The Rise of the Chinese Communist Party*

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Abstract

We examine the historical rise of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) in wartime China. Using a spatial regression discontinuity design and several measures to proxy for the Party's rise during the Sino-Japanese War (middle-to-upper-level cadre officials, grassroots party organizations, guerrilla bases), we find that it grew significantly more in counties occupied by the Japanese Army. Its pre-war popularity notwithstanding, the same markers are not statistically significant before the war, however. We identify two primary channels behind the CCP's political ascendancy. First, the communists took advantage of the militarily weaker "puppet troops" in charge of administering the loosely held occupied areas. Second, support for the CCP was powered by a strong anti-Japanese sentiment spurred by war suffering, using civilian casualties and rape cases as proxies for the harm inflicted. Finally, the CCP's wartime influence persisted after the war: former Japanese-occupied areas exhibited a significantly higher party membership density from 1950 to 1985.

Keywords: Communist Revolution, Peasant Nationalism, Power Vacuum, War Suffering, Sino-Japanese War

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1 Introduction

The rise of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) is one of the most momentous events of the twentieth century. It shaped the fortunes of 500 million people in China at the time, including those who fled as a result. While the CCP is the world's largest surviving communist party and governs a sizeable economy (the world's second largest) and population, its rise to power has received surprisingly little scholarly attention. Specifically, how did the CCP grow its membership after losing 90% of it during the deadly Long March, especially when it was forced to settle in a remote part of the country until 1949 (Section 2)? Why did it gain popular support only after the Japanese invasion of 1937? And what enabled the Party to emerge victoriously from the Sino-Japanese War, when it was militarily the weakest of the three powers?

This paper investigates the *causal* roots of the communists' revolutionary success. The peasant nationalism hypothesis maintains that the Japanese invasion of 1937 represented "specific physical pressures" that, when "acting upon given political environments," gave rise to a collective "nationalist movement" (Johnson, 1962, p. ix). As a type (or "species") of nationalism, it triggered the CCP's rise to political ascendancy. The founder of the People's Republic of China, Mao Zedong, sarcastically thanked the "Japanese capitalists and warlords for invading China" and encouraging the population to "take up the armed struggle" and "[establish] many counter-Japanese military bases," thereby "creating favorable conditions for the coming war of liberation" (Mao, 1961). According to Johnson (1962), the communists exploited the peasants' nationalist sentiment triggered by the "exogenous shock" of the Japanese invasion to organize a village-based resistance movement built upon mass activism. Johnson maintains that the impact of the invasion outweighs the communists' revolutionary "social and economic program" to redistribute wealth to the rural poor (by reducing rents, taxes, and interest payments in the pre-war years) in explanations of the CCP's ascendancy.[1] Figure 1 illustrates that CCP membership only grew rapidly after 1937, which supports Johnson's argument; he explains that Mao inspired the peasants (who had never before been concerned with national affairs) to internalize a collective national self-consciousness sparked by war sufferings — including mass killing, property damage, and humiliation. Before the Japanese invasion, this national self-consciousness was only appreciated by political elites

[1]This lies at the heart of the debate between Johnson and his critics. While Gillin (1964) and Selden (1971) argue that this program made the CCP immensely popular among ordinary people even before the invasion, Esherick's (1995) study of Yan'an finds that the communist foothold there "was very fragile indeed, with only 20,000 men and controlled only a few county seats, (while) surrounded by more than 300,000 KMT forces" (p. 53). Other regional studies have supported Johnson's thesis (e.g., Dorris, 1976; Perry, 1980; Wou, 1994). In all fairness, many criticisms are essentially a qualification of the circumstances under which peasant nationalism may or may not occur (e.g., Chen, 1986; Kataoka, 1972; Thaxton, 1997; Wou, 1994).

and intellectuals such as Sun Yat-sen and his followers.

[Figure 1 about here]

This paper has two primary objectives. First, we examine the causal impact of the Japanese invasion on the rise of the CCP in wartime China, particularly in North China. Second, we provide evidence in support of two primary channels connecting the Japanese invasion to the CCP's growing influence. We employ a boundary in the context of a spatial regression discontinuity design (RDD) to differentiate counties occupied by the Japanese — so-called Japanese Occupied Areas (JOA) — from those controlled by the Kuomingtang (KMT). In Section 3 we estimate their respective effect on several markers that reflect the Party's growing influence in these areas. We choose the 1940 boundary because virtually all the battles fought from 1938 to 1940 were between the Japanese and KMT armies; this helps alleviate the concern that the boundary might be affected by the CCP's military involvement during this period.[2] As befits a spatial RDD, we use a balance check to ensure that the boundary is orthogonal to multiple geographic and socioeconomic factors.

We report the baseline spatial RDD results in Section 4.1. Using the 100 km bandwidth as an example, we find that "treated" counties experienced a significant increase in communist influence as measured by: (1) per capita CCP cadres at the level of colonel and above (3.4%), (2) the likelihood that a Party Committee — the highest level of party organization at the county level — was established by the end of 1940 (9.7%), and (3) the size of the guerrilla base (22.6% larger). In addition to controlling for the cubic polynomials of longitude and latitude and the segment fixed effects (e.g., Becker et al., 2016; Dell, 2010), we also control for the distance from a county's centroid to the nearest railway station and telegraph line (in case the Japanese strategically chose to occupy counties with access to supplies and communications) and whether the Red Army passed through the county during its retreat to Yan'an, which may have sowed the seeds of communism. To further ensure that the boundary is exogenous, we use a particular segment that was formed by a breach in the levees of the Yellow River Dike created by the KMT's bombing to prevent the Japanese Army from chasing them. The results obtained using the counties on either side of the boundary of this quasi-natural experiment are broadly consistent with those of the baseline RDD estimates, albeit with predictably smaller coefficients due to the smaller sample size (Section 4.2).

In Section 4.3 we address issues pertaining to minor shifts in the boundary over time and villagers' possible "migration" from the occupied area to unoccupied areas. We also conduct

[2]There is scholarly consensus that the CCP played only a minor role in the military confrontations with the Japanese, choosing to engage in guerrilla warfare tactics due to their substantially weaker military capacity (see, e.g., Gillin, 1964).

a falsification test to ensure that the same three dependent variables are not significant during the pre-war period (1926-37). The results of all three exercises confirm the robustness of our baseline estimates.

To ensure that the boundary of the occupied area does not pick up any persistent effects of the explanations proposed to account for the early (pre-war) rise of the CCP (e.g., "class consciousness," "exploitation," CCP social and economic programs), we examine these factors in Section 5 as a balance check. We find that the counties on either side of the boundary exhibit no discontinuities in a wide range of variables employed as proxies for these explanations.

Our second objective is to account for the *channels* underlying the relationship between the Japanese invasion and the rise of the CCP. In Section 6 we examine two plausible channels. The first is a power vacuum in the JOA after the defeated KMT Army fled. To prevent the communists from taking over these unoccupied areas, the Japanese used "puppet troops" comprised of captive KMT soldiers and remnants of local warlords, who were armed.[3] The communists exploited this opportunity by attacking areas garrisoned by these puppet troops. In Section 6.1 we divide the JOA into areas garrisoned by the Japanese Army vs. puppet troops, and find that all three markers of CCP influence grew significantly faster in the latter — middle-to-upper-ranking cadres by 3.2-3.9%, Party Committees by 10.5-21.0%, and guerrilla bases by 26.0-81.7%. We also find evidence that CCP growth was similarly hindered in JOA pockets where the KMT guerrilla forces remained in place.

The second channel is the collective nationalist sentiment induced by the harm the Japanese Army inflicted on the Chinese people, which may have compelled ordinary citizens to join the CCP and support its cause in countering the Japanese invasion. Indeed, Acemoglu et al. (2022) document that exposure to war casualties can trigger a psychological process that increases identification with one's nation. We examine two types of war suffering to test this channel. The first is the number of civilians killed by the Japanese (the "struggle for survival" sub-channel). The second is the number of reported rape cases (the "humiliation and hatred" sub-channel).[4] Together, these atrocities awakened a "national self-consciousness". In Section 6.2 we detect a significant increase in both types of suffering in the JOA, and use a heterogeneity test to further confirm that, except for the non-military operations of Party organization building, both types had a significantly larger effect on inducing support for the CCP in JOA counties. These findings substantiate the claim that war suffering is a significant channel.

[3]After the fall of Yuan Shikai in 1916, a military strongman who ruled the Beiyang government (c. 1912-28), army generals were split into factions and controlled these militias as warlords.

[4]According to Bianco (1971, p. 153), hatred "is the most powerful agent of national self-consciousness."

To further ensure that the communist presence in the JOA fostered short- to medium-term support for the CCP, we examine these effects in Section 7 by regressing CCP membership on the JOA across five individual years over a period of nearly four decades: 1950 (the first year after the founding of the People's Republic), 1960 (a decade afterwards), 1966 (the year the Cultural Revolution began), 1976 (the end of the Cultural Revolution), and 1985 (several years into Deng Xiaoping's economic reforms). We find that CCP membership was significantly higher in the JOA at all these time points. Section 8 briefly discusses why the CCP, rather than the KMT, won the support of the Chinese people as the leading agent of national salvation. Section 9 concludes.

This study contributes to a rapidly growing literature that seeks a causal link between wars and the rise of extreme populist ideologies and revolutions in the twentieth century (Acemoglu et al., 2022; Dell and Querubin, 2018; Ferwerda and Miller, 2014; Fontana et al., 2023; Kocher et al., 2018; Ochsner and Roesel, 2020). Like the approach of Acemoglu et al. (2022), who employ variation in WWI casualties to proxy for the "Red Scare" and the corresponding growth in support for the fascists, we use variation in exposure to the Japanese invasion to account for the rise of a collective nationalist sentiment in areas disproportionately affected by it. Our approach closely resembles Fontana et al.'s (2023) argument that the Italian Civil War and Nazi occupation of Italy of 1943-45 increased later support for the Communist Party. However, the Italian Communist Party was already a legitimate political party eligible to run in a democratic election, whereas the rise of the CCP represented a revolution or regime change in a context in which the militarily stronger KMT appeared more likely to rule China. Dell and Querubin (2018) demonstrate that the foreign invasion of Vietnam led to a backlash characterized by a lack of public goods provision, a weakened civic government, and the unwanted consequences of communist insurgencies (see also Kocher et al., 2011). In a similar vein, we establish that Japan's invasion of China led to the rapid growth of a guerrilla armed force and grassroots party building, which strengthened a nationalist identity induced by war suffering. All of these factors led to the CCP's growth.

Our study also joins a large literature investigating the historical rise of the CCP from a wide range of analytical perspectives. For example, the early rise of Chinese communism has been examined through the lens of "modernization theory" (Lipset, 1959; Wickham-Crowley, 1992), "class consciousness" (Perry, 1993), "exploitation of the peasantry" by landlords (Skocpol, 1979) or the local state or warlords (Moore, 1966; Hofheinz Jr, 1969; Selden, 1971), social capital as it was articulated through different kinds of indigenous social organizations, ranging from peasant associations and secret societies to lineages (Feng and Goodman, 2000; Jiang and Lan, 2023; Perry, 1980; Thaxton, 1997), a violent culture (Rowe, 2007), a previous revolution — the 1911 Revolution — in mobilizing support for the CCP,

and more recently the exposure to media (specifically a literary magazine) among military cadres at the Huangpu Military Academy (Bai et al., 2023). While we focus on empirically testing Johnson's hypothesis, we acknowledge the potential importance and relevance of these other explanations to account for the CCP's early growth.

2 Historical Background

2.1 A Brief Pre-war History of Communism in China

Chen Duxiu and Li Dachao founded the CCP in 1921 as a reading group with only 57 members; they sought to spread Marxism among students and industrial workers. In 1924, the substantially larger Nationalist Party or Kuomingtang (KMT) — which had 50,000 members — agreed to ally with the CCP (which still had fewer than 1,000 members) as part of the aid conditions stipulated by the Soviet Union. After the unexpected death of the Nationalist leader Sun Yat-sen the following year, his successor (the right-wing Chiang Kai-shek) purged the CCP through hundreds of arrests and executions. Unable to counter the KMT, the CCP fled to rural Jiangxi Province in south-central China and founded the Red Army.

The CCP's membership grew to a staggering 411,000 by 1934 (solid line in Figure 1. It established many revolutionary bases (*geming genju di*) across south-central China in Jiangxi and Anhui provinces (shaded pinkish red in Appendix Figure A1). But the ideological clash between the two parties soon erupted into a fully-fledged civil war (the First Civil War of 1927-37). In 1934, Chiang launched a full-scale attack on the CCP, forcing the Red Army to embark on the deadly Long March, a 370-day, 9,600 km retreat from Jiangxi Province to the remote north-central Shaanxi Province, which remained the communists' stronghold until 1949 — what Esherick (2023) calls an "accidental holy land" (Appendix Figure A1 depicts the route). By 1937 its membership had shrunk by 90%; while the KMT killed some, most starved to death during the grueling journey.

2.2 Japanese Invasion of 1937

2.2.1 Power Vacuum, Grassroots Organizational Building, and the Growth of Guerrilla Bases

On July 7, 1937, on the pretext of searching for a lost soldier near the Marco Polo Bridge (*Lugou Qiao*) southwest of Beiping (now Beijing), the Japanese Army invaded China Proper

(it had occupied Manchuria — now Northeast China — for 6 years by this point).[5] For the next 8 years, a full-blown war was fought primarily between Japan and the Nationalist government. The KMT Army lost most of its battles with the Japanese and retreated to the southwest. In many invaded villages, the civilians were killed and local elites and KMT officials fled; the Japanese Army occupied the abandoned villages between 1937 and 1940 in an attempt to consolidate its control in these areas instead of chasing the KMT Army (Kataoka, 1974). While the Japanese easily defeated the KMT Army, it lacked the manpower to directly administer all the conquered territory — thus creating a power vacuum (Johnson, 1962; Bianco, 1971; Goodman, 2013; Saich, 2021).[6] For instance, although Japan had deployed up to 1.18 million soldiers to China and occupied up to 6 million km of China's territory, at the height of its control it covered only slightly over 60% of the territory. This remained the case in 1939, even after the Japanese conducted the "Pacification Campaign" (*qingxiang*) to consolidate control in the occupied area in North China. The countryside remained wide open (Kataoka, 1974) and became "communist victory" (Johnson, 1962, p. 52).

The communists swiftly moved into the occupied but unattended villages and provided helpful assistance to villagers who were desperate for leadership and organization for self-defense against future attacks by the Japanese Army. The CCP also supplied a wide array of public goods such as education and agricultural cooperation (Goodman, 2000; Keating, 1997; Pepper, 1995).

But the communists' ambitions extended far beyond assisting the peasants. The power vacuum allowed them to capitalize on their influence in the countryside: in 1938 the Politburo agreed to dispatch cadres to the countryside to set up Party Committees to guide existing members and recruit new ones.[7] This process allowed them to consolidate party control. For instance, the Red Army had 20,000 men in Shanxi Province in North China and controlled only a few county seats before the Japanese invasion (c. 1936) (Esherick, 1995, p. 53). Yet by the end of 1939 the number of county Party Committees had increased tenfold (from only three); the number of registered party members rose sharply during this period from fewer than 100 to more than 50,000.

[5]This includes areas that were "directly controlled by the central administrative bureaucracy," which in most of the Qing dynasty "consisted of the 18 provinces primarily populated by Han Chinese" (Harding, 1993).

[6]As Johnson (1962) points out, the Japanese Army was "finding it difficult elsewhere to govern the large territory that had proved so easy to invade" (p. 39). Bianco (1971) similarly remarks that "the Japanese army never took possession of the land it had conquered. It was swallowed up in the vastness of China, holding nothing but cities and connecting roads and railways" (p. 148).

[7]Central Committee of the CCP, March 15 1938, *Zhonggong zhongyang guanyu daliang fazhan dangyuan de jueyi* ("The resolution of the Central Committee of the CCP on the massive development of party members").

The communist military planners established bases in the anarchic villages to better prepare themselves for guerrilla warfare. Like its party-building efforts, the Red Army's guerrilla bases vastly expanded over time. Many villagers joined the CCP guerrilla forces to obtain weapons to protect themselves (Bianco, 1971; Kataoka, 1974). Lary (2010, p. 7) notes that young people were motivated to join the Red Army to place "patriotism and the revolution ahead of the[ir] families... in the context of a war that demanded resistance, which the CCP increasingly came to lead."

The people believed the communists were there to help them rebuild their lives and defend against the Japanese invasion, and thus joined the Red Army *voluntarily*, which was likely an important driving force behind the Party's growing influence. According to Kataoka (1972), peasant support was voluntary, but it was neither completely spontaneous nor inspired solely by appeals to patriotic self-defense; "mobilizing agents" — party and non-party (e.g., lineages), as well as military and non-military (e.g., secret societies) — were important in sustaining peasant support. Yet the Party is credited with winning the "hearts and minds" of the peasants in the JOA and thus, unlike the KMT, it did not need to forcibly conscript fighters; the CCP was immensely popular with the local people (Bianco, 1971; Gillin, 1964; Johnson, 1962; Lary, 2010; Pepper, 1995) under Mao's "mass line" policy or *Qunzhongluxian* (Huang, 2024).

The immense popularity of the CCP helps explain how the communists expanded the size of their guerrilla base — specifically the number of fighters — and increased their membership from 40,000 to 800,000 (c. 1937-40, the solid line in Figure 1) in less than 4 years. This rapid growth of Party membership was the combined result of (1) the CCP's increased recruitment efforts and (2) its improved recruitment efforts. This effect was strongest in the JOA, likely due to the Party's disproportionate dedication to fighting the Japanese in those areas.

The communists spread their influence from their stronghold in the northwest to the east and infiltrated much of North China, occupying a large part of Hebei, Shandong, and Shanxi provinces behind Japanese lines — an area Fairbank (1986, p. 31) describes as "the omnipresent social front of popular resistance." The Japanese retaliation in response to the Red Army's famous Hundred Regiments Offensive in late 1940 (discussed in Section 3.3.2) further intensified the revolution.

2.2.2 War Suffering and Peasant Nationalism

Nationalism had existed in China since at least the late Qing dynasty, especially after the Middle Kingdom suffered an unexpected, humiliating defeat by Japan in the First Sino-Japanese War (c. 1894-95). But at that time the concept only appealed to a small fraction of the population — what Johnson (1962, p. 23) calls the "unassimilated intelligentsia and

the small middle classes that grew up in the treaty ports"; hence it failed to take root. Even the patriotic Boxers — who killed many foreign consulates, merchants, and missionaries in the Boxer Rebellion — did not seek a political transformation that would have signaled a form of nationalism (Johnson, 1962, p. 26). Thus, before the Japanese invasion of 1937 Chinese peasants were largely "absorbed in local matters and had only the dimmest sense of China (as a nation)," and were thus "far too removed to feel the humiliation and territorial losses suffered" (Johnson, 1962, pp. 23, 69). Afterwards, the Chinese peasant realized that "his own peril was also China's peril"; those in the JOA "were socially mobilized by war and resistance organization, and thereby became a national population" (Johnson, 1962, p. 26).

The Japanese invasion fundamentally changed the rural conditions in China. The house arrest of Chiang Kai-shek by Zhang Xueliang, a senior KMT official, marked the beginning of "a rising tide of anti-Japanese agitation among students and military men" after Chiang's "halfhearted and ineffective efforts to forestall Japanese aggression" (Esherick, 1995, p. 55). By the time the Japanese launched a full invasion 6 years later, the extent of the damage and pain it afflicted on the Chinese people triggered a strong sense of unity and created a demand for effective leadership to resist the invaders. An estimated 24-25 million people (up to 10% of the population) died in the war (Bian, 2012). Hundreds of massacres (defined as atrocities that killed at least 800 civilians) occurred, and more than 8.8 million houses were burned down (Office, 2014). The war also disrupted a peaceful social order, and the losses and humiliations triggered deep fears of recurring invasions.

While the peasants may not have espoused the communist ideology, the war had weakened China so much that the peasantry simply "had no recourse but to seek the Red Army's protection" (Bianco, 1971, p. 151). The Japanese Army conducted "mopping-up" campaigns from 1938 until the end of the war, which included the indiscriminate pursuit of the brutal "three-all" policy (i.e., "burn all, kill all, loot all") designed to wipe out entire "infested" areas that it suspected contained communists. When the communists' guerrilla tactics succeeded in throwing the Japanese off balance, the villagers came to hate the invaders "with all their heart and soul" (Bianco, 1971, p. 153). According to Johnson (1962), war atrocities gave rise to various kinds of suffering, including humiliation, which increased support for the sentiment of national self-defense. In the occupied areas where the KMT were virtually absent, the responsibility of patriotic resistance to the Japanese fell solely on the communists (Bianco, 1971, p. 154). While the KMT and CCP both sought to mobilize the population "in the name of national resistance; by the end of the war, the CCP, operating mainly in occupied areas, where the need for mobilization for resistance was greatest, had made its version of nationalism and socialism into a huge movement" (Lary, 2010, p. 12). As Lary (2010, p. 7) describes, "personal loss and near despair detached people from their social moorings and

precipitated some survivors into political radicalism — which meant, at the time, joining the CCP."

3 Estimation Strategy

3.1 Variables and Data Sources

We employ three measures as proxies for the growing influence of the CCP in wartime China. The ideal approach would be to count the civilians who joined the Party during this period (c. 1937-45), but this data is only available at the national level. Our first variable is therefore the regional (county-level) distribution of communist cadres ranked at the level of regiment commander or colonel (*tuan*) or above by 1949 who joined the Red Army during the Sino-Japanese War.[8]

Most CCP soldiers were from rural areas; they were recruited exclusively (and voluntarily) from their hometowns (Qi, 2015). We thus use their hometown information to proxy for the county from which they joined the CCP. Since our data does not always include the year in which these officials joined the Party, we searched for this information from their personal biographies in the *Baidu Encyclopedia* (a Wikipedia-like website — https://baik.baidu.com). To account for population differences between counties, we normalize the number of CCP cadres by each county's pre-war population (c. 1936) to construct a density measure. Since the measure is based on the county's pre-war population, cross-county variation is uncorrelated with wartime casualties between counties. These middle-to-upper-level cadres would be assigned to different counties by the Party Central regardless of where they were recruited. Therefore, the variation in recruitment efforts across counties does not necessarily reflect casualty levels in a county. Rather, it indicates county-level variation in the enthusiasm for joining the CCP.

The left panel of Figure 2 depicts the geographic distribution of these cadres in the pre-war (c. 1921-36, Panel A) and wartime (c. 1937-45, Panel B) periods, both normalized by the county's pre-war population. The figure demonstrates that the increase in cadre membership came predominantly from North China. Since not everyone who joined the Party rose through the ranks to become a colonel or higher, this proxy represents a lower-bound estimate of the total number of cadres who joined the CCP during the war. To ensure that this measure and the overall measure of CCP membership are highly correlated, the

[8]We obtained information on these officers from *Zhongguo Kangrizhanzheng Junshi Shiliao Congshu* (A Compilation of Military Historical Materials of the Chinese War of Resistance Against Japan), which includes the name and hometown of officials who had reached the rank of colonel (*tuan*) or above by 1949 — when the People's Republic was founded. But we only included those who were recruited during the war in our sample.

dashed line in Figure 1 plots the trend of cadres. It illustrates that the two curves exhibit a remarkably similar trend and are highly correlated at 0.837.

[Figure 2 about here]

Our second dependent variable pertains to the CCP's county-level organization-building efforts. The Party rapidly responded to the KMT's retreat from North China by sending cadres into the JOA counties to establish party organizations and recruit party members (Gatu, 2008; Hofheinz Jr, 1969; Levine, 1987). The Party established three main types or levels of party organizations at the county level between 1940 and 1945. [9] The first and most primitive or loose form of local organization was the spontaneously developed Party group (*dang xiaozu*). Second, in Party chapters or branches (*dang zhibu*), locally elected leaders had to be approved by officials at the provincial level or above. Third, Party Committees were established directly by the Central Committee; as the highest county-level organization during the war, officials were sent by the Central Committee to administer the counties directly. Our second dependent variable is thus whether a county had established a Party Committee by the end of 1940. As we explain in Section 3.3, we use the 1940 boundary to analyze the effect of Japanese occupation primarily because all major battles that occurred between late 1937 and 1940 were fought between the Japanese and KMT armies. Unlike the first and third variables, this variable captures the non-military aspect of communist development and the spread of CCP ideology among villagers, thereby generating a more balanced picture of its influence.

Our third dependent variable is a measure of the size of the guerrilla base or military forces residing in a locale in 1940. Unlike the first two dependent variables, which were both obtained from CCP archives, we collected data for this measure by digitizing a military map of 1940 from the Japanese Wartime Intelligence Archive (see Appendix Figure A2). We use this data source because the information was documented on the ground, and hence is likely to avoid the potential memory bias associated with subsequent estimation.

Our data covers a total of 1,708 (out of 2,233) counties in 24 provinces in today's China, which coincides with "China Proper." The three northeastern provinces of Liaoning, Jilin, and Heilongjiang are excluded as they were already occupied by the Japanese in 1931. Taiwan is also excluded as it was occupied even earlier (c. 1897). We also exclude Inner Mongolia, Qinghai, Tibet, and Xinjiang because of missing data. Table Table 1 lists the summary statistics of our variables of interest.

[Table 1 about here]

[9] We obtained information on these efforts from *Sheng Gongchandang Zuzhishi Ziliao* (Provincial Archive on the History of the CCP's Party Organization).

3.2 A Spatial RDD

To identify the exogenous causes of the CCP's political ascendance, we exploit the effect of a county's discontinuous exposure to occupation by the Japanese Army using a boundary that demarcated the occupied area in 1940 on our three dependent variables. The RDD regression assumes the following specification:

$$CCP_i = \alpha + \beta Japenese\,Occupied\,Area_i + f(Geographical\,Location_i) + \sum_{j=1}^{n} seg_i^j + \pi_i \quad (1)$$

where CCP_i represents the three outcome variables of interest in county i. $Japanese\,Occupied\,Area_i$ is an indicator variable set to 1 if county i was within the JOA in 1940, and 0 otherwise.[10] $f(Geographical\,Location_i)$ is the RD polynomial controlling for smooth functions of geographic location. Following Dell (2010), we employ a two-dimensional RD in latitude-longitude space by controlling for polynomials in latitude and longitude. We also convert it into the single dimension of distance and control for the polynomials of distance. To ensure that the specification only compares counties on the same segment of the boundary, we split the boundary into 100 km segments seg_i^j, and assign a value of 1 to county i if it is closest to segment j, and 0 otherwise. Based on a GIS map of 1958, which clearly demarcates county boundaries, we constructed a 1940 map of the JOA using information obtained from *Gexian Lunxian Shijian (A Timeline of the Fall of Counties to Japanese Occupation)*, which contains the exact dates when the Japanese occupied each county. For example, Wuqing was the first county in Hebei Province to fall under Japanese control on July 19, 1937, 12 days after the Marco Polo Bridge Incident (see Appendix Figure B3). We then verified this data source with detailed information provided by Japanese Intelligence on the locations of its troops and their daily marching routines,[11] and found no significant discrepancies. Figure 3 depicts the boundary of the occupied area in 1940 based on the geocoded data projected onto the 1949 county maps.

[Figure 3 about here]

To fully exploit the exogenous variation caused by the $Japanese\,Occupied\,Area_i$, we use (1) a full sample that includes 1,708 counties from the entire China Proper in 1940, (2) a subsample of counties located within 400, 300, 200, and 100 kilometers of the boundary of

[10] As we have no information on the extent to which a county was occupied by the Japanese, we do not code counties that may have been partially occupied.

[11] We collected this data from the General Historical Materials on the Army, Institute of Defense, Defense of Japan. This data is sufficiently fine-grained to show, for example, whether a county was occupied by the formal Japanese Army or puppet troops — information we use to analyze their heterogeneous effects in Table 8A.

the occupied area (the dashed line in Figure 3 indicates the 100 km bandwidth),[12] and (3) a subsample of counties within the optimal bandwidth from the same boundary estimated based on minimization of the mean square error (MSE) (Calonico et al., 2014; Cattaneo et al., 2024). Calonico et al. (2019) provide a new method for estimating a local RD polynomial in the MSE-optimal bandwidth estimation that permits the inclusion of covariates under less restrictive assumptions, and update the "rdrobust" package accordingly.[13] This method allows us to control — in our context — for the distance to railway station and telegraph line, as well as a dummy variable indicating whether a county was in the path of the Long March. Following the standard procedure, we use a local linear RD polynomial as our baseline specification and document its robustness to (1) different RD polynomials in the parametric approach and (2) different choices of kernel methods for estimating the optimal bandwidth in the local linear approach.

3.3 Validity of the Spatial RD Design

The identification of the spatial RD relies on three assumptions: (1) the formation of the boundary was exogenous to the CCP's guerrilla activities, (2) the Japanese invasion varied discontinuously across the boundary, and support for communism grew faster in the occupied area, and (3) except for the treated variable, all other confounding factors vary smoothly at the boundary (balance checks).

3.3.1 Formation of the 1940 Boundary

We begin with assumption (1). The frontline of the JOA was mostly shaped by battles fought between the Japanese and KMT armies (e.g., Lary, 2010; Mitter, 2013). After capturing Kaifeng (the capital of Henan Province) in the Battle of Xuzhou in June 1938, the Japanese threatened to take over Zhengzhou because of its strategic location at the junction of the Pinghan and Longhai Railways (see Figure 4). This would have allowed the Japanese to quickly capture Wuhan — the wartime capital of the KMT government after the fall of Nanjing — thus forcing the Chinese to surrender. To prevent this from happening, Chang Kai-shek ordered the bombing of the Huayuankou Dike on the south bank of the Yellow River. The bombing destroyed thousands of square kilometers of farmland (shaded red in Figure 4) and shifted the course of the Yellow River several hundred kilometers to the south.[14]

[12] Section 4.1 explains why we choose these bandwidths.

[13] This method allows covariates to be included in a local polynomial estimation "in an additive-separable, linear-in-parameters way" without requiring additional smoothing methods or parametrically functional form assumptions (Calonico et al., 2019, p. 450).

[14] The Yellow River did change course several times, but this invariably occurred north of the river. The bombing caused a flood south of the river, as indicated in Figures 4 and A6. Thus, while the historical changes

While this strategic move stalled the Japanese Army's crossing of the Yellow River to chase the fleeing KMT Army (Muscolino, 2015), it killed an estimated 400,000-500,000 people and destroyed the homes and land of several million others. The Japanese did reach Wuhan in June of 1938, sparking the Battle of Wuhan, the largest and longest battle of the war. In Section 4.2, we test whether this "heroic" decision of Chiang "tarnished his reputation badly" (Bianco, 1971, p. 156).

[Figure 4 about here]

When the Japanese discovered that the KMT Army had already reached the southwest, the invaders decided to consolidate their control over North China. The Japanese Army occupied towns strategically located along major transport routes (especially railways) on the northern side of the Yellow River and wiped out remnants of the KMT bases in "mopping-up" campaigns; it also terrorized peasants for supporting the CCP. The evolving boundaries of the occupied areas during 1937-40 (as shown in Appendix Figure A3) reveal Japan's expanding territory during this time, and its increased access to local resources such as coal (Kataoka, 1974). The barricade erected by the KMT Army formed a "frontline" boundary that separated the two armies along Yellow River. This (North China) boundary remained relatively stable until nearly the end of the Sino-Japanese War. Until at least 1940, the boundary was created exclusively by military confrontations between the KMT and Japanese armies. The lack of CCP involvement in the first 3 years of this war is illustrated by Mao's belief that guerrilla warfare was the only way to attack the Japanese.[15] At that time, Japan considered the CCP just another "roving bandit," and did not direct any major military operations against it.[16]

3.3.2 Additional Reasons for Choosing the 1940 Boundary

We also use the 1940 boundary as identification because it was not affected by the CCP's activities or influence until late 1940, when it launched the Hundred Regiments Offensive in five northern Chinese provinces to prevent the KMT and Japanese from reaching a peace settlement and stopping the war. The Red Army also sought to cause severe damage to

may have led to deteriorating ecological and socioeconomic conditions, these past events are unlikely to be correlated with the outcomes caused by the KMT's bombing of the dike.

[15]Mao made this point abundantly clear soon after the Sino-Japanese War erupted, i.e., the CCP should fight the Japanese in a "highly dispersed fashion" and "deploy only a fraction of its entire troops" (From the telegraph "The Combating Principles of the Red Army", transmitted by Mao to the CCP military leaders on August 1, 1937, *Jiefangjun Lishi Ziliao Congshu: Balujun [The People's Liberation Army Historical Archive Series: The Eighth Route Army]*, p. 10).

[16]September 23, 1937, *Secret Operation Diary of the Japanese Army*, 1938-1945.

railway and communications lines and disrupt material supplies (Kataoka, 1974). The offensive killed 2,010 Japanese soldiers and injured 3,359 others — by far the most casualties the CCP inflicted on the Japanese. In retaliation, the Japanese Army stepped up its mopping-up campaigns. While the offensive must have alerted the Japanese of the Red Army's military capacity, it did not alter their view that the CCP had an "extremely low combat capability comparable to that of local banditry."[17] The Japanese Army reported to headquarters in July 1941 that, prior to the Hundred Regiments Offensive the Red Army was "preserving [its] strength by avoiding direct confrontations and accordingly casualties."[18]

To further prove that the 1940 boundary does not coincide with any pre-existing political, social, or economic boundaries that are associated with unobserved provincial characteristics, Appendix Figure A4 indicates that it does not overlap with provincial boundaries.

Another reason for choosing 1940 as the year for demarcating the boundary is that the number of civilians killed was the highest of the first 4 years of the Japanese invasion. Appendix Figure A5 juxtaposes the number of civilians killed by the Japanese Army with CCP membership levels, illustrating the opposite trends of the two variables. While the number of civilians killed by the Japanese declined gradually over time, communist membership increased (the slight blip that occurred in 1941 was the result of the Japanese retaliation for the Hundred Regiments Offensive). Evidence of massacres is consistent with that of civilian casualties. Of the 169 wartime massacres documented, 69% (116 cases) occurred in this earlier period.

To satisfy assumption (2) (that the Japanese invasion varied discontinuously across the boundary, with more rapid growth of communism in the occupied area), we fit the values from a local linear regression of the three outcome variables of interest in Figure 5 and confirm a distinct pattern of discontinuity between the counties located on either side of the boundary.

[Figure 5 about here]

3.4 Balance Checks

To verify assumption (3) (that all other confounding factors except the treated variable vary smoothly at the boundary), we employ a balance check on a number of variables that may be correlated with the CCP's growing influence in wartime China by regressing them on the JOA based on Equation (1). The results are reported in Table 2. We begin with

[17] *Military History Series: The Pacification Campaign of the Northern Branch*, p. 519.
[18] *Ibid.*

a set of geographic variables such as terrain ruggedness, elevation, slope,[19] and density of major rivers (columns (1) - (4)). Columns (5) and (6) examine climatic variables including average temperature and precipitation (1934-1936). Columns (7) and (8) evaluate natural resource endowment using the agricultural suitability of China's two main staple crops — rice and wheat — as proxies. Finally, we check for the balance of economic prosperity using population density in 1936 as a proxy (column (9)). Together, the results establish that the point estimate of these variables is small relative to the mean and is insignificantly different from zero. This confirms that the two sets of counties — occupied and unoccupied — have no significant discontinuous differences across this wide range of controls. In Section 5, we conduct additional balance checks on several socioeconomic variables pertaining to the various proposed hypotheses to account for the early emergence of communism in China (before the Japanese invasion).

[Table 2 about here]

4 Japanese Invasion and the Rise of Communism

4.1 Effect on CCP's Wartime Ascendance

Table 3 reports the results of examining the impact of the Japanese invasion on the rise of the CCP using a spatial RDD as specified in Equation (1). The dependent variable in Panel A is the density of CCP cadres, and in Panels B and C the dependent variables are dummies indicating whether a Party Committee had been established in a county and the size of the guerrilla base, both measured by the end of 1940. Columns (1)-(6) present the results for all sample counties, those that fall within the 400-, 300-, 200-, and 100-km radius, respectively, as well as the optimal bandwidth selector proposed by Calonico et al. (2014) and Cattaneo et al. (2024). Our choice of bandwidth is premised on the average size of a Chinese county in 1936, which was approximately 2,150 km^2 and had an average population of 310,000. Assuming that a county is circular in shape, its diameter (based on its average size) would be approximately 52 km^2; thus a bandwidth of 100 km would cover an area of roughly two adjacent counties on each side of the boundary. Except for the optimal bandwidth

[19] We calculate the county's average elevation, slope and terrain ruggedness index based on 90 square-meter grid-cell-level Digital Elevation Model (DEM) data constructed by the United States Geographic Service (USGS). The data on crop-specific agricultural suitability is obtained from the Global Agro-Ecological Zones version 4 (GAEZ v4), which is maintained by the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) under the auspices of the United Nations. The data for average precipitation and temperature between 1934 and 1936 were sourced and computed from the China 1km Resolution Monthly Average Temperature and Precipitation Dataset (1901-2022), which is managed by the China Qinghai-Tibet Plateau Scientific Data Center.

estimation, all regressions control for the cubic polynomials of latitude and longitude and segment fixed effects.

We also add two sets of control variables across all specifications. First, we control for counties of strategic importance to the Japanese Army for replenishing daily supplies and/or disseminating information effectively — those located near railway and telegraph lines — using the distance from a county's centroid to the nearest railway and telegraph lines in our regressions.[20] Second, we control for the CCP's possible pre-war impact on counties during the Long March by introducing a dummy variable indicating whether a county was located along the Long March route.[21] Irrespective of the choice of bandwidth, counties in the JOA have a significantly higher density of middle-to-upper-ranking cadres. Taking the 100 km radius estimation with cubic polynomial in latitude and longitude as an example, those in the occupied area have, on average, a 3.4% higher density of middle-to-upper-ranking cadres (column (5) of Panel A), and 22.6% larger guerrilla bases (column (17). As for party organizational building (a dummy variable measure), counties located in the JOA were 9.7% more likely to establish a Party Committee by the end of 1940 than those that were not. While the point estimates differ across bandwidths and polynomial controls, the results are basically similar. We report the coefficients of both the linear regression and those for other polynomial regressions (ranging from quadratic to quartic) in latitude and longitude or in distance to the boundary of the JOA as a robustness check. The results, presented in Appendix Tables A1-A3, are similar. Finally, we cluster the standard errors at the province or segment level to address potential heteroscedasticity among counties within the same province or segment, and use Conley standard errors to adjust spatial autocorrelation among the errors. Reported in Appendix Tables A4-A6, the results remain robust.

[Table 3 about here]

4.2 A Quasi-Natural Experiment from the Breach of the Yellow River Dike in 1938

As mentioned in Section 3.3.1, part of the JOA boundary in 1940 was shaped by the flood caused by the bombing of the Yellow River Dike. This shorter "natural boundary" thus affords us an invaluable opportunity to identify the causal effect of the Japanese occupation on the rising influence of the CCP. We select the segment of the 1940 boundary affected

[20] Appendix Figure A7 shows that the counties occupied in late 1937 were located near railway and telegraph lines. Following Calonico et al. (2019), we similarly adjust the covariates of both segment fixed effects and the three additional control variables employed in the local polynomial estimations reported in the last column of each panel of Table 3.

[21] We digitized this information from *Zhongguo Gongnong Hongjun Changzheng Shiliao Congshu* (A Compilation on the Historical Materials of China's Industrial and Agricultural Red Army in the Long March).

by the flood and re-estimate Equation (1) by comparing counties in the occupied area with those outside it within a radius of 100 km, 50 km (the average diameter of a county), and an optimal bandwidth from this boundary segment (Calonico et al., 2014; Cattaneo et al., 2024). Following standard practice, we control for the cubic polynomials of latitude and longitude and segment fixed effects, as well as distances to the railway and telegraph lines and whether the county was in the path of the Long March. To ensure that the CCP's growing influence was not generated by a reduction in political support for the KMT caused by the flood, we construct a new dummy variable to indicate whether a county was directly affected by the flood as an additional control. The results are reported in Table 4. We find that the JOA continues to exert a significant effect on the CCP's growing influence even when using a much smaller sample of counties along the "natural boundary" and in the presence of additional controls, however the coefficients become smaller due to fewer observations. Importantly, the dummy variable indicating whether a county was affected by the flood has no significant effect on the rise of the CCP, ruling out the concern that support for the CCP may have been achieved at the expense of the KMT due to the latter's bombing of the dike rather than the CCP's efforts to help civilians cope with the war atrocities.

[Table 4 about here]

4.3 Robustness Checks

4.3.1 Effect of Change of Boundary

While the boundary formed in 1940 remained largely stable until the end of the Sino-Japanese War, minor shifts occurred as the result of a series of battles after 1940. To verify whether these changes in the JOA boundary affected the CCP's rising influence, we geocoded the occupied area for selected years of the 1938-45 period and analyzed their respective effects. The results reported in Table 5 show that, except for 1939 (and both 1939 and 1945 for Party Committees), the remaining years all have a significant effect on the density of middle-to-upper-ranking cadres and a county's likelihood of establishing a Party Committee by 1945.[22]

[Table 5 about here]

4.3.2 Effect of Wartime Refugee Migration

The spatial RD estimation requires that no individuals can manipulate their treatment status. However, this assumption may not hold if those who were concerned about the threat

[22]We omitted the variable guerrilla base here because no data was available for 1937 and years after 1941.

of the Japanese Army fled the occupied area. This should not be a serious concern, because most did not have this luxury; only elites (e.g., landlords, merchants, and government officials) fled alongside the KMT official army to the southwest to avoid the Japanese. Ordinary citizens moved without planning on only two occasions: when the Yellow River Dike was bombed (Lary, 2010; Muscolino, 2015; Van de Ven, 2018) and in response to a widespread famine in Henan Province in 1942.[23] Assuming that there were a few isolated incidences of people moving around anyway, this temporary "migration" likely occurred in a single direction (i.e., away from the occupied area), which would only reduce the influence of the CCP in the occupied area, thus biasing our estimates downward.

To ensure that migration does not present a threat to our estimation, we employ a "donut-hole" RD approach as a falsification test by removing observations located closer to the discontinuous cutoff (Cattaneo et al., 2024).[24] We exclude observations located 10-90 km from the JOA on the basis that villagers residing so close to the boundary are likely to have fled. Figure 6 plots the coefficients of the "donut-hole" estimation by excluding these observations using the parametric polynomial estimates as in column (4) of Table 3. The zero radius in the far left corresponds to the original RD estimates (which do not exclude any observations). The most important finding from Figure 6 is that the coefficients are robustly stable across various "donut-hole" radiuses, with the same expected sign and similar magnitude to that of the zero radius, suggesting that migration (even if it did occur) does not undermine our earlier results.

[Figure 6 about here]

4.3.3 Using the Pre-war Period as a Falsification Test

The hypothesis that the Japanese invasion had a significant causal effect on the rise of the CCP implies that this effect should be significant only *after* the invasion. To verify that this was the case, we conduct a falsification test by regressing the same three dependent variables employed to proxy for the CCP's local influence but for the pre-war period of 1927-36 on the 1940 boundary. To conduct this test, we collected data on the number of CCP cadres who joined the party before 1937 and constructed two dummy variables indicating whether a county had established a Party Committee and a guerrilla base prior to the

[23] According to historians there was essentially no voluntary migration in wartime China; those who left were "moved out of the way as the Japanese tsunamied their way through their neighborhoods and then returned" (Van de Ven, 2018, p. 110; Lary, 2010).

[24] Since the refugees from Henan fled along the Longhai Railway line to the far west instead of back and forth between the JOA and KMT bases *within* North China (Lary, 2010), our donut-hole RD regressions control for the distance to the Longhai Railway line and the results (available upon request) remain the same.

Japanese invasion. We report the results of these checks in columns (1)-(3) of Table 6 for the density of middle-to-upper-ranking cadres, columns (4)-(6) for the establishment of a Party Committee, and columns (7)-(9) for whether a county supported a guerrilla base, using the full sample and those falling within the bandwidths of 200 km and 100 km.[25] Unlike the results for the wartime period, none of the coefficients is significant, confirming that the 1940 boundary was not correlated with the determinants of the spatial distribution of the CCP's pre-war influence. This falsification test also supports Johnson's (1962, p. 7) argument that the Chinese people were generally "indifferent to what the Communist Party had to offer" before the invasion and undermines his critics' case focusing on the importance of the CCP's "social and economic programs."

[Table 6 about here]

5 Competing Explanations for the Early (Pre-war) Rise of the CCP

Although we seek to explain the rise of the CCP in wartime China, it is important to rule out the potential *path-dependent* effects of several possible confounding factors that others have proposed to account for the CCP's pre-war rise. To ensure that the RDD boundary does not pick up any effects of these competing explanations, our additional balance test includes "modernization theory," "class consciousness," "exploitation by landlords and/or the local state/warlord," "social organization," and a "nationalist revolution." The remainder of this section discusses each alternative explanation in turn.

5.1 Modernization and Revolution

According to proponents of modernization theory, economic development in general and education in particular are important determinants of democracy and revolution (Barro, 1999; Lipset, 1959; Wickham-Crowley, 1992).[26] In China, modernization began in the mid-19th century with the forced opening of multiple treaty ports for trade and other purposes between 1842 and 1930. This move led to the comprehensive reform of its education system, which entailed replacing its millennia-long Confucian-based civil service exam with a Western curriculum. We employ three measures as proxies for the effects of modernization. The first

[25] Information on guerrilla bases before 1937 is restricted to whether a county had such a base but not its size. We obtained the data on whether a county supported a guerrilla base from *Shengzhi Dashiji* (Provincial Chronicles of Events in the Sino-Japanese War).

[26] For instance, using a large panel data set, Barro (1999) finds a significant positive relationship between primary school attainment and measures of democracy.

is a dummy variable indicating whether a county was one of the 112 treaty ports (Kung, 2022).The second is the number of modern firms established from 1840 to 1937.[27] Third, we employ the number of primary and middle schools in a county on the cusp of the Japanese invasion (c. 1936). Columns (1)-(3) of Table 7 clearly indicate that the two areas separated by the 1940 boundary are balanced in terms of all three measures of modernization.

[Table 7 about here]

From a Marxist perspective, when the working class collectively awakes to a "consciousness" that the time has come to overthrow the ruling class, revolution is the outcome. While there were incidents of workers' protests in factories located in the treaty ports and industrialized towns before the war (Perry, 1993), industrialization was still in its infancy in 1930s China. Nevertheless, we examine this hypothesis by employing the proportion of industrial workers who were unionized in 1933 as a proxy.[28] As column (4) shows, there is no significant difference in class consciousness between counties on either side of the boundary.

5.2 Exploitation by Landlords and the Local State

Given the predominance of China's rural economy and the alleged unequal distribution of land, many consider the exploitation of landless peasants by their landlords (through exorbitant land rents or hired labor) to be a key determinant of China's communist revolution (Hofheinz Jr, 1969; Moore, 1966; Selden, 1971; Skocpol, 1979). However, this hypothesis remains empirically untested due to the lack of data. To overcome this problem, we employ a farm survey conducted by the KMT government in 1934 that groups rural residents into socioeconomic categories (tenant farmers, semi-owner-cultivators, and owner-cultivators). Intuitively, social relations should be more exploitative in counties with a greater proportion of tenant farmers.[29]

Nor were landlords the only source of peasant burdens. In fact, there were few large landowners in North China at the time (Huang, 1985). Exorbitant taxes and unregulated fees and levies imposed by local governments and warlords were a more likely source of

[27] According to Chang (1989), who compiled the pertinent data, modern firms were (a) powered by steam engine or electricity, (b) relatively large, (c) had a registered capital of at least 10,000 silver yuan or (GBP 1,094), (d) employed at least 30 workers, (e) produced an annual output of at least 50,000 silver yuan, and (f) adopted modern (hierarchical) management practices.

[28] This data is obtained from *Ershiernian Gedi Gonghui Diaocha Zongbaogao* (A Survey of Trade Unions in Various Regions in 1933), published by the KMT's *Zhongyan renmin tuanti yundong zhidao weiyuanhui* (The Steering Committee of the Central People's Unified Movement).

[29] Yet tenancy rates are not always an accurate indicator of exploitation: the southcentral provinces of Jiangxi and Anhui both had high tenancy rates, but the former was a staunch supporter of communism, while the latter was not (Hofheinz Jr, 1969).

peasant dissatisfaction (Bianco, 1971; Chen, 1992; Duara, 1991; Gillin, 1964; Goodman, 2000; Keating, 1997; Selden, 1971, 1995). For example, Yan Xishan, the warlord who governed Shanxi Province, taxed his subjects (particularly peasants) "unmercifully" (Gillin, 1964, p. 283). To test this hypothesis, we use land tax per capita in 1934 as a proxy. We find no significant difference in either tenancy rates or land tax between the two sets of counties separated by the 1940 boundary (columns (5) and (6)).

5.3 Social Organization and Violent Culture

If social organization, and the associated social capital, was instrumental in mobilizing public support for the Nazi Party in the 1930s (Satyanath et al., 2017), then rural social networks and communities such as lineage organizations might have played a similar role in mobilizing Chinese peasants' support for the CCP (Feng and Goodman, 2000; Jiang and Lan, 2023; Kataoka, 1972; Li, 2009). The evidence suggests that in mobilizing the peasantry, the CCP did indeed draw upon the networks of the "Red Gun Society" and the salt smugglers (Perry, 1980; Thaxton, 1997). Consistent with this concept is Rowe's (2007) finding that a seven-century-long "violent culture" in two counties of Hubei Province (Huangan and Macheng) provided an important impetus for the subsequent communist revolution. To verify the alleged effects of lineage organizations, we enumerate the editions of genealogical books a county had revised; we assume that the more frequently a county revised its genealogical books, the stronger its tradition of clans and lineages (Chen et al., 2020). To proxy for a violent culture, we count the number of secret societies operating in a county during the Qing dynasty and the corresponding number of conflicts occurring therein in that period. As reported in columns (7)-(9), none of these proxies differs significantly between the two sets of counties across the 1940 boundary.

5.4 Effect of the 1911 Nationalist Revolution

The CCP and KMT cooperated in the early 1920s under the rubric of the "First United Front," which raises the concern that the KMT might have influenced the communist revolution. This would be the case especially in terms of military training, since the two parties jointly established the Huangpu Military Academy (which trained many future CCP leaders). To rule out the possible influence of the KMT, and since many KMT leaders were heavily involved in the 1911 Nationalist Revolution that brought the 2,000-year-old imperial regime to an end, we trace its possible effect by identifying the hometowns of members of *Tongmenhui* — the revolutionary alliance that preceded the KMT — to check whether the counties sampled across the discontinued boundary are also balanced. The result in column

(10) indicates no discontinuity in this respect between the counties on either side of the boundary.

6 Accounting for the Rise of the CCP

To further substantiate the claim that the relationship between the Japanese invasion and CCP growth is causal, we explore two possible underlying channels: a power vacuum and war suffering. The rest of this section discusses each channel in turn.

6.1 Power Vacuum

The KMT's retreat to the southwest in 1938 created a power vacuum in the abandoned counties where they lost battles. The Japanese established puppet troops under the "Puppet Manchuria Regime" to garrison areas they deemed strategically less important (Goodman, 2013; Johnson, 1962). More than two-thirds of the 814 occupied counties (69%) were garrisoned by these troops. The 600,000 puppet troops (comprised of captive KMT soldiers and former forces of local warlords) were not as motivated as the official army to fight for the Japanese; nor were they as militarily effective. We thus expect that the CCP exploited puppet troops' weaker military capabilities and strengthened the communist influence in areas under their control. For instance, the Japanese Army had a presence in only 20 of Shanxi Province's 105 counties, which allowed the CCP to "develop guerrilla bases, and work with the local population to support the cause of anti-Japanese war and conduct mobile warfare."[30]

To test this conjecture, we geocoded the occupied areas garrisoned by puppet troops vs. the Japanese Army based on maps in the Japanese Wartime Intelligence Archive. We then subdivided our explanatory variable of the 1940 boundary into two dummy variables (puppet troops and the Japanese Army); our dependent variables remain the same.

The results in Table 8 substantiate the claim that the CCP made the most progress in areas garrisoned by puppet troops. While the density of middle-to-upper-ranking cadres was only 1.4-1.9% higher in counties controlled by puppet troops, for grassroots organizational building it was substantially larger: by 1940 these counties had established 11-21% more Party Committees than those garrisoned by the Japanese Army. In the more stringent specifications using samples restricted to the 200 and 100 km^2 bandwidths (columns (5) and (6)), the significance disappears for counties directly controlled by the Japanese Army. The same is found for the guerrilla base measure: only counties garrisoned by the puppet

[30] "On Guerrilla and Mobile Warfare," p. 136. In *Liu Bocheng Junshi Wenxuan (A Collection of Essays on Military Affairs by General Liu Bocheng)*.

troops saw a significant expansion in the size of the guerrilla base. The larger increase in CCP influence in counties occupied by puppet troops supports the hypothesis that the CCP exploited their weakness.

According to the same logic, we expect the CCP to have expanded more slowly in JOA counties where the main KMT army had retreated but left behind a "guerrilla force" to continue fighting the Japanese, simply because under the Second United Front the two parties agreed not fight each other. In Panel B of Table 8 we thus decompose the JOA counties into those with and without a KMT guerrilla army and regress the three proxies measuring CCP growth on these two dummy variables. Although only 18.5% of counties had a KMT guerrilla presence, the results indicate that CCP growth was significantly compromised in these counties. In JOA counties with no KMT guerrilla army, all three markers of CCP growth increased significantly. Taken together, these results are consistent with the claim that the CCP was able to grow faster in occupied areas with no KMT presence.

[Table 8 about here]

6.2 War Suffering

We use two measures of war crimes committed by the Japanese Army against Chinese civilians to proxy for the war suffering channel. The first is "struggle for survival," a sentiment aroused by the civilians' perceived threat to their lives arising from the Japanese invasion. To test this channel, we employed the number of civilians killed by the Japanese Army as a proxy.[31] The second channel pertains to "humiliation and hatred" — a sentiment aroused by rape and sexual subservience in the form of "comfort women" (*weian fu*), for instance. While crimes of this nature do not present an immediate threat to life, they arouse a strong sense of humiliation among civilians and thus hatred of the offender.[32] To examine this channel, we employ the number of rape cases as a proxy.[33]

We report the results of the main effect of these two variables in Table 9. As with Table 8, we only report the results using three bandwidths (the full sample and those within a 200 km and 100 km radius, respectively), and controlling for both cubic polynomials in latitude and longitude, segment fixed effects, and the same control variables employed in

[31]The data is drawn from a survey conducted by the KMT government in 1946 and subsequently made available in *Kangrizhanzheng Shiqi Renkoushangwang Ji Caichanshunshi* (A Compilation of Provincial Archives on Population Casualty and Asset Loss during the Sino-Japanese War), edited by the CCP History Research Office of the Provincial Party Committee (2016). Given that this data was collected by the loser of the war (the KMT), it is likely less biased.

[32]For example, in some rape incidences "fathers and brothers were forced (by the Japanese Army) at bayonet point to participate" (Bianco, 1971, p. 152)

[33]We obtained the data for this analysis from the chapter entitled "Chronicles of Major Events" from *Kangrizhanzheng Shiqi Renkoushangwang Ji Caichanshunshi*.

the baseline estimation of Table 3, for the three dependent variables. To verify whether war suffering represents an important channel through which Japanese occupation led to faster CCP growth, we conducted a heterogeneity test in which we regressed the same three dependent variables on an interaction term between the JOA dummy and the two measures of war crimes described above, alongside the main effects of both variables. As Table 9 shows, war suffering has a larger effect for the two military measures of the CCP's rise for JOA than for non-JOA counties, substantiating our claim that these sufferings served as a channel through which occupation impacted the CCP's rise. But the lack of an additional effect for Party Committee suggests that party organization building was not made easier by greater war suffering.

[Table 9 about here]

A possible concern is that war suffering and the growing influence of the CCP during the war may be co-determined — for example, that the Japanese attacked Shanxi to get rid of communist-led guerrillas, which sparked the hatred of millions of peasants and predisposed them to support the CCP (e.g., Gillin, 1964). To determine whether this was the case, we regress the density of civilians killed by the Japanese Army during wartime (c. 1937-45) on the pre-1940 local influences of the CCP: (1) a dummy variable indicating whether a county hosted a Red Army base before the Japanese invasion (c. 1927-36) and (2) the size of the CCP guerrilla base in 1938 and 1939. Both variables were digitalized from the 1938 and 1939 military maps archived by the Japanese Wartime Intelligence services. As Appendix Table A7 reports, neither the presence of a revolutionary base in the pre-war period nor the size of a CCP guerrilla base before 1940 — measures that would likely have provoked the Japanese invasion — significantly affected the number of civilian casualties in wartime China. By contrast, the correlation between the size of the guerrilla base in 1940 and the density of civilians killed during wartime *is* significant, alleviating the concern that war sufferings and our various outcome variables may be co-determined.

7 Persistent Effect of the Japanese Invasion

To further verify that the CCP had an indelible impact especially in the occupied area, we examine its potential short- and medium-term effects. To do so, we construct a new dependent variable measuring the growth in the density of CCP membership over time, defined as the number of party members in a county divided by its population. We measure this value in five separate years: 1950 (the year after the founding of the People's Republic), 1960 (a decade into its rule), 1966 (the year the Cultural Revolution began), 1976 (the year

the Cultural Revolution ended), and 1985 (several years into the economic reforms). Table 10 reports the regression results of the CCP's wartime presence on the short- to medium-term persistent effects as measured by party membership density using the same bandwidths as in the baseline estimates. These results confirm that, except for a few estimations using the optimal bandwidth, all coefficients are highly significant at the 1-5% levels. Overall, our findings provide strong support for the claim that the communist influence in the JOA in wartime China exerted a significantly persistent effect even long after the war ended.

[Table 10 about here]

8 Why not KMT?

Historians have repeatedly asked why the KMT failed to exploit the wartime conditions as successfully as the CCP, which engaged eagerly and effectively in party recruitment and building, and cleverly exploited its advantage in guerrilla warfare. Bianco (1971, p. 149) characterizes the KMT's failure to engage in guerrilla warfare behind Japanese lines as a "huge, missed opportunity." A simple answer is that the KMT was the dominant political party in China and thus had to bear the brunt of the Japanese attack, and they were completely overmatched. The military defeats led Chiang to pursue a strategy of "trading space with time" (which the Russian empire had successfully used to defeat Napoleon), hoping that the vastness of China's territory would buy them time while waiting for military and other assistance from the international community, particularly the U.S. (Bu and Wang, 2019; Johnson, 1962; Van de Ven, 2018; Yang, 2010).[34] The Japanese overlooked the smaller and weaker CCP until much later, which gave it time and space to organize. Perhaps because they were peasants themselves, the Eighth Route Army "contradicted (the peasants') entire previous experiences of the military"; they "mingled socially with the villagers whose aid and friendship they deeply cherished," "lent (them) a hand in the fields," "paid in full for whatever they needed" and, above all, "never molested women" (Bianco, 1971, p. 158; Gillin, 1964, p. 281). "Thus, the masses chose to follow the Eighth Route Army because they found its conduct a welcome relief from the rapacity and brutality of other armies fighting in Shanxi" (Gillin, 1964, p. 281).

But the rapid retreat of KMT officials and regular army units from North China had at least two far-reaching consequences for the KMT's reputation. First, the scorched-earth policy of blowing up the dike left millions of civilians stranded in the affected areas with no

[34]This may explain why the KMT only maintained 56,000 soldiers in North China vis-à-vis the CCP's 160,000 (Japanese Wartime Intelligence Archive, 1941), as most of their official troops had followed Chiang and fled to the southwest. Those who remained were in most cases formed on local initiative.

governance or leadership, or protection from the Japanese, which may have undermined trust in the KMT (Bianco, 1971; Saich, 2021).[35] Second, the retreat left rural elites and former warlord forces to contend with the communists and Japanese on their own (Esherick, 1995, p. 66), which facilitated the communists' infiltration. However, Bianco's (1971) argument that the KMT might have won the Sino-Japanese War had Chiang not stubbornly insisted on first destroying the communists while tolerating the Japanese assaults on the nation's integrity (i.e., "unification and then resistance") remains speculative.

9 Conclusion

The CCP's rise to power has been described as "the most significant revolutionary movement of the twentieth century" (Saich, 2021, p. 152) in "the century of revolution" (Esherick, 1995, p. 45). However, its ascendancy was not inevitable given the uneven military strengths of the KMT and CCP against a more powerful Japan. Mao's sarcastic remarks thanking the Japanese for invading may be taken to imply that, had it not been for their invasion and the harm they inflicted on the Chinese people — *the counterfactual* — the great majority of Chinese civilians would not have answered the urgent call to unite under the banner of peasant nationalism to fight a powerful enemy. While the CCP's pre-war social and economic programs clearly bolstered their reputation, as borne out by the immense popularity of the Red Army, their local influence increased sharply only *after* the invasion.

We construct a unique historical data set from a rich variety of sources, including the recently released Japanese Wartime Intelligence archives, and find a strong relationship between Japanese military aggression and the CCP's political ascendance as evidenced by the significant increase in middle-to-upper-level Party officials, political organization building, and the rapid and vast expansion of guerrilla forces. Further analysis suggests that the CCP advanced its influence through two primary channels. First, it strategically exploited the power vacuum in areas that the Japanese Army failed to fully control. Second, the CCP received greater support from civilians in the occupied areas, since the Red Army stood by the people when the Japanese Army inflicted a variety of war atrocities on them, resulting in distinctly stronger sentiments of anti-Japanese invasion in these areas. Finally, the higher party membership density in the JOA long after the conflict ended indicates that

[35] As the KMT General Sun Yuanliang lamented: "When we implemented the scorched-earth policy in the beginning of the War of Resistance, we encouraged the population to move inland and disperse. But we did not make any appropriate arrangements for our loyal compatriots, we extended no helping hand to refugees with no place to go; we just let them scatter like rats, to survive or die. This probably was the beginning of us losing the trust of the people in the mainland" (Van de Ven, 2018, p. 108). However, the variable indicating whether a county was affected by the Yellow River flood is not significant in accounting for the rise of the CCP (see Table 4).

anti-Japanese sentiments persisted.

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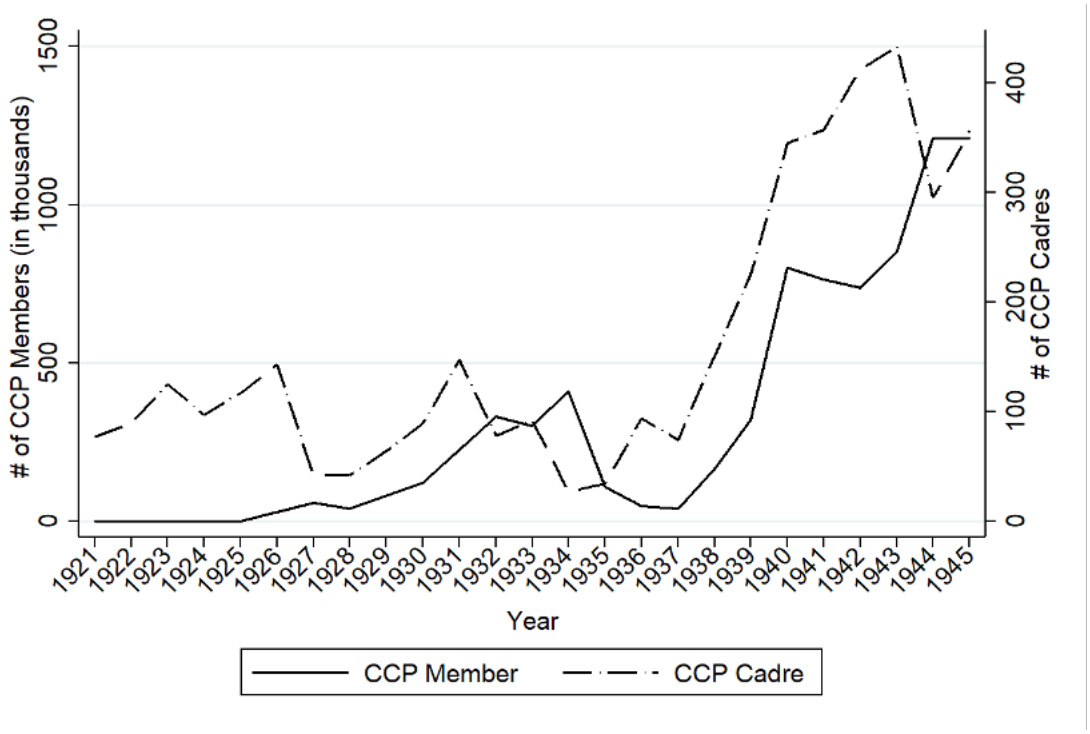
Figures and Tables

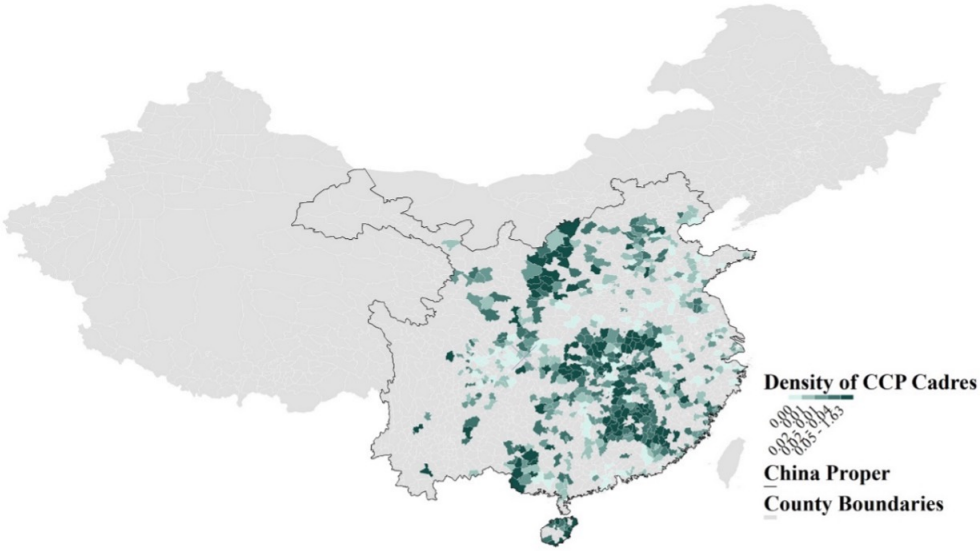
Figure 1. Number of CCP Members and Middle-to-Upper Rank Communist Party Cadres, 1921-45



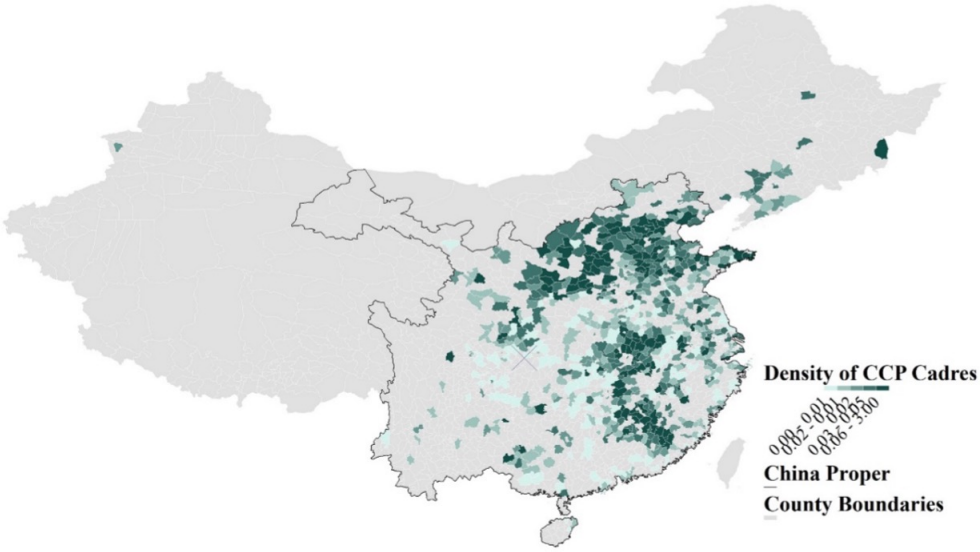
Note: The solid line indicates the overall number of CCP members between 1921 and 1945 and is measured along the left-hand panel, while the dashed line is plotted based on the number of middle-to-upper ranking cadres (colonel and above) and is measured along the right-hand panel.

Source: The time series data on the number of CCP members is obtained from *Zhongguo Gongchandang Dangnei Tongji Huibian [1921-2000]* (*A Compilation of Statistical Data within the Chinese Communist Party*), while the number of CCP middle-to-upper-ranking cadres is from *Zhongguo Kangrizhanzheng Junshi Shiliao Congshu* (*A Compilation of Military Historical Materials of the Chinese War of Resistance against Japan*) and authors' calculation.

Figure 2. Geographic Distribution of Middle-to-Upper-Ranking CCP Cadres, 1921-45



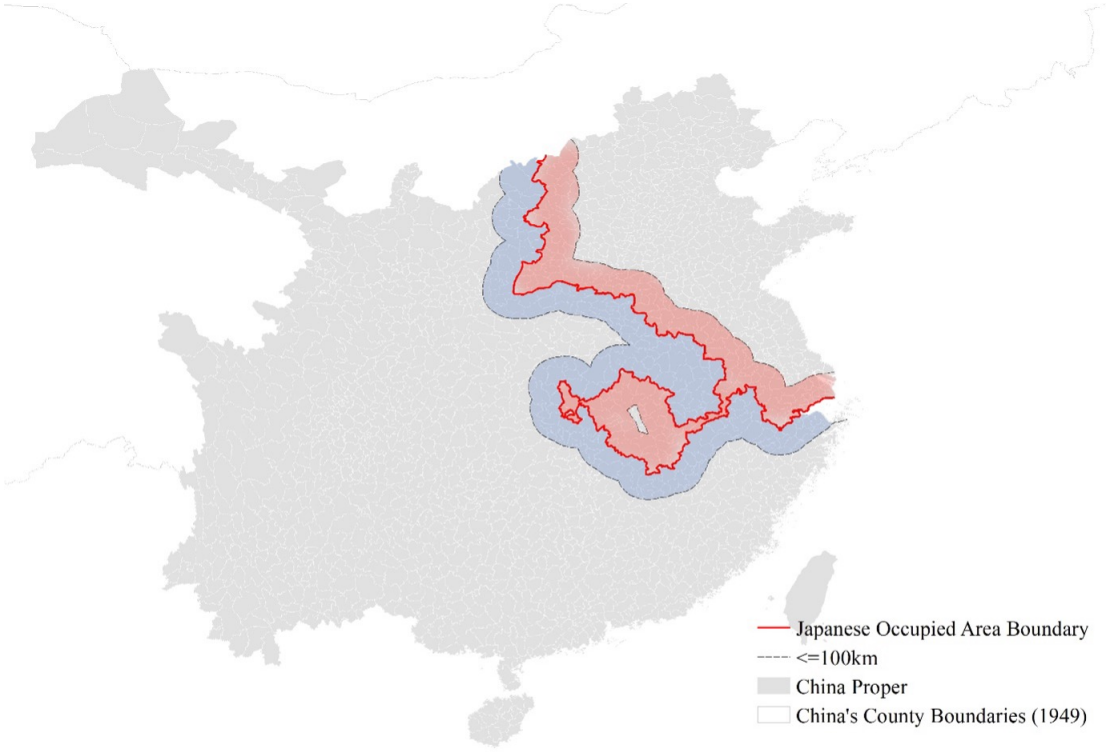
Panel A. Prewar Period (1921-1936)



Panel B. Wartime Period (1937-1945)

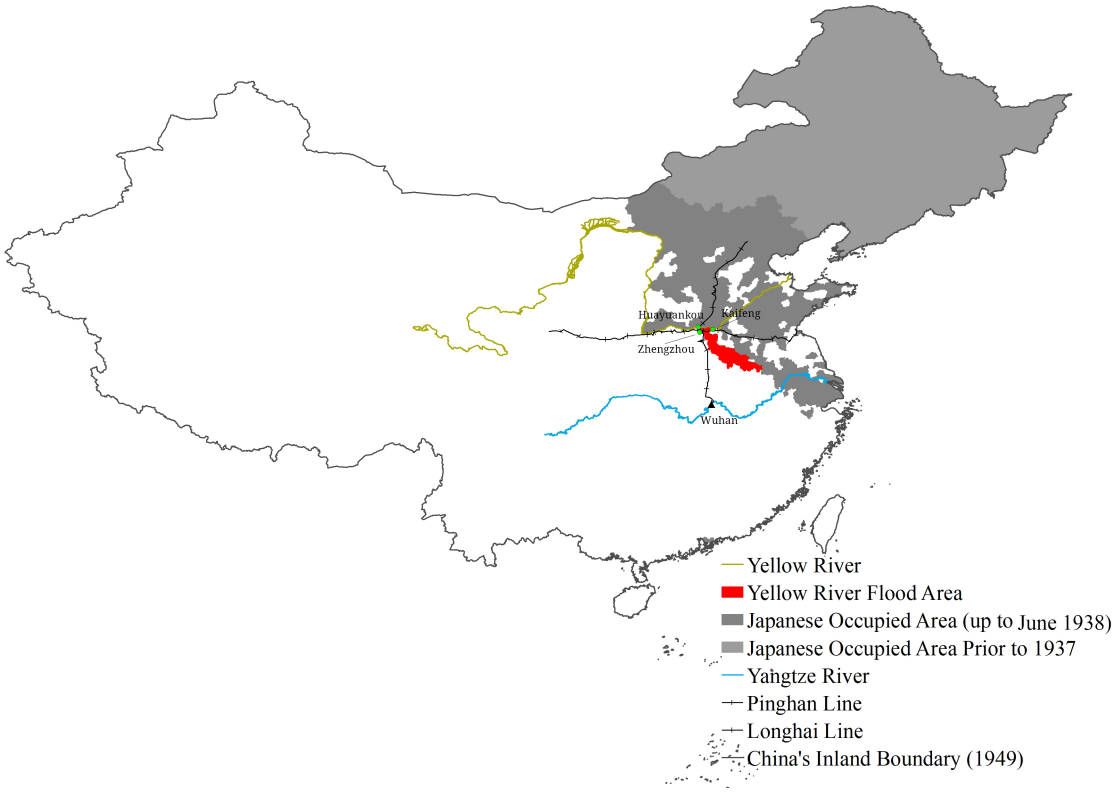
Note: Panels A and B map the geographic distribution of the density of middle-to-upper-ranking cadres in the pre-war and wartime periods. Darker shading indicates greater density. Source: Both maps are plotted using county-level data on middle-to-upper-ranking CCP cadres by their hometown. We obtained this information from *Zhongguo Kangrizhanzheng Junshi Shiliao Congshu* (*A Compilation of Military Historical Materials of the Chinese War of Resistance against Japan*).

Figure 3. JOA Boundary and China Proper, 1940



Note: The red and blue shaded areas indicating the 100 km radius bandwidth inside and outside of the occupied boundary, respectively.
Source: *A Timeline of the Fall of Chinese Counties to Japanese Occupation* (*Gexian Lunxian Shijian*).

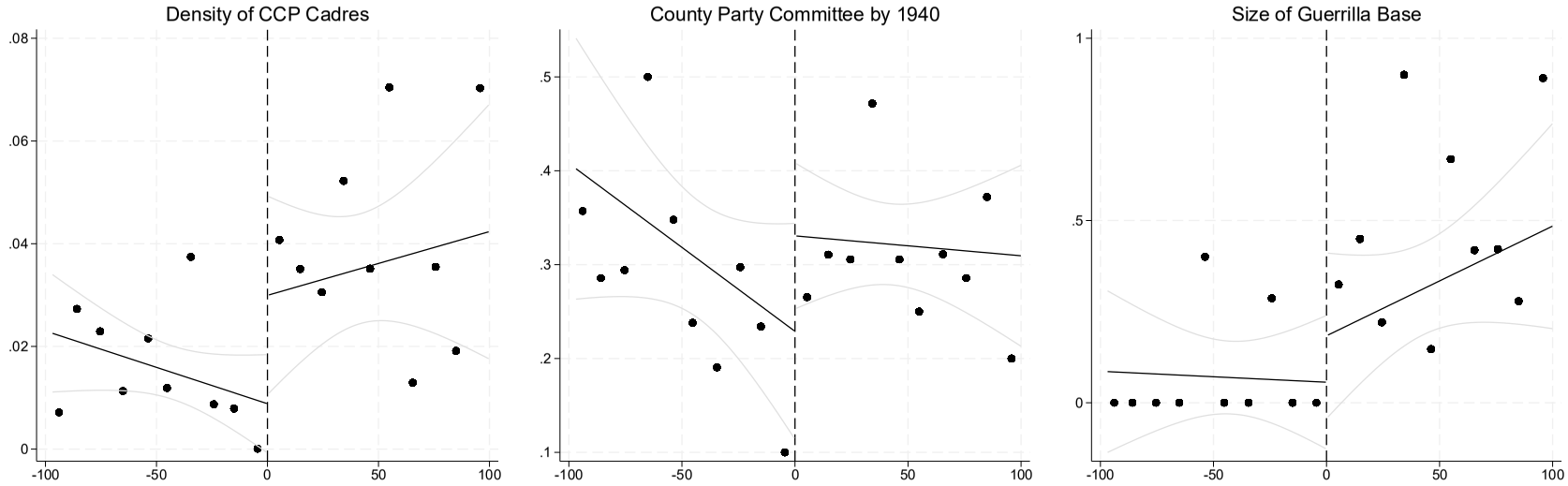
Figure 4. Breaching of the Yellow River Dikes



Note: The red shaded area indicates the Yellow River flood area resulting from the bombing of the Huayuankou Dike. The dark grey area indicates the JOA between the end of 1937 and June 1938.

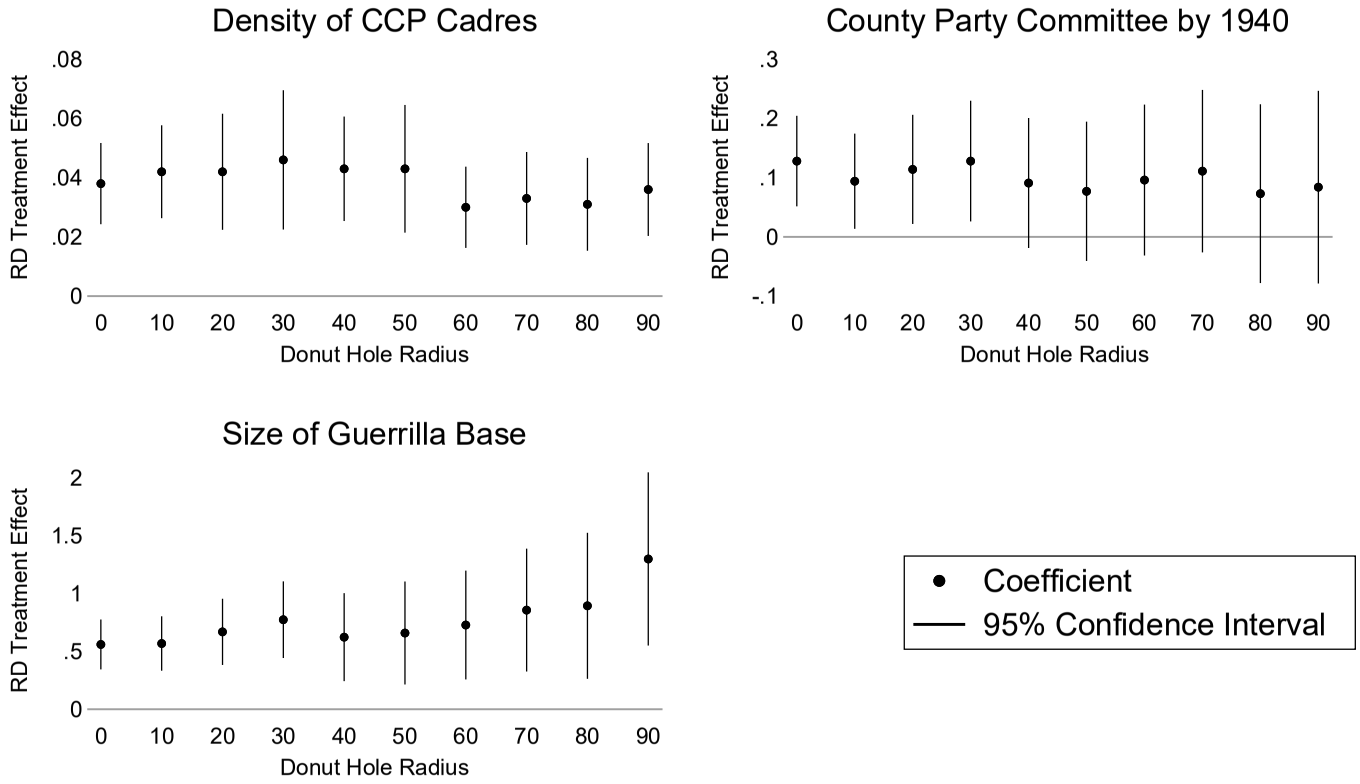
Source: Wikipedia: 1938 Yellow River Flood.

Figure 5. Fitted Values from a Local Linear Regression of Density of CCP Cadres, Dummy Variable of Party Committee, and Size of Guerrilla Base



Note : The panels in this figure show the discontinuities of the three dependent variables across the counties on both sides of the 1940 Japanese-occupied boundary. In each panel, the left of the zero vertical axis corresponds to the area outside of the boundary, and the right to the area inside the boundary. The gray circles represent the average treatment effect of the outcome variables in the 10km bin, while the gray lines indicate the confidence intervals of the linear regressions at the 95% level of statistical significance.
Source: Authors' calculations.

Figure 6. Donut-Hole RD Estimations, by Hole Radius



Note : The panels in this figure show the coefficients obtained from the donut-hole RD estimations on the three dependent variables. In each panel, the dots represent the coefficients of the treatment effect of Japanese occupation on the three dependent variables based on the specification employed in Table 3. As befits a donut-hole analysis, counties located in radii of the donut holes are removed.
Source: Authors' calculations.

Table 1. Summary Statistics of Variables of Interest

Variables	# of Obs.	Mean	Std. Dev.	Min	Max
Japanese-Occupied Counties (1940)	2,265	0.373	0.484	0	1
Japanese-Occupied Counties (1938)	2,265	0.275	0.446	0	1
Japanese-Occupied Counties (1939)	2,265	0.367	0.482	0	1
Japanese-Occupied Counties (1942)	2,265	0.599	0.490	0	1
Japanese-Occupied Counties (1945)	2,265	0.536	0.499	0	1
Density of CCP Cadres (per 1,000 inhabitants, logged)	1,708	0.018	0.066	0	1.386
Party Committee by 1945 (=1)	1,708	0.266	0.442	0	1
Size of Guerrilla Base in 1940 (logged)	1,708	0.300	1.370	0	9.210
Japanese Army	1,708	0.045	0.208	0	1
Puppet Troops	1,708	0.262	0.440	0	1
JOA with KMT Guerrilla Base	1,708	0.071	0.257	0	1

Source: Appendix B provides a detailed description of the data source and construction process.

Table 2. Balance Checks

	TRI	Elevation	Slope	Rivers Density	Temperature	Precipitation	Rice Suitability	Wheat Suitability	Population Density (1936)
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)
Japanese-Occupied Area	-0.002	0.277	0.484	1.467	0.885	-0.295	-0.021	-0.105	-0.059
	(0.008)	(0.226)	(0.494)	(1.172)	(1.275)	(0.233)	(0.146)	(0.083)	(0.064)
Cubic Polynomials of XY	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Segments Fixed Effects	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Number of Observations	1,708	1,708	1,708	1,708	1,708	1,708	1,708	1,708	1,708

* p<0.10; ** p<0.05; *** p<0.01. Robust standard error in parentheses. Constant added but not reported.

Table 3. Effect of Japanese Army's Destruction on the Rise of the CCP, Spatial RD Estimation

	War Period (1937-45)					
	All	≤400 km	≤300 km	≤200 km	≤100 km	Optimal Bandwidth
Panel A	Density of CCP Cadres (per 1,000 inhabitants, logged)					
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
Japanese-Occupied Area	0.037***	0.032***	0.031***	0.030***	0.034***	0.028***
	(0.006)	(0.006)	(0.006)	(0.006)	(0.008)	(0.008)
Distance to Railway	0.001	0.004***	0.005***	0.006***	0.008***	
	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.002)	(0.002)	(0.002)	
Distance to Telegraph	0	0.001	0.001	0.001	0	
	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.002)	(0.002)	
Long March County	-0.001	-0.005	0	-0.006	-0.002	
	(0.003)	(0.005)	(0.008)	(0.008)	(0.016)	
Mean of Dep. Var.	0.018	0.028	0.03	0.029	0.029	0.029
Observations	1,708	1,035	932	807	540	622
Panel B	Party Committee, 1940 (presence =1)					
	(7)	(8)	(9)	(10)	(11)	(12)
Japanese-Occupied Area	0.204***	0.157***	0.144***	0.131***	0.097*	0.178**
	(0.037)	(0.039)	(0.039)	(0.041)	(0.051)	(0.077)
Distance to Railway	0.031***	0.053***	0.068***	0.067***	0.079***	
	(0.007)	(0.011)	(0.011)	(0.012)	(0.016)	
Distance to Telegraph	-0.032***	-0.021*	-0.033***	-0.026**	-0.034**	
	(0.008)	(0.011)	(0.011)	(0.012)	(0.015)	
Long March County	-0.058**	-0.044	-0.08	-0.189***	-0.103	
	(0.027)	(0.052)	(0.065)	(0.070)	(0.111)	
Mean of Dep. Var.	0.272	0.354	0.369	0.359	0.367	0.365
Observations	1,708	1,035	932	807	540	538
Panel C	Size of Guerrilla Base in 1940 (logged)					
	(13)	(14)	(15)	(16)	(17)	(18)
Japanese-Occupied Area	0.732***	0.657***	0.630***	0.493***	0.226**	0.289*
	(0.127)	(0.121)	(0.118)	(0.112)	(0.107)	(0.169)
Distance to Railway	0.027	0.075**	0.087**	0.093**	0.093**	
	(0.020)	(0.034)	(0.038)	(0.039)	(0.038)	
Distance to Telegraph	0.047**	0.076**	0.079**	0.065	0.043	
	(0.019)	(0.035)	(0.038)	(0.041)	(0.037)	
Long March County	-0.057	-0.12	-0.162	-0.134	-0.271**	
	(0.037)	(0.091)	(0.148)	(0.283)	(0.124)	
Mean of Dep. Var.	0.3	0.495	0.549	0.509	0.259	0.364
Observations	1,708	1,035	932	807	540	467
Cubic Polynomials of XY	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No
Segment Fixed Effects	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No

Notes: The control variables include the distances to railway stations and telegraph lines and a dummy variable indicating Long March counties, all of which are added as covariates to the optimal bandwidth estimation and inference (in columns (6), (12), and (18)) using the **rdrobust** command in Stata (Calonico et al., 2017). * p<0.10; ** p<0.05; *** p<0.01. Robust standard errors in parentheses. Constant added but not reported.

Table 4. Effect of Japanese Army's Occupation on the Rise of the CCP: Breaching of the Yellow River Dike as a Natural Experiment

	War Period (1937-45) Distance to Yellow River Flood Area								
	≤100km	≤50km	Optimal Bandwidth	≤100km	≤50km	Optimal Bandwidth	≤100km	≤50km	Optimal Bandwidth
	Density of CCP Cadres (per 1,000 inhabitants, logged)			Party Committee, 1940 (presence =1)			Size of Guerrilla Base in 1940 (logged)		
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)
Japanese-Occupied Counties	0.014***	0.015**	0.015**	0.335***	0.271**	0.292***	0.729***	0.676*	0.279
	(0.005)	(0.007)	(0.007)	(0.082)	(0.116)	(0.081)	(0.273)	(0.384)	(0.260)
Flood Area	0.002	0.003		0.091	0.14		0.142	0.326	0.286
	(0.008)	(0.007)		(0.091)	(0.106)		(0.427)	(0.421)	
Control Variables	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Cubic Polynomials of XY	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	No
Segment Fixed Effects	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	No
Mean of Dep. Var.	0.013	0.011	0.018	0.319	0.288	0.358	0.357	0.286	0.55
Observations	151	80	201	151	80	492	151	80	212

Notes: The control variables include the distances to railway stations and telegraph lines (not shown), a dummy variable indicating Long March counties (not shown), and a dummy indicating whether a county was directly affected by the Yellow River flood, all of which are added as covariates to the optimal bandwidth estimation and inference (in columns (2), (4), (6), and (8)) using the **rdrobust** command in Stata (Calonico et al., 2017). * p<0.10; ** p<0.05; *** p<0.01. Robust standard errors in parentheses. Constant added but not reported.

Table 5. Effect of Japanese Army's Occupation on the Rise of the CCP, Changes in Occupied Area Boundaries, 1938-45

	War Period (1937-45) Subsample Counties ≤ 100km					
	Density of CCP Cadres (per 1,000 inhabitants, logged)					
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
JOA 1938	0.029**					0.015
	(0.011)					(0.011)
JOA 1939		0.012				-0.017
		(0.008)				(0.016)
JOA 1940			0.034***			0.040***
			(0.008)			(0.013)
JOA 1942				0.019*		0.002
				(0.011)		(0.009)
JOA 1945					0.011*	0.003
					(0.006)	(0.009)
Mean of Dep. Var.	0.029	0.029	0.029	0.029	0.029	0.029
Observations	540	540	540	540	540	540
	Party Committee by 1945 (=1)					
	(7)	(8)	(9)	(10)	(11)	(12)
JOA 1938	0.171***					0.103
	(0.062)					(0.069)
JOA 1939		0.076				0.019
		(0.053)				(0.070)
JOA 1940			0.139***			0.120*
			(0.051)			(0.066)
JOA 1942				0.158**		0.113
				(0.079)		(0.091)
JOA 1945					-0.067	-0.162*
					(0.082)	(0.088)
Mean of Dep. Var.	0.367	0.367	0.367	0.367	0.367	0.367
Observations	540	540	540	540	540	540
Control Variables	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Cubic Polynomials	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Segment Fixed Effects	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes

Notes: All columns use the sample of counties within 100 km of the occupied area boundaries in the particular year. The control variables include the distances to railway stations and telegraph lines and a dummy variable indicating Long March counties. * p<0.10; ** p<0.05; *** p<0.01. Robust standard errors in parentheses. Constant added but not reported.

Table 6. Falsification Test: Effect of Japanese Occupied Area in the Pre-war Period

	Pre-war Period (1921-36)								
	All	≤200km	≤100km	All	≤200km	≤100km	All	≤200km	≤100km
	Density of CCP Cadres (per 1,000 inhabitants, logged)			Party Committee before the Long March (1934)			Guerrilla Base (=1) before 1937		
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)
Japanese-Occupied Area	-0.000	0.002	0.001	-0.043	-0.026	-0.022	-0.022	-0.011	-0.005
	(0.004)	(0.004)	(0.004)	(0.030)	(0.052)	(0.048)	(0.019)	(0.023)	(0.023)
Cubic Polynomials of XY	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Segment Fixed Effects	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Observations	1,708	807	540	1,709	807	540	1,709	807	540

* p<0.10; ** p<0.05; *** p<0.01. Robust standard error in parentheses. Constant added but not reported.

Table 7. Alternative Explanations of the Pre-war Rise of the Chinese Communist Party

	Dummy of Treaty Ports	Number of Modern Firms (1840-1937)	Number of Primary and Middle Schools (1937)	Share of Unionized Workers	Share of Tenancy (1934)	Land Tax Per Capita (1934)	Number of Strong Clans (with Genealogies)	Number of Secret Societies (Qing)	Number of Conflicts in Qing Dynasty	Number of *Tongmenghui* Member
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)	(10)
Japanese Occupied Area	-0.125	0.058	0.026	-0.011	0.064	-0.034	-0.078	0.058	0.004	-0.043
	(0.215)	(0.208)	(0.030)	(0.016)	(0.212)	(0.201)	(0.052)	(0.061)	(0.011)	(0.081)
Cubic Polynomials of XY	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Segment Fixed Effects	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Number of Observations	1708	1708	1708	1708	1528	1433	1708	1708	1708	1708

* p<0.10; ** p<0.05; *** p<0.01. Robust standard error in parentheses. Constant added but not reported.

Table 8. Power Vacuum as Channel

	War Period (1937-45)								
	All	≤200km	≤100km	All	≤200km	≤100km	All	≤200km	≤100km
	Density of CCP Cadres (per 1,000 inhabitants, logged)			Party Committee,1940 (=1)			Size of Guerrilla Base in 1940 (logged)		
Panel A	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)
Puppet Troops	0.039***	0.032***	0.034***	0.210***	0.136***	0.105**	0.817***	0.559***	0.260**
	(0.007)	(0.007)	(0.008)	(0.038)	(0.042)	(0.052)	(0.138)	(0.122)	(0.111)
Japanese Army	0.020**	0.018*	0.032**	0.163***	0.09	0.034	0.177	-0.004	-0.04
	(0.008)	(0.009)	(0.013)	(0.058)	(0.063)	(0.078)	(0.222)	(0.227)	(0.225)
Mean of Dep. Var.	0.018	0.029	0.029	0.272	0.359	0.367	0.3	0.509	0.259
Observations	1,708	807	540	1,708	807	540	1,708	807	540
Panel B	(10)	(11)	(12)	(13)	(14)	(15)	(16)	(17)	(18)
JOA without KMT	0.045***	0.039***	0.042***	0.298***	0.226***	0.190***	0.882***	0.621***	0.301***
Guerrilla Base	(0.007)	(0.007)	(0.009)	(0.037)	(0.042)	(0.051)	(0.136)	(0.121)	(0.116)
JOA with KMT	0.002	-0.002	0.003	-0.190***	-0.229***	-0.245***	0.108	0.008	-0.05
Guerrilla Base	(0.005)	(0.005)	(0.006)	(0.036)	(0.040)	(0.053)	(0.174)	(0.173)	(0.130)
Mean of Dep. Var.	0.018	0.029	0.029	0.272	0.359	0.367	0.3	0.509	0.259
Observations	1,708	807	540	1,708	807	540	1,708	807	540
Control Variables	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Cubic Polynomials of XY	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Segment Fixed Effects	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes

Notes: The control variables include the distances to railway stations and telegraph lines and a dummy variable indicating Long March counties. * p<0.10; ** p<0.05; *** p<0.01. Robust standard errors in parentheses. Constant added but not reported.

Table 9. War Suffering as Channel

	War Period (1937-45)								
	All	≤200km	≤100km	All	≤200km	≤100km	All	≤200km	≤100km
	Density of CCP Cadres (per 1,000 inhabitants, logged)			Party Committee,1940 (=1)			Size of Guerrilla Base in 1940 (logged)		
Panel A	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)
JOA	0.018***	0.006	0.008	0.125***	0.063	0.030	0.527***	0.267*	0.175
	(0.005)	(0.005)	(0.007)	(0.040)	(0.046)	(0.056)	(0.151)	(0.147)	(0.139)
Density of Civilians Killed	0.008*	-0.001	-0.001	0.073***	0.056***	0.058**	0.053***	0.055**	0.009
	(0.004)	(0.002)	(0.002)	(0.015)	(0.020)	(0.024)	(0.013)	(0.023)	(0.025)
JOA*Density of Civilians Killed	0.007	0.017***	0.021***	0.014	0.026	0.039	0.266***	0.243***	0.042
	(0.006)	(0.005)	(0.008)	(0.021)	(0.025)	(0.031)	(0.080)	(0.083)	(0.072)
Mean of Dep. Var.	0.018	0.029	0.029	0.272	0.359	0.367	0.3	0.509	0.259
Observations	1,708	807	540	1,708	807	540	1,708	807	540
Panel B	(10)	(11)	(12)	(13)	(14)	(15)	(16)	(17)	(18)
JOA	0.033***	0.023***	0.022***	0.223***	0.147***	0.115**	0.726***	0.381***	0.132
	(0.006)	(0.006)	(0.006)	(0.037)	(0.042)	(0.052)	(0.132)	(0.115)	(0.106)
Density of Rape Cases	0.262	-0.108**	-0.147***	1.670**	1.833**	1.691**	1.661***	2.181*	0.218
	(0.227)	(0.042)	(0.051)	(0.733)	(0.833)	(0.849)	(0.627)	(1.232)	(0.625)
JOA*Density of Rape Cases	-0.080	0.309***	0.866***	-1.527*	-1.959**	-1.449	7.536***	7.962***	7.372**
	(0.242)	(0.097)	(0.241)	(0.788)	(0.878)	(1.107)	(1.965)	(2.015)	(3.292)
Mean of Dep. Var.	0.018	0.029	0.029	0.272	0.359	0.367	0.3	0.509	0.259
Observations	1,708	807	540	1,708	807	540	1,708	807	540
Control Variables	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Cubic Polynomials of XY	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Segment Fixed Effects	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes

Notes: The control variables include the distances to railway stations and telegraph lines and a dummy variable indicating Long March counties. * p<0.10; ** p<0.05; *** p<0.01. Robust standard errors in parentheses. Constant added but not reported.

Table 10. Persistent Effect of the Japanese Invasion, 1950-85

	Party Membership Density, Selected Years after 1949					
	All	≤400km	≤300km	≤200km	≤00km	Optimal Bandwidth
				1950		
Japanese-Occupied Area	2.485***	2.288***	2.166***	2.017***	1.703***	2.221***
	(0.133)	(0.137)	(0.140)	(0.149)	(0.180)	(0.426)
No. of Observations	794	576	523	447	289	794
				1960		
Japanese-Occupied Area	0.540***	0.511***	0.490***	0.469***	0.424***	0.611***
	(0.064)	(0.068)	(0.072)	(0.079)	(0.080)	(0.179)
No. of Observations	929	647	588	500	325	929
				1966		
Japanese-Occupied Area	0.417***	0.350***	0.319***	0.285***	0.259**	0.281
	(0.066)	(0.068)	(0.071)	(0.078)	(0.084)	(0.228)
No. of Observations	931	645	586	498	324	931
				1976		
Japanese-Occupied Area	0.447***	0.421***	0.396***	0.374***	0.400***	0.478
	(0.066)	(0.071)	(0.074)	(0.081)	(0.090)	(0.246)
No. of Observations	926	639	581	493	320	926
				1985		
Japanese-Occupied Area	0.554***	0.406***	0.392***	0.320***	0.314**	0.168
	(0.093)	(0.084)	(0.089)	(0.090)	(0.101)	(0.236)
No. of Observations	894	611	555	469	297	894
Control Variables	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Cubic Polynomials of XY	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Segment Fixed Effects	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes

Notes: The control variables include the distances to railway stations and telegraph lines and a dummy variable indicating Long March counties, all of which are added as covariates to the optimal bandwidth estimation and inference (in columns (6), (12), and (18)) using the **rdrobust** command in Stata (Calonico et al., 2017). * p<0.10; ** p<0.05; *** p<0.01. Robust standard errors in parentheses. Constant added but not reported.

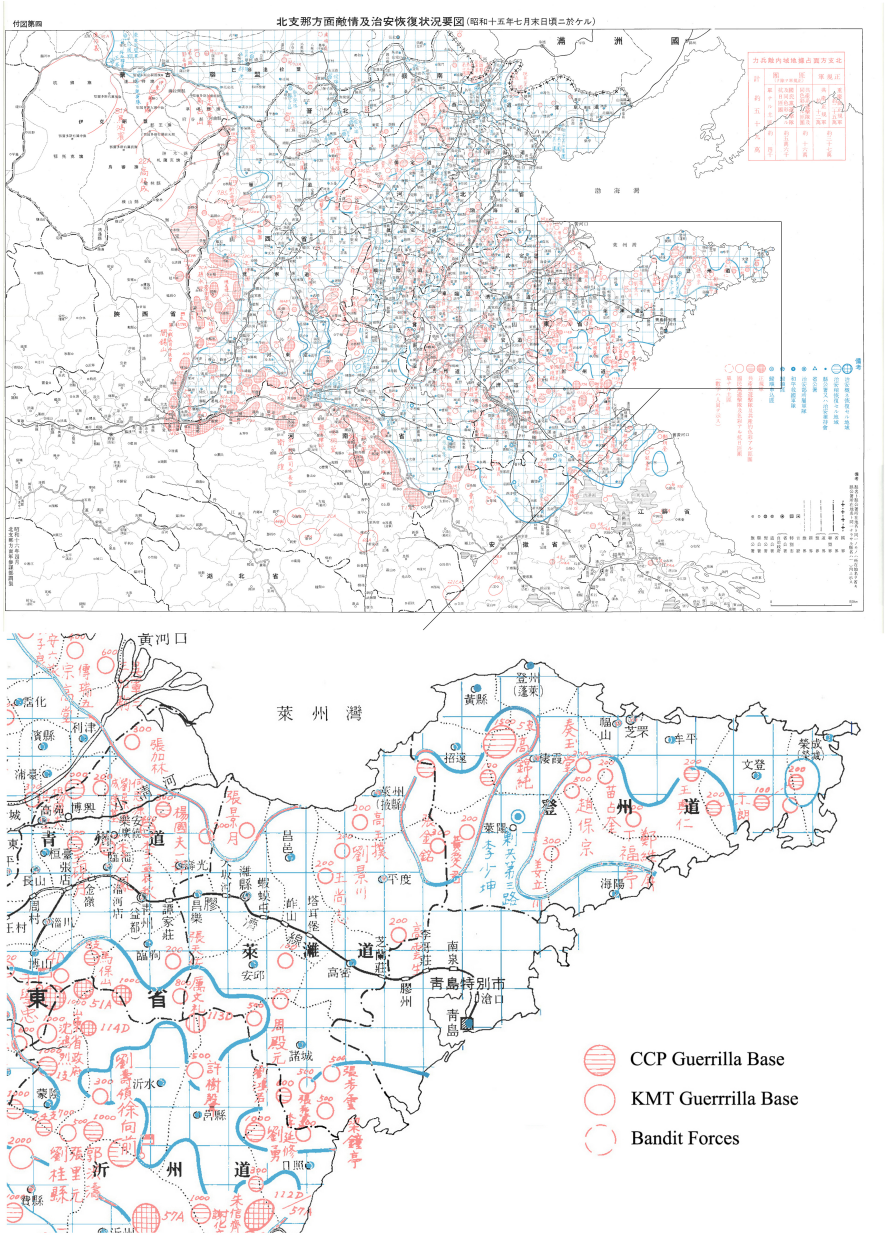
Appendix (For Online Publication)

Appendix A. Additional Figures and Tables

Figure A1. Routes of Long March, 1934-35

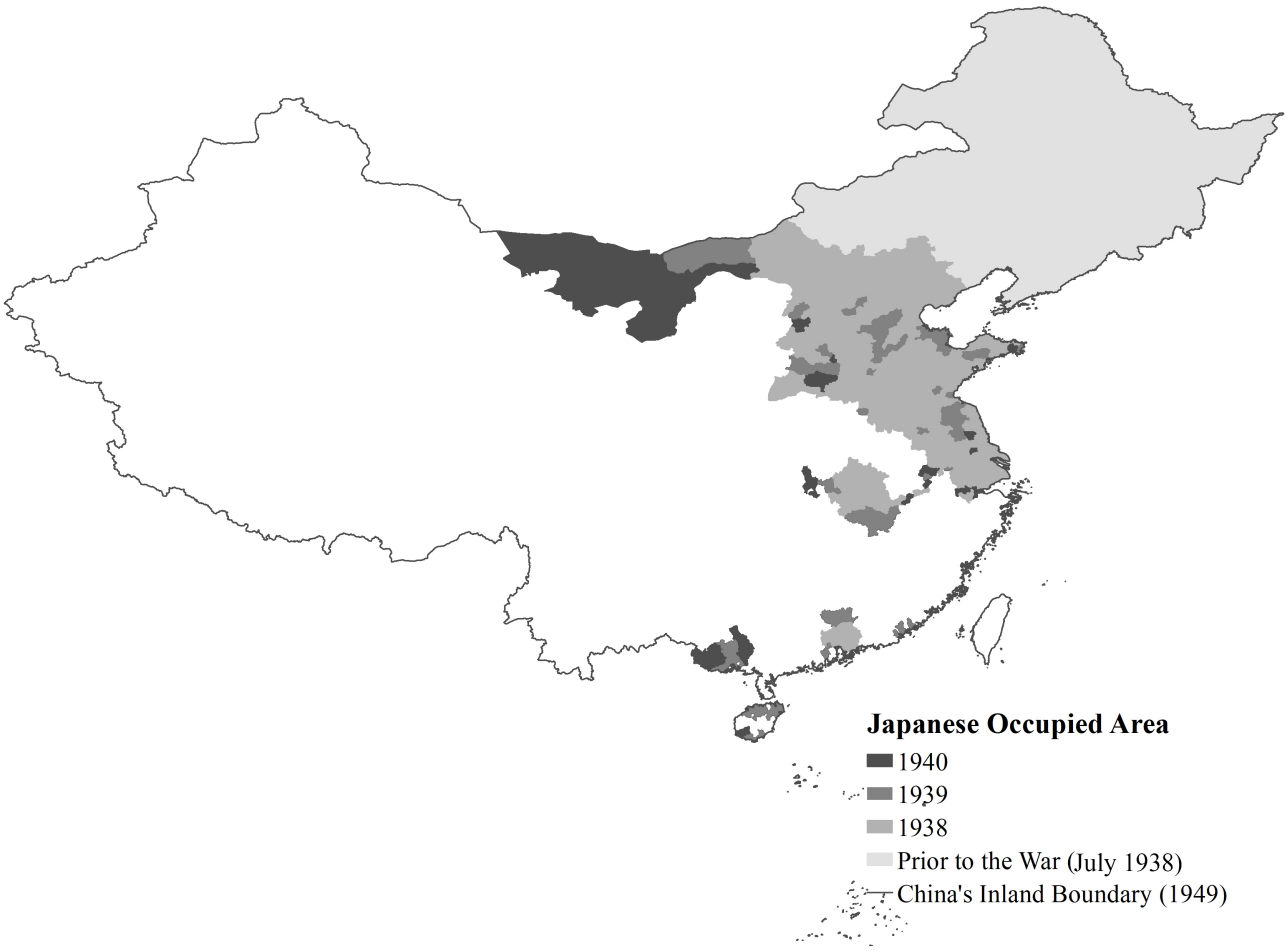
Source: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Long_March

Figure A2. Illustrative Maps of Japanese Wartime Intelligence



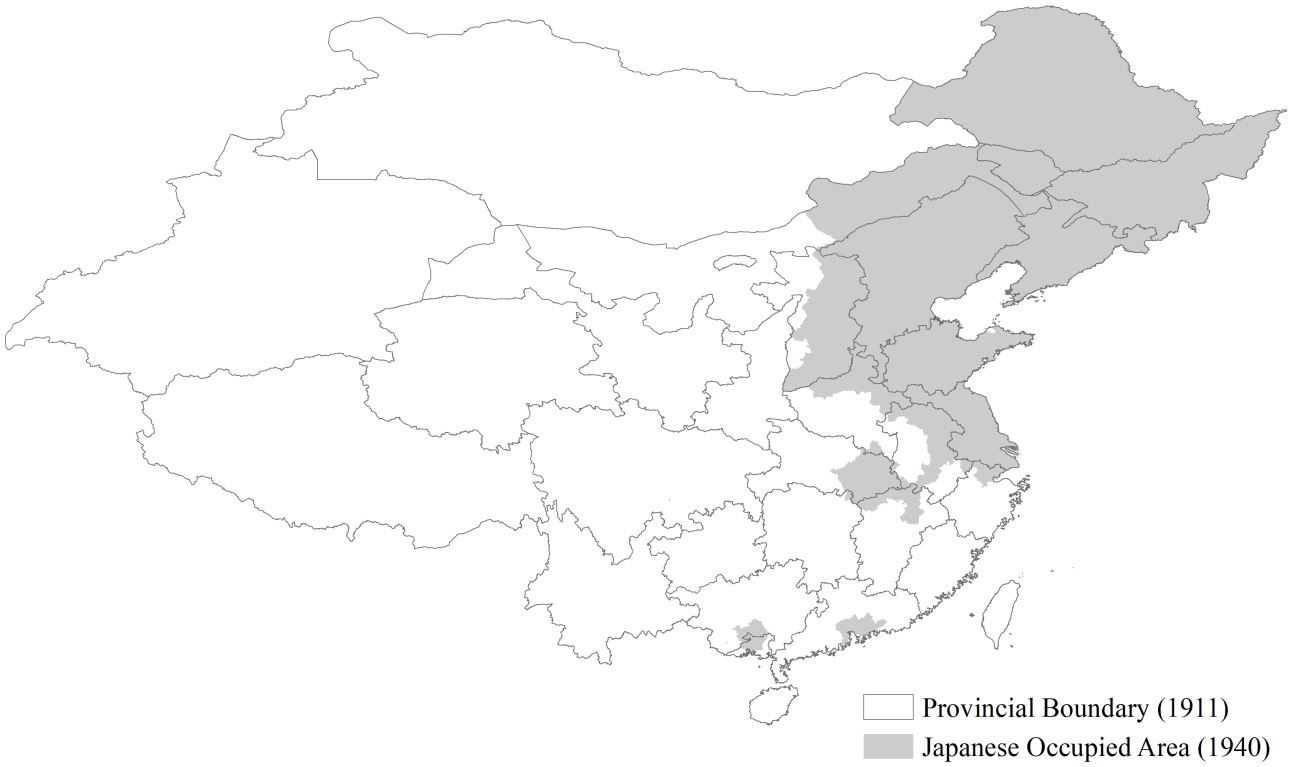
Note: Top: an example map from the Japanese War Intelligence Archive. Bottom: by magnifying a part of the map (of Shandong Province in North China), the Japanese not only demarcated a clear boundary of their own troops (thick blue line), but also showed the geography of various military forces, including the guerrilla bases of the CCP and KMT as well as local bandit forces. The red (blue) dotted circles indicate CCP (KMT) guerrilla bases. Each of these dots corresponds to an Arabic numeral representing a rough estimate from Japanese intelligence of the size of its various enemies.

Figure A3. Changing Boundaries of the JOA, 1937-40



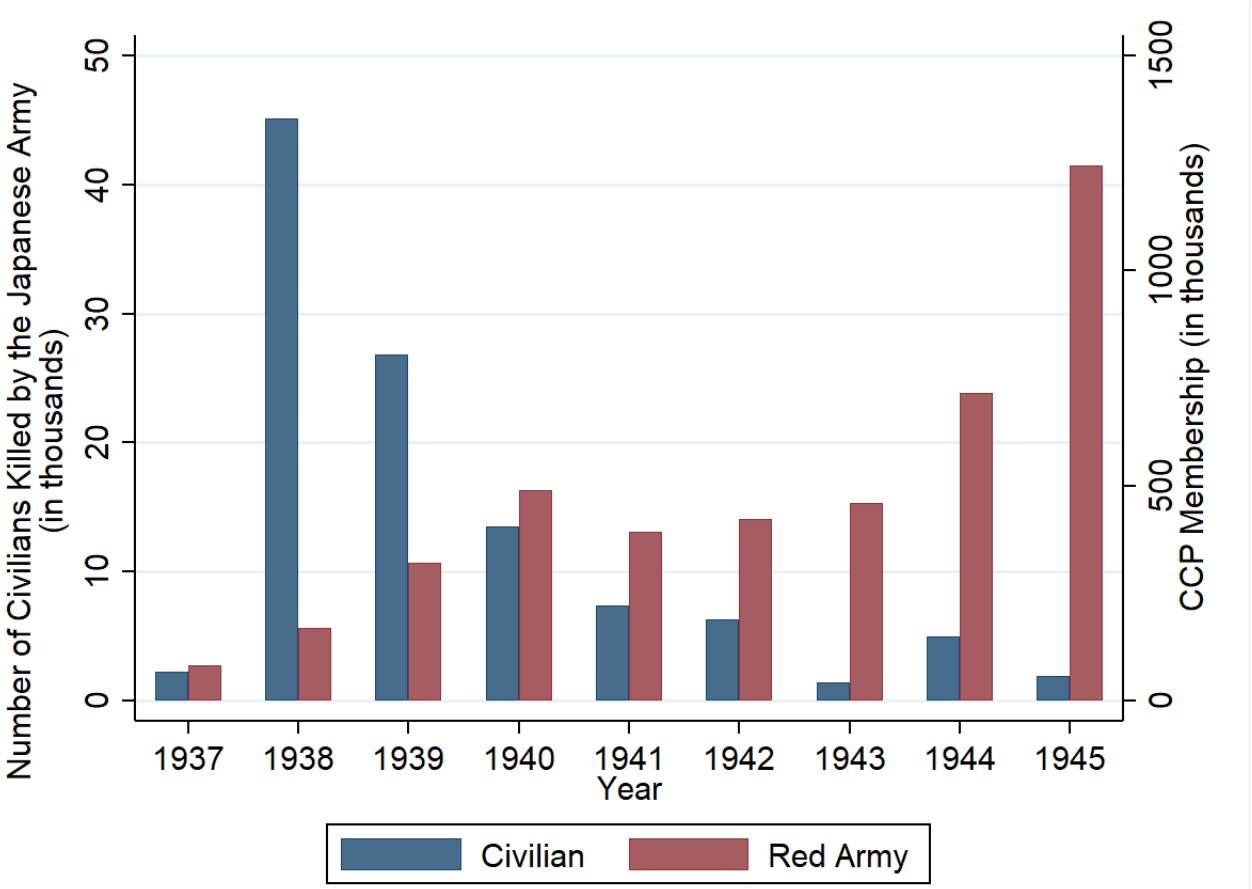
Note: Prior to the full invasion of July 1937, only Northeast China (Manchuria) was occupied. By 1938 a good part of North China fell into the hands of the Japanese. There was an incremental increase in 1939, and in 1940 a big chunk of the Northwest was also occupied. Source: *Gexian Lunxian Shijian* (*A Timeline of the Fall of Chinese Counties to Japanese Occupation*).

Figure A4. China's 1911 Provincial Administrative Boundaries Overlain by the JOA, 1940



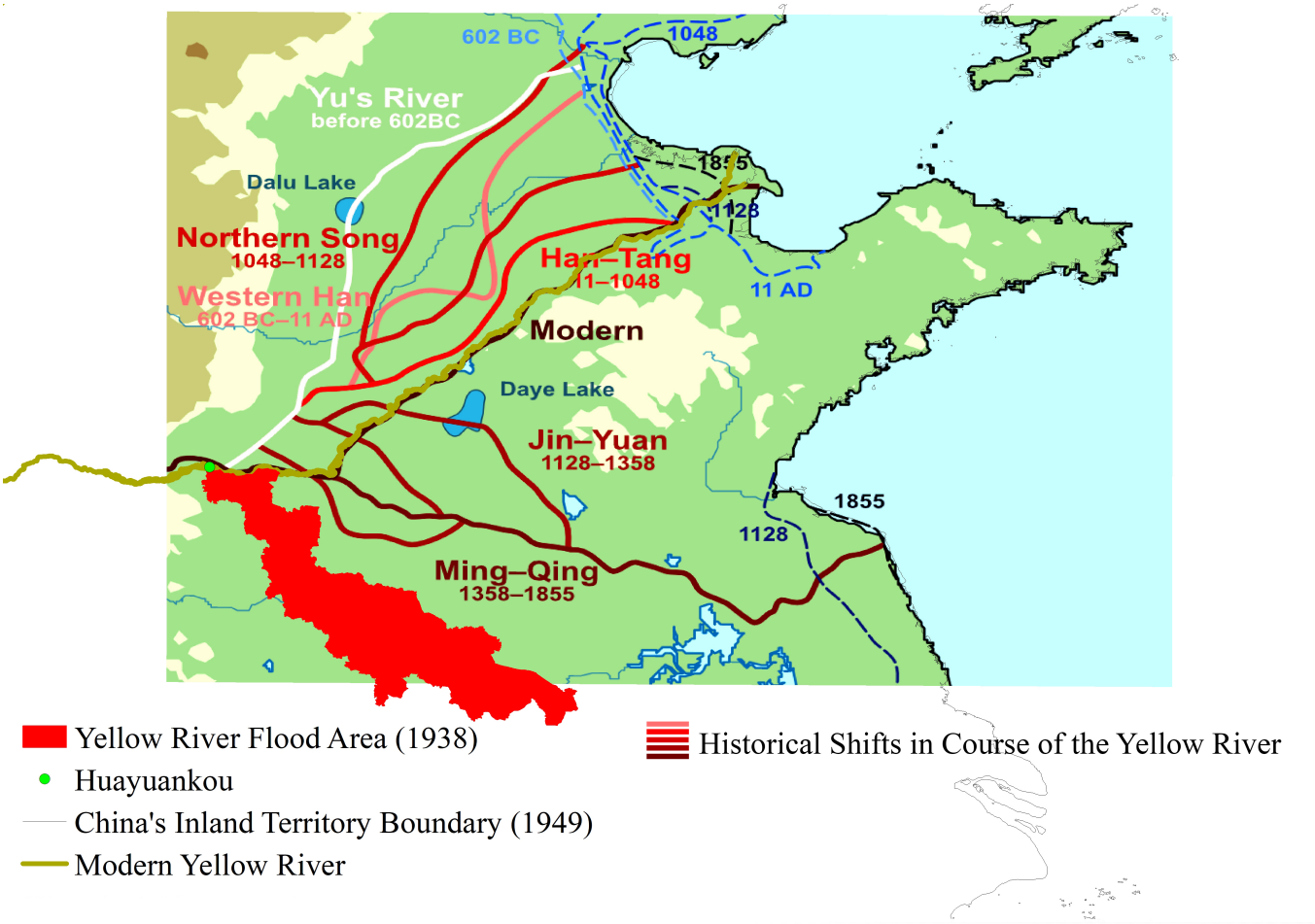
Note: The figure maps China's provincial boundaries from 1911 (the last year of the Qing dynasty) against the counties occupied by the Japanese Army based on the boundary demarcated in 1940.

Figure A5. Number of Civilians Killed by the Japanese Army and CCP Cadre Membership



Source: Authors' calculations.

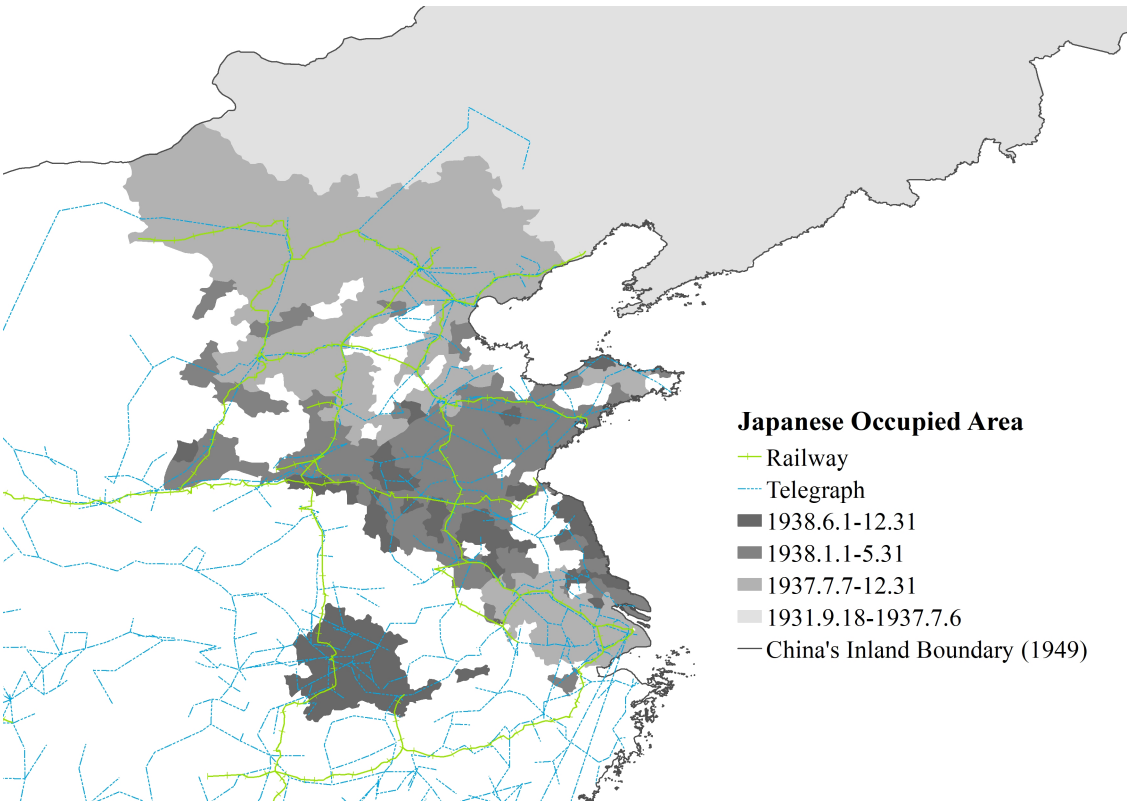
Figure A6. Historical Shifts in Course of the Yellow River and the Flood Area of 1938



Note: We georeferenced this map and overlain it with the 1938 map of the Yellow River Flood Area that we created in Figure 4 to show that the flood area created by the bombing of the Huayuankou Dike in 1938 is entirely different from the areas affected by historical shifts in course of the river.

Source: https://en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Yellow_River_watercourse_changes_en.png.

Figure A7. Railway Networks, Telegraph Lines, and the Japanese Occupied Area, 1938



Source: Authors' construction.

Table A1. Effect of the Japanese Army's Occupation on the Rise of the CCP
Spatial RD Estimation with Various Polynomials

	War Period (1937-45)				
	Density of CCP Cadres (per 1,000 inhabitants, logged)				
	All	≤400 km	≤300 km	≤200 km	≤100 km
Polynomials in Latitude and Longitude					
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
Linear Polynomial	0.029***	0.037***	0.039***	0.038***	0.035***
	(0.006)	(0.007)	(0.008)	(0.008)	(0.009)
	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)	(10)
Quadratic Polynomial	0.034***	0.038***	0.042***	0.041***	0.038***
	(0.007)	(0.008)	(0.008)	(0.009)	(0.009)
	(11)	(12)	(13)	(14)	(15)
Cubic Polynomial	0.036***	0.038***	0.036***	0.037***	0.036***
	(0.008)	(0.009)	(0.009)	(0.009)	(0.010)
	(16)	(17)	(18)	(19)	(20)
Quartic Polynomial	0.036***	0.035***	0.033***	0.033***	0.035***
	(0.008)	(0.009)	(0.009)	(0.009)	(0.010)
Polynomials in Distance to Boundary					
	(21)	(22)	(23)	(24)	(25)
Linear Polynomial	0.031***	0.029***	0.030***	0.030***	0.034***
	(0.006)	(0.006)	(0.006)	(0.006)	(0.008)
	(26)	(27)	(28)	(29)	(30)
Quadratic Polynomial	0.028***	0.030***	0.030***	0.030***	0.034***
	(0.006)	(0.006)	(0.006)	(0.006)	(0.008)
Control Variables	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Segment Fixed Effects	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Mean of Dep. Var.	0.018	0.028	0.03	0.029	0.029
Observations	1,708	1,035	932	807	540

Notes: The control variables include the distances to railway stations and telegraph lines and a dummy variable indicating Long March counties, all of which are added as covariates to the optimal bandwidth estimation and inference (in columns (6), (12), and (18)) using the **rdrobust** command in Stata (Calonico et al., 2017). * p<0.10; ** p<0.05; *** p<0.01. Robust standard errors in parentheses. Constant added but not reported.

Table A2. Effect of the Japanese Army's Occupation on the Rise of the CCP
Spatial RD Estimation with Various Polynomials

	War Period (1937-45) Party Committee by 1940 (=1)				
	All	≤400 km	≤300 km	≤200 km	≤100 km
Polynomials in Latitude and Longitude					
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
Linear Polynomial	0.101***	0.147***	0.179***	0.187***	0.185***
	(0.038)	(0.044)	(0.044)	(0.045)	(0.050)
	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)	(10)
Quadratic Polynomial	0.152***	0.136***	0.163***	0.168***	0.178***
	(0.041)	(0.044)	(0.045)	(0.046)	(0.050)
	(11)	(12)	(13)	(14)	(15)
Cubic Polynomial	0.131***	0.141***	0.154***	0.168***	0.174***
	(0.042)	(0.046)	(0.046)	(0.047)	(0.050)
	(16)	(17)	(18)	(19)	(20)
Quartic Polynomial	0.128***	0.161***	0.180***	0.203***	0.223***
	(0.044)	(0.046)	(0.046)	(0.048)	(0.053)
Polynomials in Distance to Boundary					
	(21)	(22)	(23)	(24)	(25)
Linear Polynomial	0.139***	0.147***	0.152***	0.135***	0.099**
	(0.037)	(0.039)	(0.039)	(0.041)	(0.050)
	(26)	(27)	(28)	(29)	(30)
Quadratic Polynomial	0.142***	0.150***	0.153***	0.136***	0.099**
	(0.038)	(0.039)	(0.039)	(0.041)	(0.050)
Control Variables	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Segment Fixed Effects	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Mean of Dep. Var.	0.272	0.354	0.369	0.359	0.367
Observations	1,708	1,035	932	807	540

Notes: The control variables include the distances to railway stations and telegraph lines and a dummy variable indicating Long March counties, all of which are added as covariates to the optimal bandwidth estimation and inference (in columns (6), (12), and (18)) using the **rdrobust** command in Stata (Calonico et al., 2017). * p<0.10; ** p<0.05; *** p<0.01. Robust standard errors in parentheses. Constant added but not reported.

Table A3. Effect of the Japanese Army's Occupation on the Rise of the CCP
Spatial RD Estimation with Various Polynomials

	War Period (1937-45)				
	Size of Guerrilla Base in 1940 (logged)				
	All	≤400 km	≤300 km	≤200 km	≤100 km
Polynomials in Latitude and Longitude					
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
Linear Polynomial	0.621***	0.463***	0.433***	0.388***	0.124
	(0.115)	(0.117)	(0.121)	(0.119)	(0.117)
	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)	(10)
Quadratic Polynomial	0.442***	0.419***	0.408***	0.381***	0.167
	(0.112)	(0.112)	(0.108)	(0.103)	(0.102)
	(11)	(12)	(13)	(14)	(15)
Cubic Polynomial	0.477***	0.211**	0.210**	0.231**	0.067
	(0.112)	(0.102)	(0.104)	(0.105)	(0.115)
	(16)	(17)	(18)	(19)	(20)
Quartic Polynomial	0.292***	0.188*	0.236**	0.241**	0.207**
	(0.098)	(0.104)	(0.098)	(0.094)	(0.103)
Polynomials in Distance to Boundary					
	(21)	(22)	(23)	(24)	(25)
Linear Polynomial	0.722***	0.729***	0.718***	0.561***	0.232**
	(0.127)	(0.129)	(0.127)	(0.119)	(0.107)
	(26)	(27)	(28)	(29)	(30)
Quadratic Polynomial	0.759***	0.744***	0.729***	0.566***	0.233**
	(0.132)	(0.129)	(0.127)	(0.119)	(0.108)
Control Variables	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Segment Fixed Effects	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Mean of Dep. Var.	0.3	0.495	0.549	0.509	0.259
Observations	1,708	1,035	932	807	540

Notes: The control variables include the distances to railway stations and telegraph lines and a dummy variable indicating Long March counties, all of which are added as covariates to the optimal bandwidth estimation and inference (in columns (6), (12), and (18)) using the **rdrobust** command in Stata (Calonico et al., 2017). * p<0.10; ** p<0.05; *** p<0.01. Robust standard errors in parentheses. Constant added but not reported.

Table A4. Effect of Japanese Army's Destruction on the Rise of the CCP
Spatial RD Estimation with Standard Errors Clustered at Province Level

	War Period (1937-45)					
	All	≤400 km	≤300 km	≤200 km	≤100 km	Optimal Bandwidth
Panel A	Density of CCP Cadres (per 1,000 inhabitants, logged)					
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
Japanese Occupied Area	0.036**	0.038***	0.036**	0.037**	0.036**	0.027**
	(0.014)	(0.013)	(0.013)	(0.013)	(0.015)	(0.012)
Distance to Railway	0.003**	0.005***	0.005***	0.006**	0.007**	
	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.002)	(0.002)	(0.003)	
Distance to Telegraph	0.001*	0.001	0.000	0.000	-0.001	
	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.002)	
Long March County	0.000	-0.007	-0.008	-0.013	-0.014	
	(0.004)	(0.007)	(0.010)	(0.013)	(0.018)	
Mean of Dep. Var.	0.018	0.028	0.03	0.029	0.029	0.029
Observations	1,708	1,035	932	807	540	622
Panel B	Party Committee, 1940 (presence =1)					
	(7)	(8)	(9)	(10)	(11)	(12)
Japanese Occupied Area	0.131	0.141	0.154	0.168*	0.174**	0.175*
	(0.108)	(0.097)	(0.089)	(0.087)	(0.073)	(0.099)
Distance to Railway	0.053***	0.064***	0.067***	0.063***	0.080***	
	(0.015)	(0.016)	(0.015)	(0.015)	(0.017)	
Distance to Telegraph	-0.024**	-0.018	-0.026*	-0.019	-0.024	
	(0.010)	(0.013)	(0.014)	(0.016)	(0.021)	
Long March County	-0.053	0.018	-0.060	-0.139	0.017	
	(0.033)	(0.060)	(0.049)	(0.115)	(0.115)	
Mean of Dep. Var.	0.272	0.354	0.369	0.359	0.367	0.365
Observations	1,708	1,035	932	807	540	538
Panel C	Size of Guerrilla Base in 1940 (logged)					
	(13)	(14)	(15)	(16)	(17)	(18)
Japanese Occupied Area	0.477**	0.211**	0.210**	0.231***	0.067	0.276*
	(0.208)	(0.081)	(0.072)	(0.065)	(0.073)	(0.164)
Distance to Railway	0.074*	0.083*	0.092*	0.101*	0.078**	
	(0.037)	(0.044)	(0.045)	(0.050)	(0.034)	
Distance to Telegraph	0.037	0.067	0.071	0.058	0.016	
	(0.025)	(0.040)	(0.045)	(0.055)	(0.042)	
Long March County	0.015	-0.056	-0.103	0.135	0.164	
	(0.040)	(0.071)	(0.126)	(0.174)	(0.119)	
Mean of Dep. Var.	0.3	0.495	0.549	0.509	0.259	0.364
Observations	1,708	1,035	932	807	540	467
Cubic Polynomials of XY	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No
Segment Fixed Effects	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No

Notes: The control variables include the distances to railway stations and telegraph lines and a dummy variable indicating Long March counties, all of which are added as covariates to the optimal bandwidth estimation and inference (in columns (6), (12), and (18)) using the **rdrobust** command in Stata (Calonico et al., 2017). * p<0.10; ** p<0.05; *** p<0.01. Robust standard errors in parentheses. Constant added but not reported.

Table A5. Effect of Japanese Army's Destruction on the Rise of the CCP
Spatial RD Estimation with Standard Errors Clustered at Segment Level

	War Period (1937-45)					
	All	≤400 km	≤300 km	≤200 km	≤100 km	Optimal Bandwidth
Panel A	Density of CCP Cadres (per 1,000 inhabitants, logged)					
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
Japanese Occupied Area	0.036***	0.038***	0.036***	0.037***	0.036***	0.026*
	(0.009)	(0.007)	(0.007)	(0.007)	(0.008)	(0.014)
Distance to Railway	0.003	0.005*	0.005*	0.006*	0.007**	
	(0.002)	(0.002)	(0.002)	(0.002)	(0.003)	
Distance to Telegraph	0.001	0.001	0.000	0.000	-0.001	
	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.001)	
Long March County	0.000	-0.007	-0.008	-0.013	-0.014	
	(0.003)	(0.010)	(0.014)	(0.015)	(0.019)	
Mean of Dep. Var.	0.018	0.028	0.03	0.029	0.029	0.029
Observations	1,708	1,035	932	807	540	622
Panel B	Party Committee, 1940 (presence =1)					
	(7)	(8)	(9)	(10)	(11)	(12)
Japanese Occupied Area	0.131	0.141	0.154*	0.168**	0.174***	0.171**
	(0.105)	(0.081)	(0.070)	(0.060)	(0.042)	(0.068)
Distance to Railway	0.053**	0.064***	0.067***	0.063***	0.080***	
	(0.020)	(0.011)	(0.011)	(0.011)	(0.018)	
Distance to Telegraph	-0.024*	-0.018	-0.026*	-0.019	-0.024	
	(0.011)	(0.013)	(0.011)	(0.014)	(0.021)	
Long March County	-0.053	0.018	-0.060	-0.139	0.017	
	(0.030)	(0.040)	(0.042)	(0.101)	(0.158)	
Mean of Dep. Var.	0.272	0.354	0.369	0.359	0.367	0.365
Observations	1,708	1,035	932	807	540	538
Panel C	Size of Guerrilla Base in 1940 (logged)					
	(13)	(14)	(15)	(16)	(17)	(18)
Japanese Occupied Area	0.477	0.211**	0.210**	0.231**	0.067	0.264
	(0.264)	(0.070)	(0.073)	(0.072)	(0.116)	(0.219)
Distance to Railway	0.074	0.083	0.092	0.101	0.078	
	(0.060)	(0.057)	(0.065)	(0.068)	(0.046)	
Distance to Telegraph	0.037	0.067	0.071	0.058	0.016	
	(0.026)	(0.041)	(0.045)	(0.047)	(0.036)	
Long March County	0.015	-0.056	-0.103	0.135	0.164	
	(0.010)	(0.071)	(0.091)	(0.180)	(0.132)	
Mean of Dep. Var.	0.3	0.495	0.549	0.509	0.259	0.364
Observations	1,708	1,035	932	807	540	467
Cubic Polynomials of XY	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No
Segment Fixed Effects	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No

Notes: The control variables include the distances to railway stations and telegraph lines and a dummy variable indicating Long March counties, all of which are added as covariates to the optimal bandwidth estimation and inference (in columns (6), (12), and (18)) using the **rdrobust** command in Stata (Calonico et al., 2017). * p<0.10; ** p<0.05; *** p<0.01. Robust standard errors in parentheses. Constant added but not reported.

Table A6. Effect of Japanese Army's Destruction on the Rise of the CCP
Spatial RD Estimation with Conley Standard Error

	War Period (1937-45)				
	All	≤400 km	≤300 km	≤200 km	≤100 km
Panel A	Density of CCP Cadres (per 1,000 inhabitants, logged)				
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
Japanese Occupied Area	0.036***	0.033***	0.034***	0.037***	0.038***
	(0.011)	(0.010)	(0.010)	(0.010)	(0.011)
Distance to Railway	0.003***	0.004**	0.005**	0.006***	0.007**
	(0.001)	0.002	(0.002)	(0.002)	(0.003)
Distance to Telegraph	0.001	0.001	0.001	0.001	-0.001
	(0.001)	0.002	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.002)
Long March County	0.000	-0.009	-0.012	-0.016	-0.016
	(0.003)	(0.008)	(0.010)	(0.013)	(0.017)
Mean of Dep. Var.	0.018	0.028	0.03	0.029	0.029
Observations	1,708	1,035	932	807	540
Panel B	Party Committee, 1940 (presence =1)				
	(7)	(8)	(9)	(10)	(11)
Japanese Occupied Area	0.131	0.149*	0.158**	0.168**	0.176***
	(0.088)	(0.081)	(0.070)	(0.068)	(0.058)
Distance to Railway	0.053***	0.065***	0.067***	0.063***	0.08***
	(0.013)	(0.012)	(0.012)	(0.013)	(0.018)
Distance to Telegraph	0.024***	-0.018	-0.027**	-0.019	-0.024
	(0.009)	(0.012)	(0.012)	(0.013)	(0.019)
Long March County	-0.053*	0.021	-0.053	-0.139	0.015
	(0.030)	(0.056)	(0.059)	(0.099)	(0.150)
Mean of Dep. Var.	0.272	0.354	0.369	0.359	0.367
Observations	1,708	1,035	932	807	540
Panel C	Size of Guerrilla Base in 1940 (logged)				
	(13)	(14)	(15)	(16)	(17)
Japanese Occupied Area	0.477**	0.314**	0.257*	0.235*	0.082
	(0.196)	(0.141)	(0.141)	(0.125)	(0.093)
Distance to Railway	0.074**	0.095**	0.096**	0.100**	0.082**
	(0.031)	(0.038)	(0.040)	(0.042)	(0.035)
Distance to Telegraph	0.037	0.058	0.065	0.049	0.018
	(0.029)	(0.046)	(0.050)	(0.051)	(0.042)
Long March County	0.015	-0.016	-0.013	0.166	0.144
	(0.033)	(0.088)	(0.138)	(0.222)	(0.109)
Mean of Dep. Var.	0.3	0.495	0.549	0.509	0.259
Observations	1,708	1,035	932	807	540
Cubic Polynomials of XY	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Segment Fixed Effects	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes

Notes: The control variables include the distances to railway stations and telegraph lines and a dummy variable indicating Long March counties. * p<0.10; ** p<0.05; *** p<0.01. Robust standard errors in parentheses. Constant added but not reported.

Table A7. Pre-1940 CCP Influences and Density of Civilians Killed, 1937-45

	Density of Civilians Killed, 1937-45			
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Revolutionary Bases (=1)	0.140	0.197	0.253	0.273
	(0.173)	(0.176)	(0.183)	(0.176)
CCP Base Size 1938		0.051	0.016	0.016
		(0.057)	(0.054)	(0.053)
CCP Base Size 1939		0.015	0.015	0.015
		(0.028)	(0.028)	(0.028)
CCP Base Size 1940		0.195***	0.193***	0.184***
		(0.035)	(0.035)	(0.034)
Distance to Railway				-0.148***
				(0.019)
Distance to Telegraph				0.008
				(0.019)
Long March County				-0.172***
				(0.062)
Segment Fixed Effects	No	No	Yes	Yes
Observations	1742	1742	1742	1742

Notes: * p<0.10; ** p<0.05; *** p<0.01. Robust standard errors in parentheses. Constant added but not reported.

Appendix B. Data Construction

Dependent Variables

To examine the impact of the Japanese occupation on the CCP's growing influence during the Sino-Japanese War (c. 1937-45), we constructed three measures as proxies. The first is the number of cadre officials who joined the Red Army during the war and had risen to the rank of colonel/regiment commander (*tuan*) or above (middle-to-upper ranking cadres) by the time the People's Republic of China was founded (1949). We constructed this variable by first gathering a list of these officials and their hometowns from *Zhongguo Kangrizhanzheng Junshi Shiliao Congshu* (A Compilation of Military Historical Materials of the Chinese War of Resistance against Japan). Since most CCP soldiers who joined during the war were recruited from rural areas (Qi, 2015), we used their hometown information as a proxy for the specific county in which they joined. Figure B1 provides a snapshot of the pertinent information from the *Compilation*. We then matched these names with their biographical information from the *Baidu Encyclopedia* to obtain information on the year they joined the CCP. For example, Wang Lanlin, whose name appears at the top of the exhibit below (circled in red), joined the Anti-Japanese Suicide Resistance Squad and later the CCP in 1937 after the Japanese invasion at the rank of a colonel in Shanxi Province.

Figure B1. An Exhibit of Biographical Information of Middle-to-Upper Ranking Cadre Officials

Name Hometown Highiest Job Title before 1949

姓 名	籍 贯	主 要 职 务
王兰麟	山西省解县	山西青年抗敌决死队第4纵队20团团长，晋绥军区第6军分区参谋长
王伟光	山东省乳山县	山东军区第6师16团政治委员
王伟民	河南省濮阳县	冀鲁豫军区第2军分区政治部副主任
王吉文	湖北省黄安县	山东纵队第1旅3团团长，第115师教导1旅3团团长，鲁南军区第1军分区(兼3团)司令员
王光文	山东省滕县	冀中军区独立第1旅副旅长、旅长，晋察冀军区特务团团长
王光华	山东省沂水县	冀南军区政治部主任
王廷文	河北省霸县	第120师独立2旅4团团长，第358旅4团团长
王廷卿	山西省怀仁县	第120师政治部民运部社会调查科科长
王仰文	山西省孝义县	山西新军工卫旅卫生部部长

Source: Table of CCP cadres ranked colonel (*tuan*) or above by 1949 on p. 116 from Volume 7 of the Sino–Japanese War Archive from the *Compilation*.

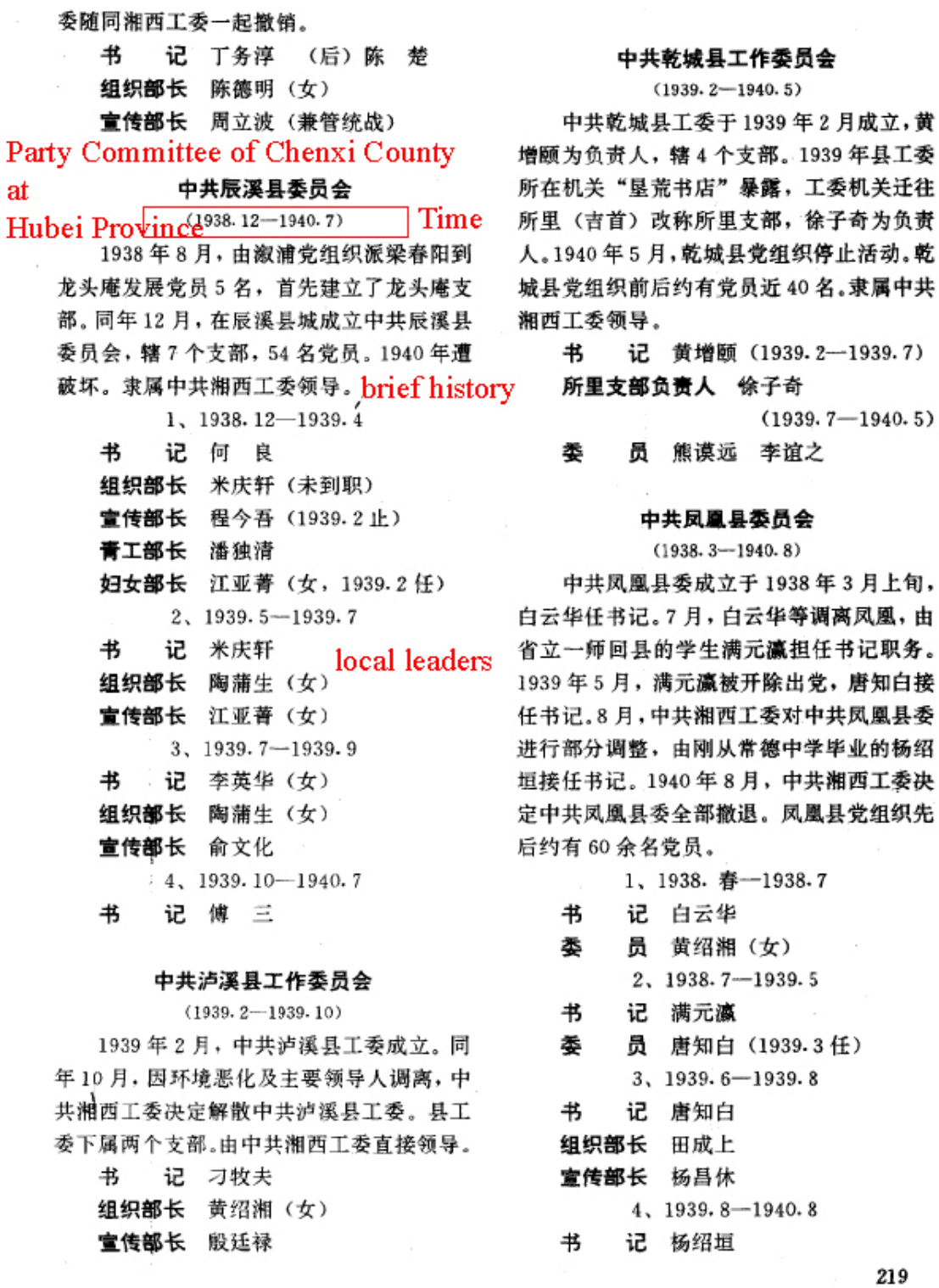
To construct a density measure of the middle-to-upper-ranking officials, we normalize our sample of CCP officials who joined the Party during wartime by the county's pre-war population (c. 1936). We obtained the pre-war population data from the County Population Statistics published by the Department of Statistics under the auspices of the Ministry of the Interior in 1938.

Our second dependent variable is a dummy indicating whether a Party Committee — the highest level of party organization at the county level — existed by the end of 1940. This variable is designed to capture the CCP's organization-building efforts at the grassroots county level. The CCP is known for its organizational capacity to mobilize the people to support its anti-Japanese cause (Gatu, 2008; Hofheinz Jr, 1969; Levine, 1987); this variable detects between-county variations in organizational capability. These efforts were meticulously documented in a compilation entitled *Sheng Gongchandang Zuzhishi Ziliao* (Provincial Archives on the History of the CCP's Party Organization). Under the directorship of Li Rui, then deputy minister of the Organization Department, detailed historical materials on the CCP's grassroots organization-building efforts (at the county and township levels) were systematically collected and submitted to the central government. These materials cover a long period of time including the pre-war period, wartime, the Civil War, and even after 1949. The county-level data was aggregated up to the prefecture, then province, and finally national levels.

The Central Committee directly established Party Committees, which were the highest level of organization established at the county level in wartime China; central Party officials were sent to administer the counties directly. Below the Party Committee in the organizational hierarchy was the Party chapter or branch (*dang zhibu*); locally elected leaders had to be approved by the authorities above and the chapter incorporated into the formal Party organization. The Party group or *dang xiaozu* represented the most primitive or loose form of local party organization as it was established spontaneously and had no obligation to follow the Party's instructions.

We obtained the data on party organization from provincial-level archives, which contain detailed historical information on all three levels of party organization. Figure B2 provides an example of such information from a page from the *Zhongguo Gongchandang Hubei Sheng Zuzhishi Ziliao*, 1921-87 (Hubei Provincial Archive on the History of the CCP's Party Organization). It provides detailed historical information about when Party Committees were established, as well as brief leadership characteristics such as gender and tenure, for four counties in this province.

Figure B2. History of County Organizations from a Provincial Archive



委随同湘西工委一起撤销。

书　　记　丁务淳　（后）陈　楚
组织部长　陈德明（女）
宣传部长　周立波（兼管统战）

Party Committee of Chenxi County at Hubei Province

中共辰溪县委员会

（1938.12—1940.7）　Time

1938年8月，由溆浦党组织派梁春阳到龙头庵发展党员5名，首先建立了龙头庵支部。同年12月，在辰溪县城成立中共辰溪县委员会，辖7个支部，54名党员。1940年遭破坏。隶属中共湘西工委领导。　brief history

1、1938.12—1939.4
书　　记　何　良
组织部长　米庆轩（未到职）
宣传部长　程今吾（1939.2止）
青工部长　潘独清
妇女部长　江亚菁（女，1939.2任）

2、1939.5—1939.7
书　　记　米庆轩　local leaders
组织部长　陶蒲生（女）
宣传部长　江亚菁（女）

3、1939.7—1939.9
书　　记　李英华（女）
组织部长　陶蒲生（女）
宣传部长　俞文化

4、1939.10—1940.7
书　　记　傅　三

中共泸溪县工作委员会

（1939.2—1939.10）

1939年2月，中共泸溪县工委成立。同年10月，因环境恶化及主要领导人调离，中共湘西工委决定解散中共泸溪县工委。县工委下属两个支部。由中共湘西工委直接领导。

书　　记　刁牧夫
组织部长　黄绍湘（女）
宣传部长　殷廷禄

中共乾城县工作委员会

（1939.2—1940.5）

中共乾城县工委于1939年2月成立，黄增颐为负责人，辖4个支部。1939年县工委所在机关“垦荒书店”暴露，工委机关迁往所里（吉首）改称所里支部，徐子奇为负责人。1940年5月，乾城县党组织停止活动。乾城县党组织前后约有党员近40名。隶属中共湘西工委领导。

书　　记　黄增颐（1939.2—1939.7）
所里支部负责人　徐子奇
（1939.7—1940.5）
委　　员　熊谟远　李谊之

中共凤凰县委员会

（1938.3—1940.8）

中共凤凰县委成立于1938年3月上旬，白云华任书记。7月，白云华等调离凤凰，由省立一师回县的学生满元瀛担任书记职务。1939年5月，满元瀛被开除出党，唐知白接任书记。8月，中共湘西工委对中共凤凰县委进行部分调整，由刚从常德中学毕业的杨绍垣接任书记。1940年8月，中共湘西工委决定中共凤凰县委全部撤退。凤凰县党组织先后约有60余名党员。

1、1938.春—1938.7
书　　记　白云华
委　　员　黄绍湘（女）

2、1938.7—1939.5
书　　记　满元瀛
委　　员　唐知白（1939.3任）

3、1939.6—1939.8
书　　记　唐知白
组织部长　田成上
宣传部长　杨昌休

4、1939.8—1940.8
书　　记　杨绍垣

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We then collected information on the year a Party Committee was established in a county

to construct a second measure. It is possible that a county could have more than one Party Committee: the initial one could have been annihilated by the Japanese, or been strategically moved to another county to flee the Japanese and then relocated back to the original county when the situation allowed. Where we identify more than one Party Committee in a county, we only count the first one, provided that it endured for more than a year. We then constructed a dummy variable to indicate whether a Party Committee was established in a county by 1940 — the year we adopt for the formation of the RD boundary. To conduct the falsification test, we also collected information on the first Party Committee established in the prewar period (1931-36) from the same archival materials (but in a different section on the land revolution).

Our third measure of CCP local influence is a variable constructed to proxy for its military capacity — the size of the guerrilla base in 1940. It is based on information from the Japanese Wartime Intelligence Archive. During the Sino-Japanese War, the Japanese Intelligence services collected an enormous amount of information on the military capacity of the KMT and CCP, as evidenced by their granularly detailed military maps, chronicled records and reports. Under the auspices of the National Archives of Japan, the Japan Center for Asian Historical Records organized, digitized, and made these richly documented archives available online (https://www.jacar.go.jp/). We used this information to digitalize a 1940 military map that contains rich information on the geographical distribution and size of the guerrilla bases of the KMT and CCP armies (see Figure A2).

Key Explanatory Variable

Our key explanatory variable is a boundary demarcated based on whether a county was occupied by the Japanese Army in 1940, abbreviated as the Japanese Occupied Area (JOA). We collected the pertinent information from *Gexian Lunxian Shijian* (A Timeline of the Fall of Chinese Counties to Japanese Occupation). Archived by the KMT and published in four volumes as *Zhonghuaminguo Shilu: Wenxian Tongji* (The Collected Statistics of the Republic of China), it contains the exact date the Japanese Army occupied a county. By matching and merging the temporal information from the *Timeline* with a GIS map of 1958, we obtained a clear demarcation of the county boundaries, which we used to construct a map of the JOA for 1940 for our analysis. An exhibit taken from the *Timeline*, Figure B3 reveals that the first county (at the top of list) that fell into Japanese hands was Wuqing County in Hebei Province, on 19 July 1937, 12 days after the Marco Polo Bridge Incident.

Figure B3. *Gexian Lunxian Shijian* (A Timeline of the Fall of Chinese Counties to the Japanese Occupation)

26 文献统计(一)

7. 抗日战争时期各主要县(市)沦陷时间表(1937 年 7 月 7 日～1945 年 8 月 15 日)

1937 年 Year

County (City) Name 县(市)名	Date of Falling 沦陷时间	Contemporary Region 今属地区
河北武清	7 月 19 日	天津市
河北宛平	7 月 20 日	北京丰台区
北平	7 月 28 日	
天津	7 月 31 日	
河北大兴	8 月 9 日	北京市
河北昌平	8 月 17 日	北京市
察哈尔张北	8 月 20 日	河北省
河北良乡	8 月 21 日	北京房山区
河北房山	8 月 21 月	北京市
河北静海	8 月 24 日	天津市

Variables Employed in Testing Channels

To empirically test the war suffering channel, we collected information on the number of civilians directly killed by the Japanese Army and rape cases reported for each county. This information was obtained from a survey conducted by the KMT government in 1946 in preparation for claiming war reparations from the Japanese. After more than half a century, the survey results were made available again in *Kangrizhanzheng Shiqi Renkoushangwang Ji Caichanshunshi* (The Collection of Provincial Archives on Population Casualty and Asset Loss during the Sino-Japanese War), edited by the CCP History Research Office of the Provincial Party Committee (2016). Figure B4 provides an exhibit showing county-level civilian casualties in Shanxi Province.

Figure B4. An Exhibit of the Survey of Civilian Casualties in the Shanxi Archive

（3）山西省人口伤亡汇报表①

填送日期：1946 年 7 月 15 日　第一页

分类 / 县别	伤亡人口总计	轻伤（人）				重伤（人）				死亡（人）				不明（人）				费用（元）			附表数	附记
		小计	男	女	幼童	小计	男	女	幼童	小计	男	女	幼童	小计	男	女	幼童	小计	医药费	葬埋费		
交城县	184	1	1			5	5			178	170	6	2					12960016	2102130	10857886	33	一、各县市所报调查表内填列伤、失踪及其他不明轻重伤者均以不明计算。 二、本表所列男、女、幼童系按十八岁以上之男女分列男、女，十八岁以下之男女均列幼童计算。 三、夏县、沁源二县人口伤亡非县政府特报，系人民汇报到省。
隰　县	247	5	2	3		3	3			232	207	15	10	7	7			6014153	518452	5495701	225	
安邑县	1619	6	4	1	1	27	22	2	3	1537	1374	80	83	49	38	7	4	141399417	8761540	132637877	266	
临晋县	1475									1365	1258	61	46	110	88	17	5	133691084	12059143	121631941	252	
阳曲县	457	2	2			1	1			423	393	14	16	31	27	2	2	26770290	82140	26688150	97	
永和县	24									24	24							3622300	57300	3565000	6	
灵石县	1003									947	831	61	55	56	50	3	3	49249682	4461728	44787954	97	
沁　县	541									487	440	31	16	54	37	15	2	33386575	875075	32511500	94	
大同县	362	4	4			14	14			332	298	19	15	12	10	2		30998010	3232870	27765140	151	
太原县	270					1	1			262	234	13	15	7	7			11366869	438923	10927946	199	
襄陵县	598	6	5		1	14	13		1	512	457	38	17	66	54	9	3	27335540	2759616	24575924	126	
蒲　县	4222	1		1		11	10		1	4139	2936	765	498	71	59	8	4	324747614	5752364	318995250	854	
赵城县	829					4	3	1		747	644	61	42	78	68	6	4	58112086	6731956	51380130	134	

① 此件系山西省政府编制。

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County-level data on rape cases is much harder to come by; such information was made available in the "Chronicles of Major Events" of the Collection. Figure B5 provides an example from that chapter for Hebei Province. It says the Japanese Army occupied Wufeng County in Hebei on 15 December 1937; in the process they killed 1,096 civilians, burned down over 2,000 houses, and raped more than 150 women. Using this data source, we collected records of rape cases in each county during the war to construct our variable, which is also normalized by each county's pre-war population (c. 1936).

Figure B5. An Exhibit of the "Chronicles of Major Events," Hebei Archive

1937 年

10 月 13 日 侵华日军 5 架飞机轰炸安阳城，炸毁房屋 2000 余间，炸死居民孙菊香等 38 人，其中曹秀珍的姥姥家被炸死 9 人。

11 月 2 日 日军岗田部侵入安阳县西梁、东梁村，疯狂烧杀抢掠。在西梁村，杀害村民史会只、李秋贵、范主言、范双喜、范根喜、范老秃、范太松、范喜只、范成来、范成元等 32 人，刺伤 11 人，烧毁房屋 46 间；在东梁村抢走牲口 14 头、大车一辆、油 500 余斤、粮食 57 石、棉花 1125 斤。

11 月 5 日 日军攻占安阳城。日军进城后，采用刺刀捅、大刀砍、机枪扫射等残暴手段，在西营街、大院街、裴家巷、西营坑等地屠杀平民 1000 余人，轮奸妇女 20 余人，烧毁从小西门到北马道 2000 余间民房。

12 月 15 日 日军第一百零八师团在第十四师团馆余聪支队协同下，攻陷清丰县城。日军进城后疯狂烧杀淫掠，屠杀城内及城郊村庄居民 1096 人，烧毁房屋 2000 余间，奸污妇女 150 余人。