**East Asia, 1931-1945**

After **Sun Yat-sen**'s death in March 1925, **Chiang Kai-shek** became the leader of the **Guomindang** (**KMT**). In 1926, Chiang led the **Northern Expedition** through China with the intention of defeating the warlords and unifying the country. Chiang received the help of the Soviet Union and the Chinese Communists; however, he soon dismissed his Soviet advisors. He was convinced, not without reason, that they wanted to get rid of the **KMT** (also known as the **Nationalists**) and take over control. Chiang decided to strike first and purged the Communists, killing thousands of them in the **Shanghai Massacre** of April 12, 1927. At the same time, other violent conflicts were taking place in China; in the South, where the Communists had superior numbers, Nationalist supporters were being massacred. These events eventually led to the **Chinese Civil War** between the Nationalists and Communists, led by **Mao Zedong**. Chiang Kai-shek pushed the Communists into the interior as he sought to destroy them, and established a government with **Nanking** as its capital in 1927. By 1928, Chiang's army overturned the **Beiyang government** and unified the entire nation.

In Japan, Emperor **Hirohito** began ruling in 1926. In 1931, the Japanese used the **Mukden Incident**, where the Japanese army accused Chinese dissidents of bombing a Japanese owned railroad in Manchuria, as an excuse to create a Japanese puppet state in Manchuria, **Manchukuo** (1932-1945).

In 1934, Mao and his communist followers decided to break out of the southern mountains of China where they had been hiding from the **KMT** and trek to **Shaanxi**, an even more remote province in northwestern China. The so-called **Long March** took them 6000 miles and ended up with the death of 96,000 communists. Only 4000 survived the harsh terrain and attacks from the KMT.

In 1937, the **Second Sino-Japanese War** (1937-1945) began when Japan invaded northern China in 1937 and took control of the former capital of Beijing. In the **Battle of Shanghai** (1937) bombing was first used against civilian rather than military targets. Later, in the **Rape of Nanking** (1937), 300,000 Chinese civilians are either murdered or raped. The war continued on as part of **World War II** (1939-1945). During the Second Sino-Japanese War and World War II, the Chinese nationalists under Chiang Kai-shek and the Chinese communists under Mao Zedong agreed to a ceasefire so that they could fight together against the Japanese.

In 1941, the American naval base at **Pearl Harbor** was attacked by the Japanese. It led to the entry of the United States into World War II. The **Battle of Midway** in 1942 was a naval battle won by the Americans. It began a long, slow set of naval victories by the Americans across the Pacific Ocean toward Japan. In March 1945, the United States began **fire-bombing** major Japanese cities.

In August 1945, **atomic bombs are dropped by the United States on the Japanese cities of Nagasaki and Hiroshima** in hope of ending the war before American troops had to start fighting on Japanese soil. The American military feared huge American casualties in Japan if they had to take the country by force. They figured the atomic bombs would scare Japan into surrendering. As expected, **Japan surrendered to the United States** in September 1945.

As Japan withdrew from its occupied Chinese territories in March 1946, the **Chinese Civil War** broke out again between the communists under Mao and the nationalists under Chiang. The communists were much better armed because they had been supplied with the Japanese weapons captured by the Soviet Union. In addition, they were more popular with the peasants because they promised free farmland and lower taxes. As a result, Mao was able to take over the entire mainland of China and form the **People’s Republic of China** in Beijing on October 1, 1949.