War & Revolution in East Asia (1900–1949)

¶ 5.1



Equations of Revolution

The Catalyst:

Qing Atrophy + Boxer Disaster = Reform Possibility (0) → Inevitable Revolution

The Ideology:

Nationalism + Democracy + Livelihood = The 3 Principles of the People

(Credited to Sun Yat-sen, shaped by his global education in Hawaii and Hong Kong)

The Spark:

1911: An army mutiny in Wuchang ignites countrywide revolution.



1912 The child emperor Puyi abdicates.

↳ Ends 2,000+ years of imperial rule; Republic of China declared.

1916 General Yuan Shikai seizes power, attempts an imperial grab, and dies.



The Warlord Era

The republic fragments among regional warlords, each controlling their own private armies.

Versailles Peace Conference: Shandong given to Japan ≠ Returned to China

May 4, 1919 – Massive student protests erupt in Beijing



The May Fourth Movement

Attacked: Traditional Confucian society.

Promoted: Science, Democracy, and vernacular Chinese.

Key Figure: Lu Xun and young intellectuals aggressively criticizing the old order.

1927: The Shanghai Massacre

1921



Sun Yat-sen's Nationalist Party (Guomindang) and the newly founded Chinese Communist Party cooperate to reunify China (backed by Soviet assistance).

1925



Sun dies. Chiang Kai-shek assumes leadership and launches the Northern Expedition to defeat the warlords.

Chiang turns on and slaughters the Communists.

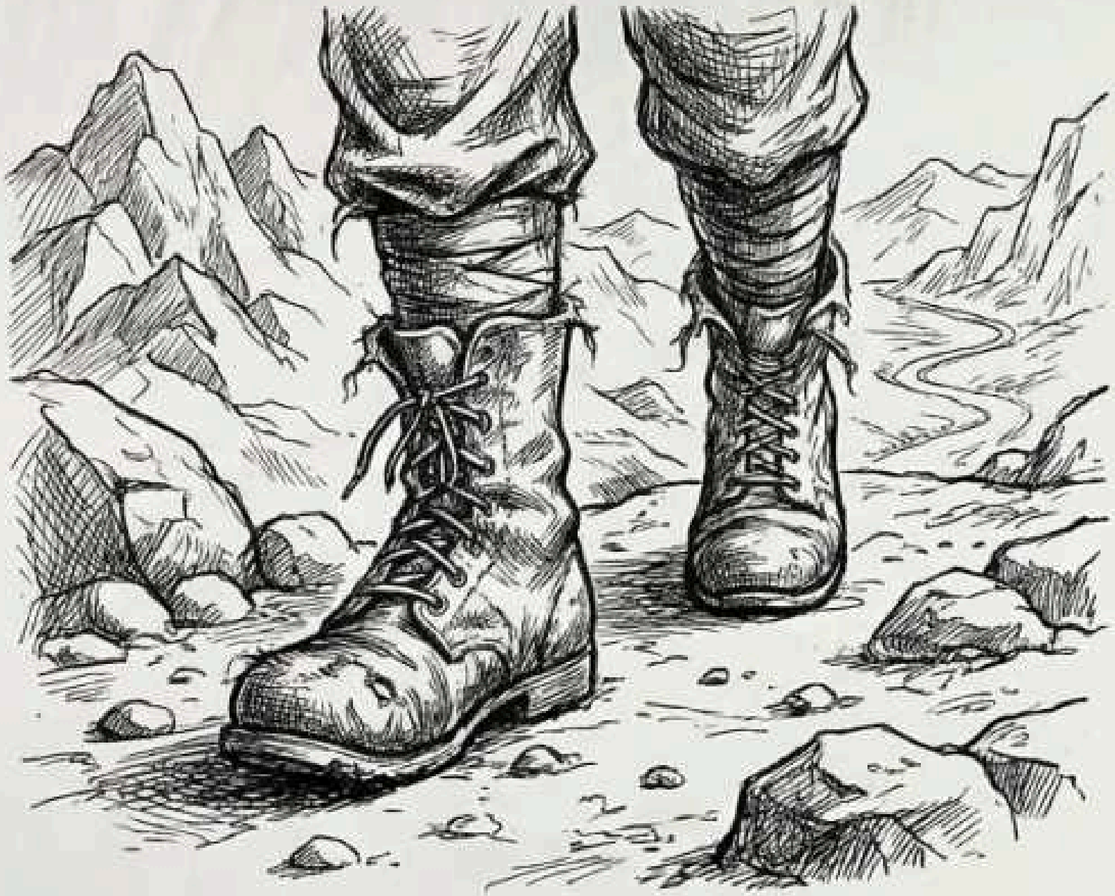


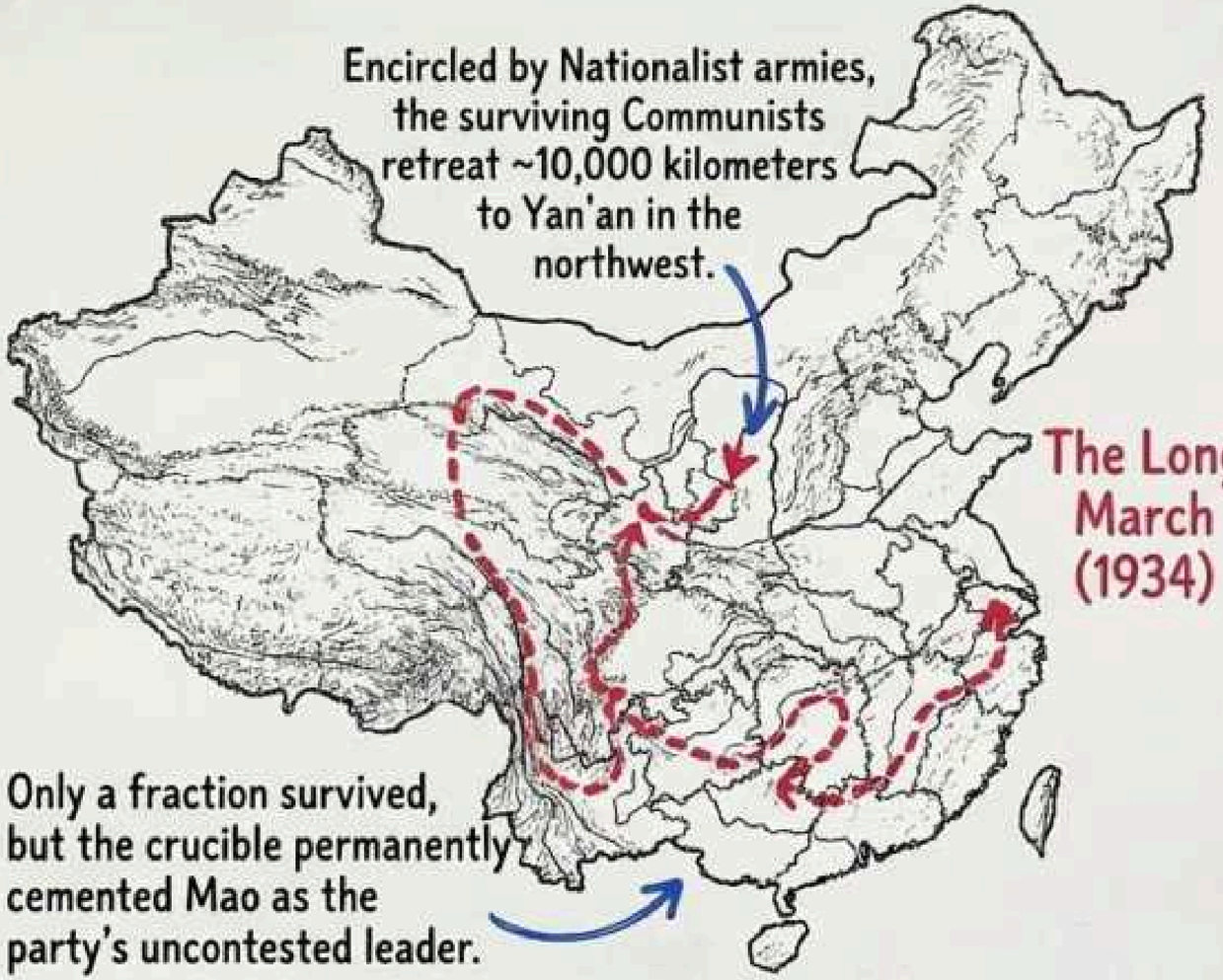
1928

Chiang establishes the Nationalist government in Nanjing.



Orthodox Marxism − (Urban Factory Workers) + (Rural Peasantry) = Mao Zedong's Revolutionary Engine





Vicious Cycle

Great Depression severely hurts Japanese exports.

Descent into extreme Militarism.



1931: Japanese officers stage an incident and seize Manchuria.

The Puppet State: Manchukuo is created with Puyi as the figurehead.

1933: Japan formally exits the League of Nations.

Army officers demand an Asian empire for resources and security.

July 1937

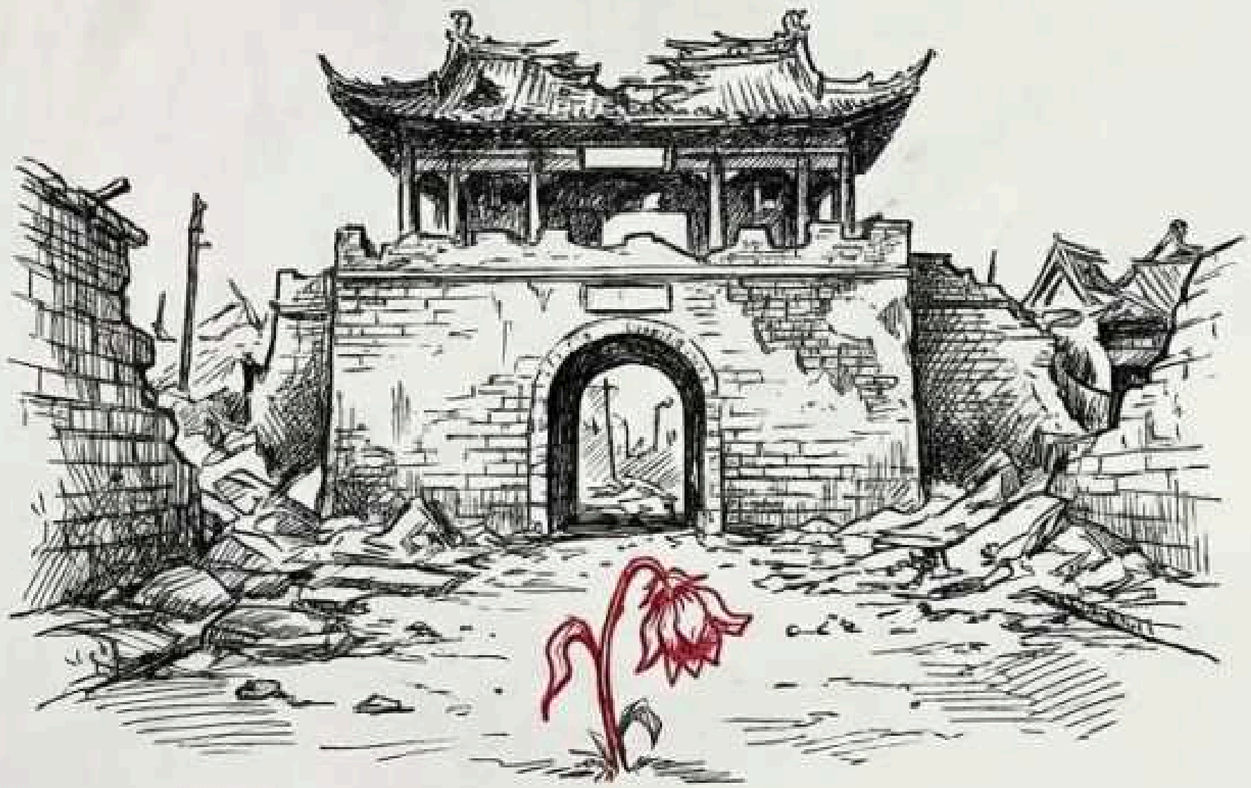
Full-scale Sino-Japanese war begins.

Fall 1937

Japanese forces capture Shanghai.

December 1937

Fall of the Nationalist capital, Nanjing.



The Nanjing Massacre

Over the weeks following the city's fall, Japanese forces massacred tens to hundreds of thousands of civilians and prisoners, alongside mass rape.

*This remains a deeply bitter, unresolved issue between China and Japan.

The Second United Front

(Unified against Japan, but defined by deep mutual distrust).

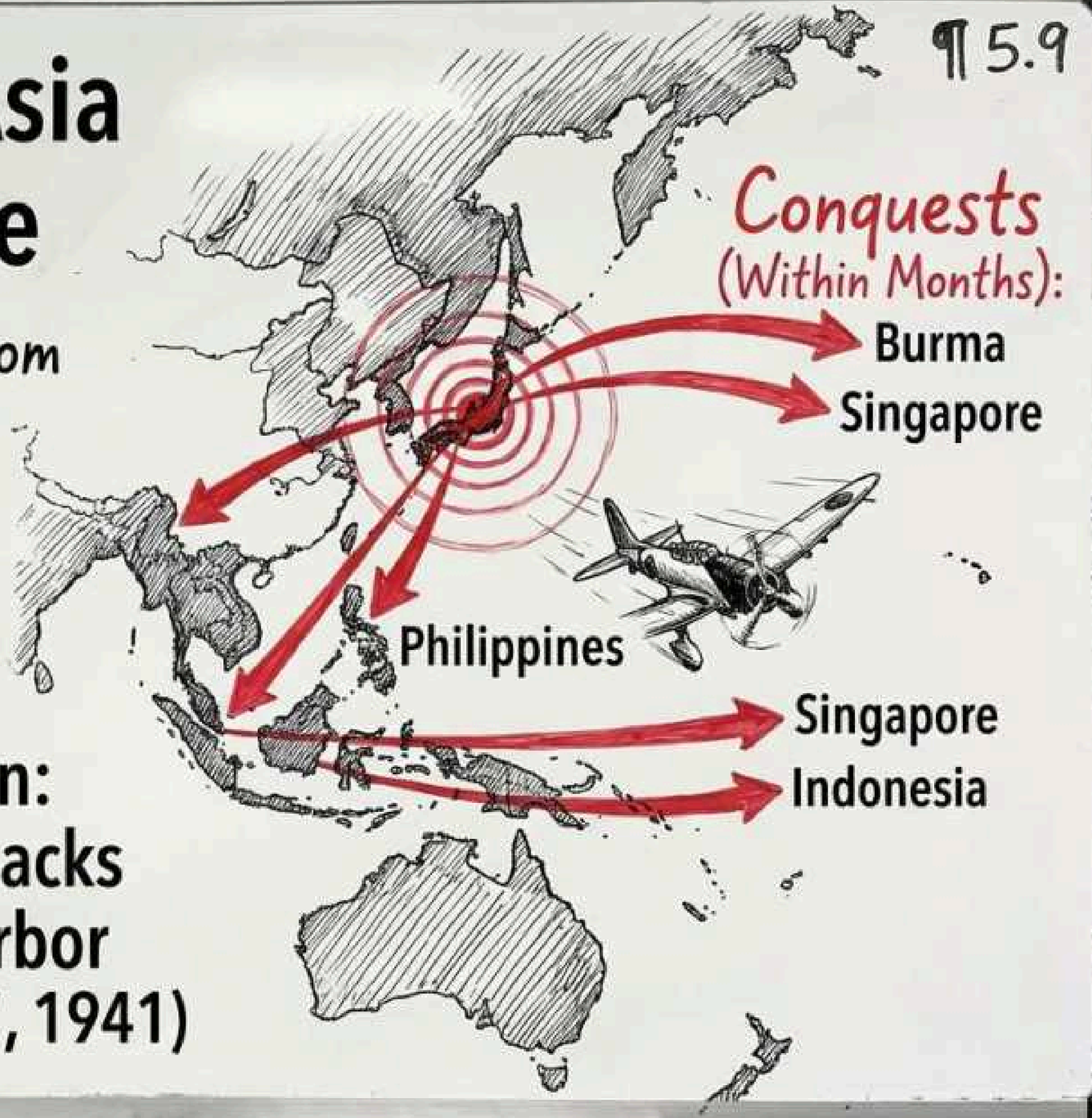
Nationalists (KMT)	Communists (CCP)
Strategy: Conventional warfare.	Strategy: Guerrilla warfare behind Japanese lines.
Action: Retreated deep inland to the wartime capital of Chongqing.	Action: Massively expanded their political base among the peasantry.

War Toll = ~14,000,000 + Lives Lost + Tens of Millions of Refugees

¶5.9

1940: Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere

(Presented as Asian liberation from Western empires; in practice, absolute Japanese domination).



Catalyst:
US cuts off oil exports

Ignition:
Japan attacks Pearl Harbor (December 7, 1941)

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June 1942

Battle of Midway turns the tide of the naval war.

American forces advance island by island.

Devastating firebombing campaigns incinerate Japanese cities.



The Finale (August 1945):

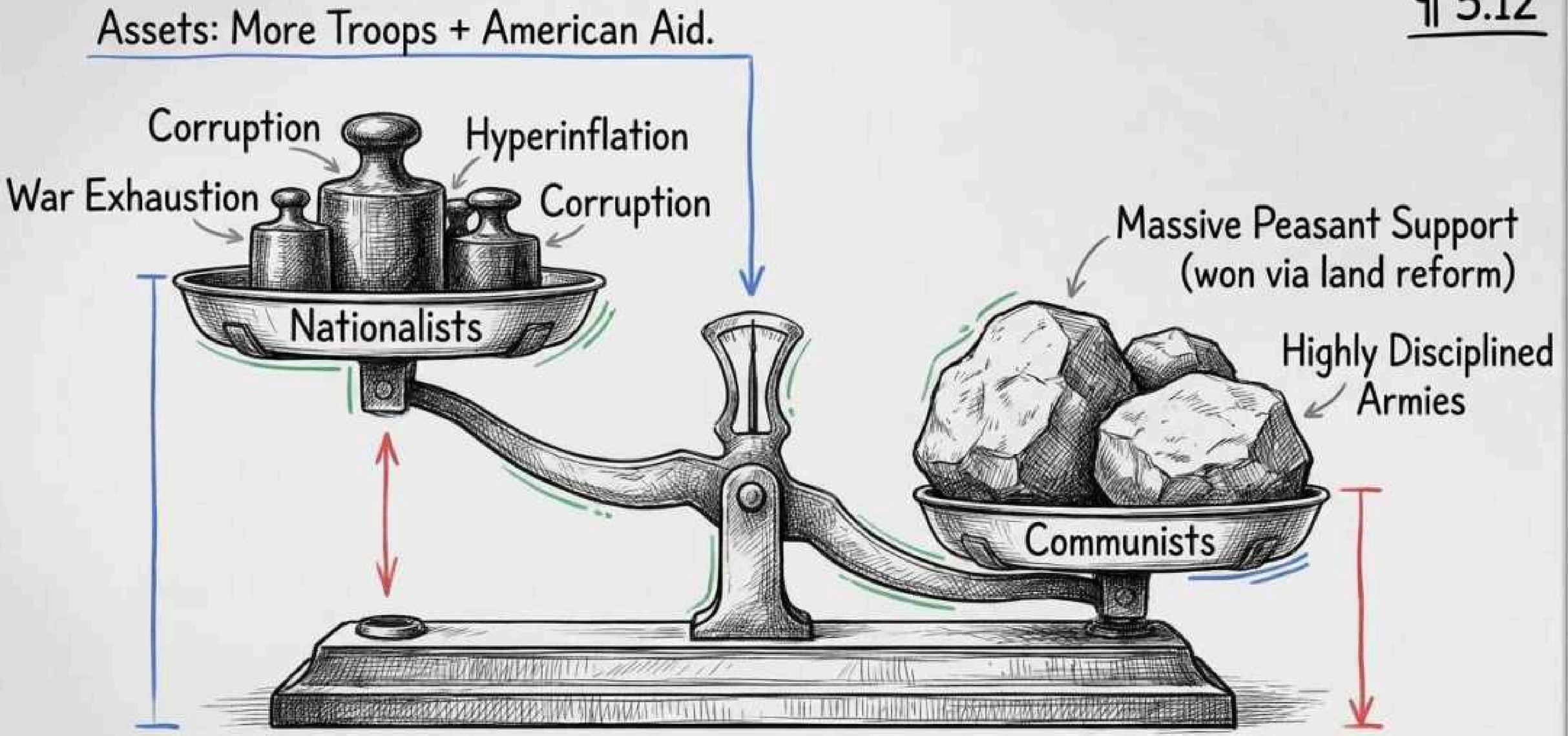
- US drops atomic bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki.
- Soviet Union declares war on Japan.
- August 15, 1945: Emperor Hirohito formally announces Japan's surrender.



Ledger of Colonialism

Physical Extraction	Identity Suppression
Japan builds extensive railways, factories, and mines.	Harsh eradication of Korean identity (escalating in late 1930s): - Forced adoption of Japanese names. - Forced Shinto worship. - Forced labor in Japanese mines and factories.

Unresolved Trauma: Countless women were forced into sexual slavery for the Japanese army—a historical wound that remains unresolved today.



October 1, 1949 – Mao Zedong proclaims the People's Republic of China in Beijing.

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- Chiang Kai-shek and ~2 million followers retreat to Taiwan.
- The Nationalists continue to operate as the Republic of China (ROC).
- Context: Taiwan had previously been a Japanese colony since 1895.

THE DIVISION BETWEEN THE MAINLAND PRC AND TAIWAN REMAINS ONE OF THE MOST DANGEROUS UNRESOLVED ISSUES IN GLOBAL POLITICS TODAY.

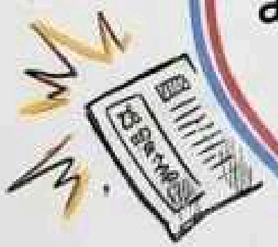
Imperial End:

1911 Revolution shatters the Qing, unleashing the Warlord Era.



Cultural Shift:

May Fourth Movement attacks tradition and sparks intellectual revolution.



Ideological Crucible:

The Long March and Mao's brilliant, unconventional peasant strategy shape the CCP.



War & Outcome:

Japanese militarism devastates Asia until 1945; Communist victory finalizes the mainland shift in in 1949.



Next: East Asia since 1945.