

insults of foreign powers.” Many Chinese present China’s modern history in terms of its victimization by rapacious foreigners in order to place their country on a moral high ground vis-à-vis the West and Japan. These books present China as the victim of the predations of rapacious foreigners, never an aggressor itself.<sup>40</sup>

Non-Han peoples, populating the regions bordering China proper, however, have a different story to tell. When the Chinese government has had the capability, it has mercilessly put down the country’s many simmering independence movements. The continuing unrest in Tibet and the Chinese suppression, not only of political activists, but also of Tibetan culture, are but the latest phase of a very long history of power politics over weak border peoples.<sup>41</sup> Coercive Chinese policies in Xinjiang and Inner Mongolia have also fueled the ethnic unrest there. Tibet, Xinjiang, and Inner Mongolia are not insignificant regions. Together they constitute about one-third of China’s current territory.

Despite China’s communist credentials, it remains the world’s last surviving vast continental empire. However ironically, it has remained imperialist long after the much criticized West and Japan abandoned their land empires. The only other continental empire to endure late into the twentieth century was the Soviet Union, which did so equally in contravention to Marxist orthodoxy: The communist credo of the Soviet Union and People’s Republic of China has proclaimed communism and imperialism to be mutually exclusive categories.

In reality, Chinese casualties at the hands of European forces during the Opium Wars do not compare to the slaughter during China’s numerous campaigns against its ethnic minorities.<sup>42</sup> Chinese casualties in the Opium Wars ranged from several hundred to several thousand per battle.<sup>43</sup> Likewise, the death and destruction of the Sino-Japanese War of 1937-1945 – estimated at 10 million – do not come close to equaling the combined casualties suffered during the Taiping Rebellion (1851-64) and the Great Leap Forward (1958-60). Common estimates for the latter two are 20 million deaths each.<sup>44</sup> It is important to

40 See for instance, the opening chapter of the series edited by 沙健孫 [Sha Jiansun], ed. 『中國共產黨通史』 [*The History of the Chinese Communist Party*], vol. 1 (Changsha: 湖南教育出版社, 1995), pp. 2-3. See also: 章佰鋒 [Zhang Baifeng] 『抗日戰爭』 [*War of Japanese Resistance*], vol. 1 (Chengdu: 四川大學出版社, 1997), p. vii; 王建朗 [Wang Jianlang] 抗戰初期的遠東國際關係 [*Far Eastern International Relations at the Beginning of the War of Resistance*] (Taipei: 東大圖書公司遠東國際, 1996), p. 2.

41 Amnesty International provides a whole list of publications on Chinese mistreatment of their minority peoples. See <http://web.amnesty.org/library/>.

42 Wen-Djang Chu, *The Moslem Rebellion of Northwest China 1862-1878* (The Hague: Mouton, 1966), p. vii; 巴勃科夫 И. Ф. Воспоминания о моей службе в Западной Сибири, 1859-1875 гг. СПб., 1912. С. 301; Hosea Ballou Morse, *The International Relations of the Chinese Empire: The Period of Submission 1861-1893*, vol. 2 (Shanghai: Kelly and Walsh, 1918), p. 111.

43 Gerald S. Graham, *The China Station: War and Diplomacy 1830-1860* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1978), pp. 214-216, 273-274, 400.

44 R.J. Rummel, *China's Bloody Century: Genocide and Mass Murder since 1900* (New Brunswick: Transaction Publishers, 1991), p. 103; J. David Singer and Melvin Small, *The Wages of War*,

note that in the Sino-Japanese War, Japan was not responsible for the many deaths from the ongoing civil war between the Communists and the Guomindang. Such horrendous comparisons give a sense of the terrible scope of the tragedy suffered by Chinese civilians during the last two centuries of endemic warfare. But most of the killing has been by Han Chinese or other Chinese nationals.

Although China was certainly a victim of imperialism, the slaughter in the nineteenth century of both its native peoples attempting secession and its Han subjects attempting the restoration of Han rule, the horrendous civil wars of the Republican period, and the political campaigns of the communist era together account for tens of millions of civilian deaths. No foreign power can compete with the destruction that the Chinese have wreaked upon themselves and visited on their minority peoples since the eighteenth century when the Qianlong Emperor (乾隆) employed widespread genocide to conquer Xinjiang and complete the Qing empire.<sup>45</sup>

The Chinese have exaggerated their victimization at the hands of foreigners in order to avoid facing up to the dark side of their domination of vast non-Han territories and the domestic origins of the endemic civil wars that have savaged China. Instead, they have assumed the role of the forever righteous victim. Scholars in the West have unwittingly helped prolong the life of this Chinese myth by publishing voluminously on European imperialism in China, on the Opium Wars, on the rise Chinese nationalism as a response to the West, etc., while writing very little about the fate of China's many ethnic minorities or the particulars of its many civil wars. The Guomindang-Communist Civil War of the 1940s was but one of a long interlocking succession of regional and na-

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*1816-1965: A Statistical Handbook* (New York: Wiley, 1981), pp. 67, 131. Singer and Small focus on military, not civilian, casualties. There is also a very interesting web page at <http://users.erols.com/mwhite28/warstats.html> entitled, *Death Tolls for the Man-made Megadeaths of the Twentieth Century*. It contains numerous references to relevant sources.

- 45 Concerning the human costs of the Chinese conquest and occupation of Xinjiang in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, see, Owen Lattimore, *Inner Asian Frontiers of China* (New York: American Geographical Society, 1940), pp. 170-171; Immanuel C.Y. Hsu, *The Ili Crisis: A Study in Sino-Russian Diplomacy 1871-1881* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1965), pp. 6, 16, 193; Thomas J. Barfield, *The Perilous Frontier: Nomadic Empires and China* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1989), pp. 293-294; Wen-Djang Chu, *The Moslem Rebellion*, pp. vii, 1-3, 25-27, 96, 128, 132, 163; Richard A. Pierce, *Russian Central Asia, 1867-1917: A Study in Colonial Rule* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1960), p. 11; Joseph Fletcher, "Ch'ing Inner Asia c. 1899" in John K. Fairbank, ed., *The Cambridge History of China*, vol. 10 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1978), pp. 64-65; Key-Hiuk Kim, "The Aims of Li Hung-chang's Policies toward Japan and Korea, 1870-1882," in Samuel C. Chu and Kwang-ching Liu, eds., *Li Hung-chang and China's Early Modernization* (Armonk, NY: M.E. Sharpe, 1994), p. 2; Owen Lattimore, *Pivot of Asia: Sinkiang and the Inner Asian Frontiers of China and Russia* (Boston: Little, Brown & Co., 1950), pp. 46, 126, 143-144; Kwang-ching Liu and Richard J. Smith, "The Military Challenge: The Northwest and the Coast," in John K. Fairbank and Kwang-ching Liu, eds., *The Cambridge History of China*, vol. 11 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980), p. 241.

tional civil wars. Before the 1989 Tiananmen Massacre, whose live television coverage left no doubt about the bloodshed, many Westerners also viewed China with an equally uncritical eye. Averting their eyes from the harsh side of communist rule, they focused instead on the harsh side of Western imperialism in China. In doing so, they have unwittingly supported a double standard for China vis-à-vis not only the West but also Japan. Western scholars have tallied what Japan and the West did to China but never what the Han Chinese did to each other. This would put foreign violence in perspective. It would also fully implicate the Han in the massacre of their countrymen.

For Sino-Japanese relations, the consequences were two-fold. On the one hand, the Chinese refused to recognize any positive Japanese contributions to Chinese development. On the other hand, the Chinese have failed to see how their treatment of Japan only spurred Japan to take ever more punitive actions against them. When the League of Nations sent the Lytton Commission to investigate the 1931 Japanese invasion of Manchuria, Japan produced inventories of cases documenting China's flaunting of international law at Japanese expense and its abuse of Japanese citizens.<sup>46</sup> Although the commission agreed with many of the Japanese complaints, it abhorred the Imperial Japanese Army's military solution.<sup>47</sup> Japan detailed the Soviet involvement in China but insisted that the Lytton Commission keep much of this information secret, which it did.<sup>48</sup> So the myths endured.

Japan's inability to counter Soviet propaganda – coupled with its invasion and occupation of Manchuria and then China proper – lent credence to Chinese misperceptions. It bolstered not only the myths of Soviet and Tsarist discontinuity and Russo-Chinese friendship, but also the Chinese exaggerations concerning their victimization by foreigners. The Chinese dire gainst the competing party armies and warlord armies whose leaders monopolized government funds to fight and devastate the country, debased the currency when the tax base proved insufficient to fund their armories, and generally wreaked havoc wherever they

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46 See for example the Japanese Foreign Ministry's submission to the Lytton Commission: *Relations of Japan with Manchuria and Mongolia*, Document B, revised ed. (Tokyo: 外務省, 1932). See also Hoover Institution Archives, Vladimir Dmitrievich Pastuhov papers, box 17, Japan Economic Federation, Chamber of Commerce and Industry of Japan, Japan-China Economic Association, "China's Treaty Violations in Manchuria," Tokyo, 1932; Ibid., box 33, League of Nations Association of Japan, "Anti-Japanese Laws, Ordinances and Instructions Issued by the Chinese Authorities," parts 1-3, Tokyo, 1931; Itoh Takeo, *China's Challenge in Manchuria: Anti-Japanese Activities in Manchuria Prior to the Mukden Incident* (Dairen: South Manchurian Railway Company, 1932).

47 江口圭一 [Eguchi Keiichi] 『十五年戦争小史』 [A Short History of the Fifteen Year War] rev. ed. (Tokyo: 青木書店, 1991), pp. 68-69; Ian Nish, *Japan's Struggle with Internationalism: Japan, China, and the League of Nations, 1931-3* (London: Kegan Paul International, 1993), pp. 175-176.

48 外交史料館, 外務省, A.1.1.0-21-12-2, vol. 2, "Mr. Matsuoka's Conversations with the Members of the League Commission," 24 March 1932, p. 141.

went.<sup>49</sup> The unabating civil wars and the Soviet intervention that helped fuel them were the cause of China's plight and precipitated Japan's intervention.<sup>50</sup> It is no coincidence that Japan launched a full-scale invasion of China in 1937 right after the Goumindang formed the Second United Front with the Chinese Communists.

### THE MYTH OF ORIGINAL SOVEREIGNTY

Both the Soviet Union and China claimed that it, not the other, possessed the original claim to much of central and northeastern Asia. In the mid-nineteenth century, Russia had taken advantage of China's preoccupation with internal rebellions besetting its interior – the Taiping, the Nian (1851-68), and the Panthay (1855-73) Rebellions – and the foreign wars along its coast – the first and second Opium Wars (1839-42, 1856-60) – to secure for Russia the entire northern bank of the Amur River, the coastline between the Ussuri River and the sea, and vast territories in central Asia. In the treaties of Aigun (1858), Beijing (1860), and Tarbagatai (1864), Russian gained about 665,000 sq. mi. of territory or roughly the equivalent to all of the United States east of the Mississippi River.<sup>51</sup> In the Tsarist period, Russians took great pride in these gains, but the ideological shift following the Bolshevik Revolution of 1917 made it difficult for the Soviets to justify their territorial gains, which they had no intention of relinquishing.

While the Soviet Union could not justify its gains, China could not accept its losses. Instead, each fostered its own variant of the myth of original sovereignty. Both the Soviets and the Chinese<sup>52</sup> claimed that the borderlands histor-

49 According to the Lytton Commission Report on the Japanese invasion of Manchuria, military expenses constituted 80 percent of the government expenses of the deposed warlord, Zhang Xueliang (西村成雄 [Nishimura Shigeo] 「日本政府の中華民国認識と張学良政権」 [The Japanese Government's Recognition of the Republic of China and Zhang Xueliang's Political Power] in 山本有造 [Yamamoto Yuzo], ed. 『「満州国」の研究』 [Research on "Manchukuo"] (Tokyo: 緑蔭書房, 1995), p. 5). Arthur Waldron, *From War to Nationalism: China's Turning Point, 1924-1925* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995); Lloyd E. Eastman, *The Abortive Revolution: China under Nationalist Rule, 1927-1937* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1990); Lloyd E. Eastman, *Seeds of Destruction: Nationalist China in War and Revolution 1937-1949* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1984).

50 Aleksandr Ya. Kalyagin, *Along Alien Roads* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1983), pp. 5-11; Lloyd E. Eastman, "Nationalist China during the Sino-Japanese War 1937-1945," in John K. Fairbank and Albert Feuerwerker, eds., *The Cambridge History of China*, vol. 13 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), p. 576; Garver, *Chinese-Soviet Relations*, p. 271; Forbes, *Warlords and Muslims*, p. 144; Barnett, *China on the Eve of*, p. 247; Benson, *The Ili Rebellion*, p. 7; Sheridan, *Chinese Warlord*, pp. 164-169, 177-179.

51 Alan J. Day, ed., *Border and Territorial Disputes* (Detroit: Gale Research, 1982), pp. 259-261.

52 See in particular, the eight-volume series of historical maps published by the Cartographic Publishing House in the People's Republic of China. Each volume contains a complete map of China as well as many close-ups. Although the territory controlled by each Chinese

ically constituted an integral part of their empire. There is ample evidence that this was not the case, certainly at the time of the Romanov (1613-1917) and Qing dynasties.<sup>53</sup> Russians had not even been in the vicinity until the seventeenth century and did not arrive in significant numbers before the completion in 1905 of the railway connecting European Russia to Tashkent and the linking of Russia's two coasts, between 1891 and 1916, by the Trans-Siberian Railway.<sup>54</sup>

Even today Siberia remains under-populated and cut off from the rest of Russia. Despite Siberia's administrative incorporation into Russia on paper, in practice, its remoteness meant that it was not completely integrated into the Russian empire until the Soviet period and, therefore, cannot be said to have been historically an integral part of Russian territory. Tsarist tariff policy supports this argument; tariff breaks at Cheliabinsk and Irkutsk treated Siberian grain like a foreign product.<sup>55</sup> The case for Russia's historical links to Central Asia is even more tenuous. The native populations bordering Xinjiang and Outer Mongolia bear no cultural or linguistic ties to the Great Russians. In 1991 when the opportunity arose, they immediately sought independence. While China does possess the more ancient historical claim<sup>56</sup> to ties with Central Asia and southern Siberia, the Han are as culturally and linguistically distinct from the native peoples inhabiting these regions as are the Great Russians.

Qing sources are extremely vague regarding the extent of Chinese territories; they discuss a plethora of changing place names referring to areas of unknown extent and vague location. Since the Chinese did not master Western

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dynasty varied dramatically, every volume in the series shows very similar external boundaries. The huge loss of territory under the Ming dynasty, which came between the territorially two largest dynasties, the Yuan or Mongol dynasty and the Qing dynasty (neither Han Chinese), is concealed by including the Ming with the Yuan dynasty. In earlier dynasties, the lands of independent border peoples are included as parts of China as if they were provinces. 譚其驤 [Tan Qixiang], ed. 中國歷史地圖集 [Collection of Historical Maps of China] 8 vols. (Shanghai: 中華地圖出版社, 1975-1982). For other Chinese sources see: 吳相湘 [Wu Xiangxiang] 『俄帝侵略中國史』 [History of the Imperial Russian Invasion of China] (Taipei: 國立編譯館, 1986); 『沙俄侵略中國西北邊界史』 [History of the Tsarist Russian Invasion of Northwest China] (Beijing: 人民出版社, 1978); 『沙俄侵略華史』 [The History of the Tsarist Russian Invasion of China], 中國社會科學院近代史研究所 [Institute of Modern History, Chinese Academy of Social Sciences] (Beijing: 人民出版社, 1981); 陳登元 [Chen Dengyuan] 『中俄關係述略』 [Outline of Russo-Chinese Relations] (Shanghai: 商務印書館, 1926); 佟冬 [Tong Dong] 『沙俄與東北』 [Tsarist Russia and Manchuria] (Changchun: 吉林文史出版社, 1985), pp. 1-2.

53 Fred W. Bergholz, *The Partition of the Steppe: The Struggle of the Russians, Manchus and the Zunghar Mongols for Empire in Central Asia, 1619-1758, A Study in Power Politics* (New York: Peter Lang, 1993), p. 419.

54 Глинка Г. В. (ред.) *Азиатская Россия* Т. 2. 1914 (reprint, Cambridge: Oriental Research Partners, 1974). С. 539, 549.

55 J. N. Westwood, *A History of Russian Railways* (London: George Allen and Unwin, Ltd., 1964), p. 117.

56 James Forsyth, *A History of the Peoples of Siberia: Russia's North Asian Colony 1581-1990* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), pp. 103-108, 213-214, 217.