there is a match or a mismatch, and if so, why. Wars are not all of one type: insurgencies generally seek regime change within a single country – so the stakes are high for both sides. Because insurgencies require little equipment and few forces to wage, they are hard to eliminate and tend to protract. Victory in regional and global wars generally involves large conventional battles requiring quantities of military hardware. In regional wars, the stakes vary and the higher their value to both sides, the more likely the conflict will protract. Global wars contest the nature of the global order. Therefore, they are wars of extraordinarily high stakes, usually of long duration, and usually coalition wars. Wars protract not only because of the stakes and number of parties involved, but also when they threaten third parties, which intervene to shape the outcome. Good strategy works to prevent hostile third-party intervention.

I have disaggregated the warfare in China in the twentieth century to analyze the long Chinese civil war (1911–49), the Second Sino-Japanese War (1931–45), and World War II (1939–45). The first began as a mutiny and entailed a bitter insurgency, the second began as a regional war, and the third resulted from the escalation into a global war of two regional conflicts, one in Europe and the other in China. Each of the three wars was fought for different objectives and with different strategies. The stakes were high in all three, creating mayhem of incredible scale and duration. I have also introduced terminology useful for analyzing wars that I will explain as I go along: proximate and underlying causes, limited and unlimited objectives, positive versus negative objectives, center

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of gravity, military versus grand strategy, operational versus strategic effects, a prevent-defeat versus a deliver-victory strategy, a peripheral theater versus the main theater, conventional versus guerrilla war, land powers versus sea powers, people's war, sanctuary, jackal state, script-writing, death ground, sunk costs, the principle of continuity, a decisive battle, a disposal force, and the tactical, operational, and strategic levels of war.

I am grateful for generous grants from the Hoover Institution for two Title VIII fellowships to use Hoover's archives and Stanford's libraries; the International Exchange of Scholars for a Fulbright fellowship funding a year of research at the Defense Research Center Archives and the Foreign Ministry Diplomatic Records Office in Tokyo; the Slavic Research Center at Hokkaido University for a year of research using Japanese, Chinese, and Russian materials; and the National Library of Australia's Harold White Fellowship and the Chiang Ching-kuo Foundation for a year of writing in Canberra. I am also indebted to the extraordinarily helpful staffs of the Academia Sinica archives of the Institute of Modern History, the Australian National University libraries, the Defense Research Center Archives of Japan's Defense Agency, the Diplomatic Records Office of the Japanese Foreign Ministry, Harvard University libraries, Hokkaido University libraries, the Hoover Institution Archives, the National Library of Australia, the Naval War College library, Princeton University libraries, the Slavic Research Center library, and Stanford University libraries. I am also grateful to Alice K. Juda, David E. Kaiser, Robin A. Lima, and Yu Miin-ling for help on sources; to Yu Miin-ling and Arakawa Ken-ichi for proofreading the Chinese and Japanese sources in the Bibliography; and to a former student, Commander Patrick Hansen, who helped me better understand the military writings of Mao Zedong. At Cambridge University Press, editor Eric Crahan, his assistant Abigail Zorbaugh, and production manager Marielle Poss carefully guided the manuscript from review through production; Susan Thornton took charge of copy-editing; David Cox drew up the very complicated maps; David Levy designed the cover; and project manager Bhavani Ganesh assembled all the pieces.

In particular, I wish to thank my senior colleagues in the Strategy & Policy Department, both present and former – George W. Baer, William C. Fuller, Jr., Michael I. Handel, David E. Kaiser, Bradford A. Lee, John

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Finally, as a government employee, I am required to make clear that the thoughts, opinions, and mistakes expressed in this volume are my own and are not necessarily those of the U.S. government, the U.S. Department of Defense, the U.S. Navy Department, or the U.S. Naval War College; nor do I represent any of these institutions.

TECHNICAL NOTE

For simplicity, the term “Russia” has been used to refer to the Soviet period. This obviates the need to introduce the designation Soviet Russia for the early period of Bolshevik rule. When I use the term “Soviet” or “Soviet Union,” I do so to emphasize Russia under communist rule. Just as France has been called France whether under monarchical or republican rule, so should Russia be referred to as Russia. The Communists made a big to-do about their supposed break with history and requirement for a new name. It turns out that they were temporary, while Russia endures.

Unless otherwise specified, “Chinese” refers to the nationals of China, while “Taiwanese” refers to the nationals of Taiwan. “Han” refers to the predominant ethnic group of China. “Manchurian” refers to the residents of Manchuria with no implied ethnicity. I use the term “Nationalist Party” to refer to the Kuomintang (KMT) or Guomindang (GMD) to avoid confusing transliteration systems altogether. KMT is used only in the Chronology for considerations of space. Similarly, CCP for Chinese Communist Party appears there.

Chinese and Japanese names follow Asian conventions to list surname first. All Chinese names have been rendered in pinyin except for some very common exceptions: Chiang Kai-shek (not Jiang Jieshi), his son Chiang Ching-kuo (not Jiang Jingguo), his adopted son Chiang Wei-kuo (not Jiang Weiguo), his wife Soong Mayling (not Song Meiling), his sister-in-law Soong Chingling (not Song Qingling), Sun Yat-sen (not Sun Zhongshan), his son Sun Fo (not Sun Ke), Confucius (not Kongzi), Harbin (not Haerbin), Chahar (not Chahaer), Yangzi River (not Changjiang), and Manchukuo (not Manzhouguo or Manshūkoku).

Counting soldiers turns out to be a tricky business. Unit sizes vary by country and by era and not all units were always fully manned. During

TECHNICAL NOTE

the Second Sino-Japanese War, a Nationalist division had 11,000 men compared to a Japanese division with 24,000 to 28,000 men.¹

Dating is not straightforward either. The international dateline divides the Pacific Ocean so that correct dating in Asian sources differs from U.S. sources. For instance, the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor took place on 7 December 1941 Washington time but on 8 December 1941 Tokyo time. This book is based on a combination of Japanese, Chinese, Russian, and U.S. sources, which sometimes date according to home-country time and sometimes according to battle-theater time. Likewise, battle and campaign dates are not straightforward. Do they begin when one side deploys or reaches a particular place or starts shooting? Do they end when troops reach a city center or when enemy main forces give up or when mopping up operations end? The sources do not agree. I have done my best to date events according to local time in the theater or the venue of the diplomacy.

The term “warlord” is problematic and all substitutes for it are also problematic. For thousands of years, Chinese history has been divided between periods of unified dynastic rule and periods of divided rule. In the past, such rulers were called kings and, in periods of unified rule, emperors. The first half of the twentieth century was a period of divided rule, but the pejorative term “warlord” came into general use to refer to the many aspiring leaders of China. Such people, while often generals, exercised both civil and military power, hence the agglomeration of “war” for the military side and “lord” for the civil side of their rule. Alternate terminology includes “militarist” (also pejorative and missing the civil side), “military ruler” (less pejorative but still missing the civil side), and “military executive” (pedantic and unclear). So I apologize in advance for the lack of imagination to think of a nonpejorative word to replace “warlord.”