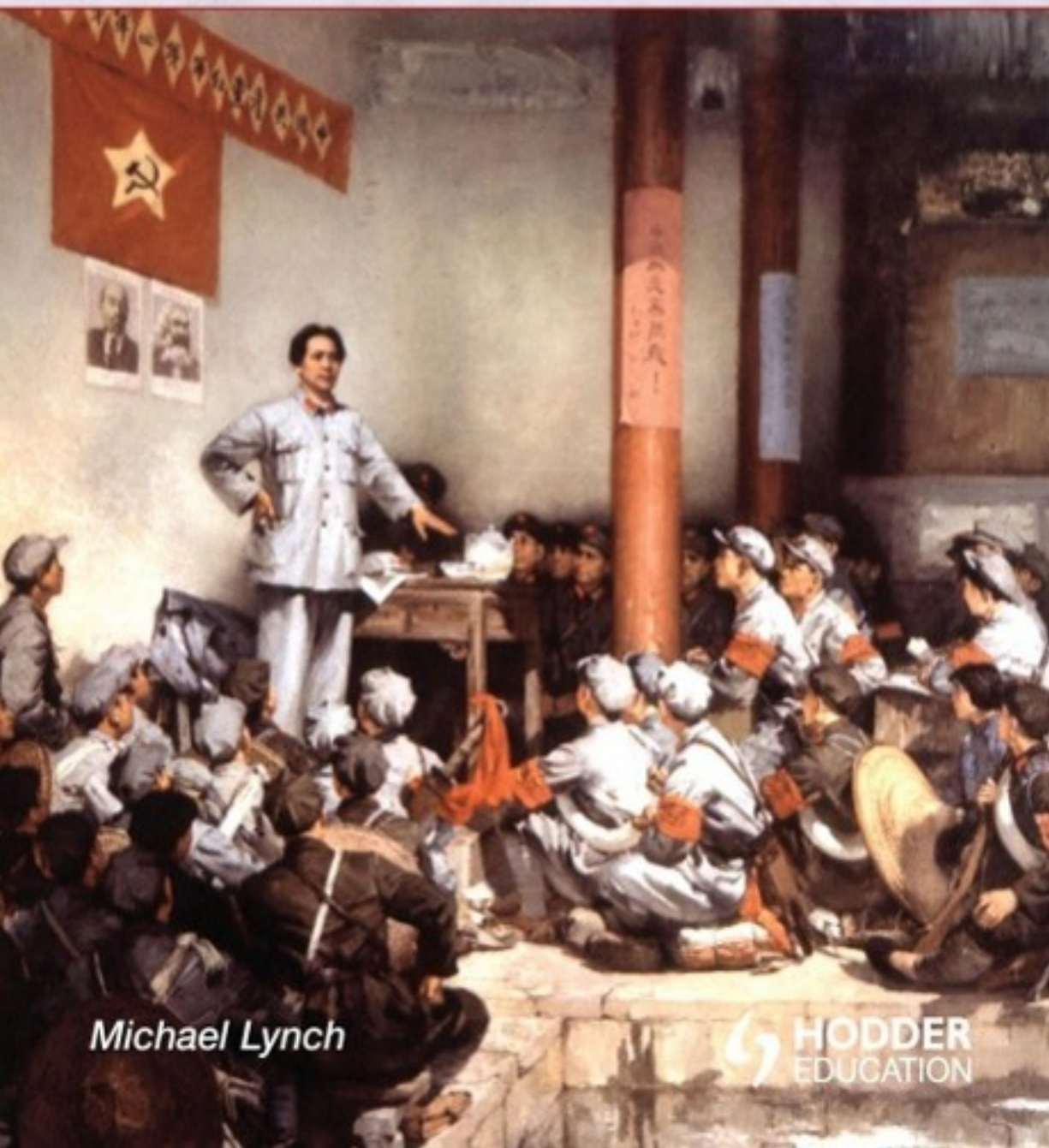


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China: From Empire to People's Republic 1900–49

SECOND EDITION



Michael Lynch

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Study Guide authors: Angela Leonard (Edexcel) and Martin Jones (OCR).

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Cover image: Mao Tse Tung at the Koutien conference where the role of the Red Army was defined, © Photos 12/Alamy.
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Dedication

Keith Randell (1943–2002)

The *Access to History* series was conceived and developed by Keith, who created a series to ‘cater for students as they are, not as we might wish them to be’. He leaves a living legacy of a series that for over 20 years has provided a trusted, stimulating and well-loved accompaniment to post-16 study. Our aim with these new editions is to continue to offer students the best possible support for their studies.

Note on spellings

There are two main styles of transliterating Chinese names into English, the older Wade–Giles system and the more recent *Pinyin* form. In this book it is *Pinyin* that is normally used. To avoid confusion, the Wide–Giles or alternative form is added in brackets after the first appearance of the name. There is also a glossary of names at the end of the book (page 158) giving a list of names in both forms.

1

Imperial China and the Chinese Revolution

POINTS TO CONSIDER

In 1900, China was a politically backward empire, militarily inferior to its neighbour, Japan, and economically exploited by the Western colonial powers. Within the next 50 turbulent years, it had rejected its imperial past, embraced republicanism, survived Japanese occupation, undergone civil war and embraced Communism. In order to understand Chinese history in the first half of the twentieth century, it is necessary to have an appreciation of the character of China as a nation as it had developed by the end of the nineteenth century. This chapter provides an outline of the main features of China as it stood in 1900 and then examines the challenges to the imperial system that led to the fall of the Qing in the Chinese Revolution of 1911–12. It looks at:

- The character of imperial China
- China's relations with the outside world
- The last years of imperial China 1900–11
- The Chinese Revolution 1911

Key dates

1644–1911	Rule of the Qing dynasty
1794	McCartney mission to China
1839–60	Period of the opium wars
1895	China defeated in war with Japan
1895–1911	Railway boom in China
1898	Formation of Hong Kong as British colony
1899	Adoption of open door policy by USA
1900–1	Boxer Rising
1904	Tibet granted independence from China
1904–5	Russo-Japanese war
1905	Workers' protest against US anti-Chinese immigration laws
1908	November Death of Emperor Guangxu and Dowager Empress Cixi

1911	October 10	'Double Tenth' rising at Wuhan (Wuchang)
1912	February 12	Formal abdication of Qing dynasty. Chinese Republic established

1 | Imperial China

Recorded history in China dates from around 2200 BC and is customarily measured by reference to the 15 **imperial** dynasties which ruled from that time until the early twentieth century. The last of these was the **Manchu** dynasty, which ruled China from the mid-seventeenth century until the overthrow of the imperial system in the revolution of 1911. The Manchu emperors, as their name suggests, came from Manchuria, a large north-eastern state that originally lay outside China. Strictly speaking, therefore, the rule of the Manchu was the imposition of foreign authority over China. It is true that the Manchu came to absorb so many aspects of Chinese culture that to the outside observer it seemed that the two peoples were indistinguishable. Nevertheless, the Chinese never lost their sense of being subject to alien rulers, which explains why, when **Chinese nationalism** began to develop in the nineteenth century, it often expressed itself in the form of anti-Manchu agitation. An interesting example of this was the symbolic cutting off by the Chinese of their pigtails, the traditional Manchu hairstyle which had been imposed on them.

At the beginning of the twentieth century the Chinese population was composed of four main ethnic peoples:

- Han
- Manchu
- Mongol
- Tibetan.

Of these four groups the Han were by far the most numerous, forming 90 per cent of the population. It was this Han predominance that had given China its sense of being one nation, this despite its great size (as large in area as the USA) and its many linguistic, regional and climatic variations.

Confucianism

A striking aspect of old China was its resistance to change. Arguably, a visitor transported from China in 100 BC to China in AD 1800 would have found a society little different from the world he had left. Absence of change lay at the heart of Chinese culture. This was a matter of deliberate choice. Central to the antique Chinese view was the concept of harmony as developed by the sage and teacher **Confucius** (551–479 BC). Confucius was not a religious thinker; he thought that gods probably did not exist, and that, even if they did, they were too remote and unknowable to worry about. It was this world and the people within it that

Key question

What were the distinctive characteristics of imperial China?

Rule of the Qing dynasty: 1644–1911

Key date

Imperial

The rule of the various dynasties and emperors over China.

Manchu

Also known as the Qing, the last imperial dynasty (1644–1911).

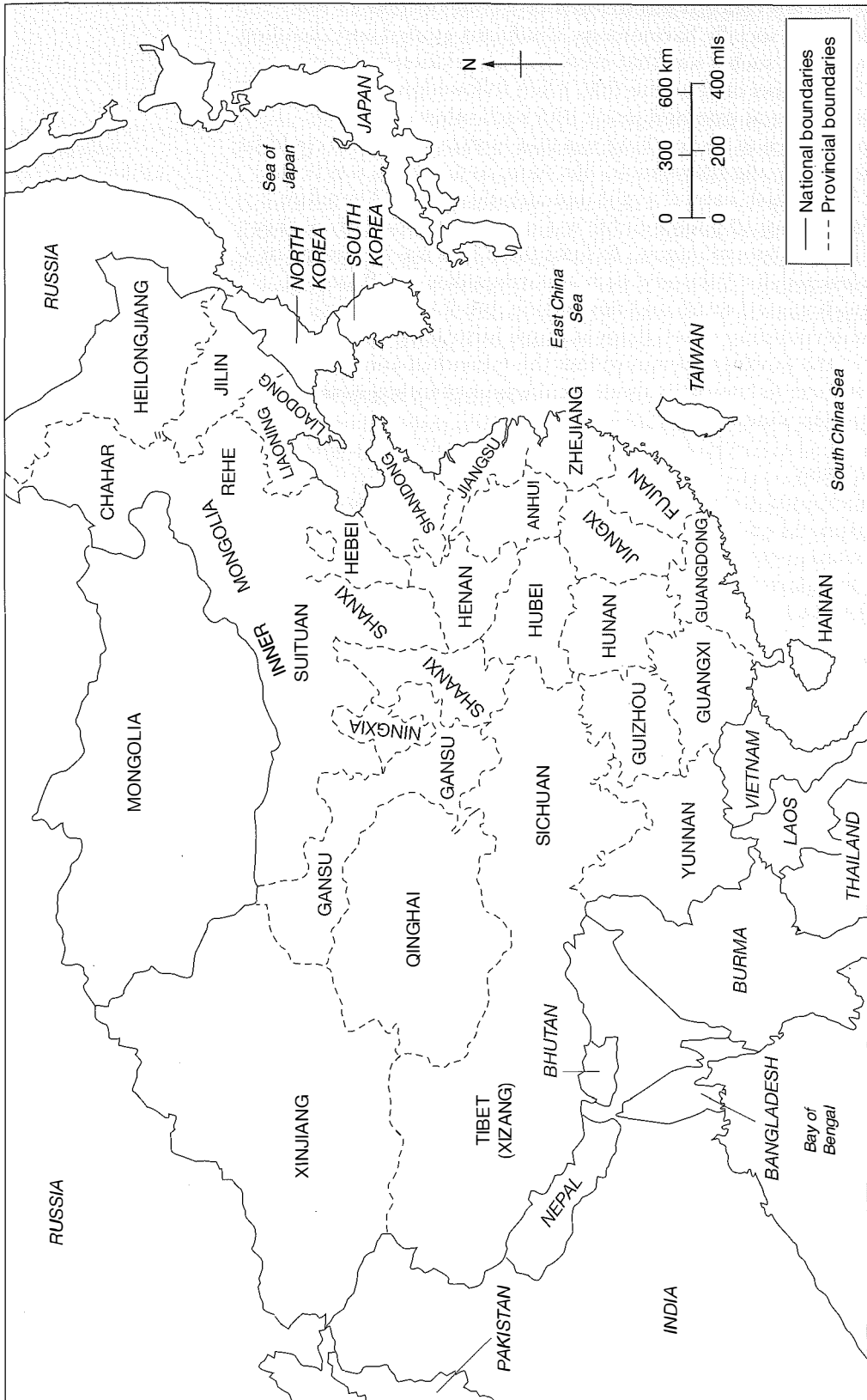
Chinese nationalism

Strongly committed belief in the need for China to re-establish its independence and sovereignty.

Confucius

The Latin name of the Chinese scholar (551–479 BC), whose philosophy of acceptance influenced China for thousands of years and continues to shape Chinese thinking today.

Key terms



mattered. His concern was to advance a code of conduct that would prove socially harmonious. Confucius graded and classified behaviour in such a way that every human relationship was covered by laws of etiquette that, when followed, would allow people to live at ease and peace with each other.

The essence of his teaching was that human happiness could be found only in the harmonious life. Man, as a species, was born into an ordered, natural world that already existed. Therefore, the task facing all people in life was to relate as smoothly as they could to the laws of nature. To fight these laws was to engage in a hopeless activity. Disasters, such as earthquakes and floods, obviously caused death and destruction, but it was a misunderstanding to see them as tragic intrusions. They were part of the workings of nature that the individual and society had to embrace; to complain about them was as pointless as shouting against the wind.

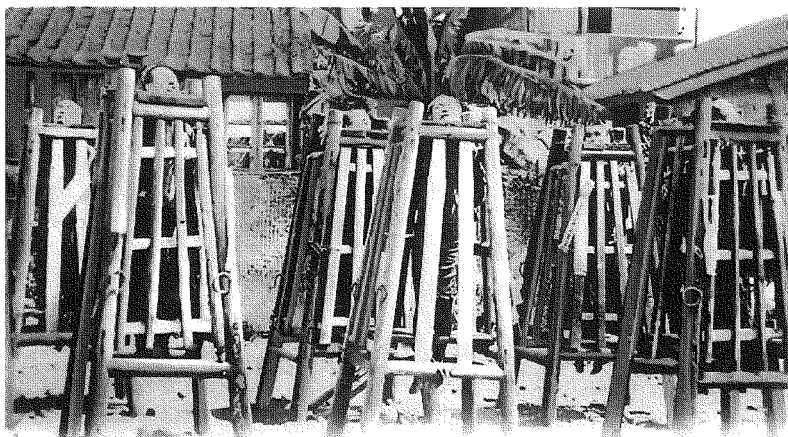
Quietism

Confucianism, therefore, may best be described as a form of **quietism**. As a set of guides and principles, it became identified with obedience to authority and the maintenance of the *status quo*. This had particular relevance to the political situation. Since the maintenance of harmony was society's chief purpose, it was the duty of all citizens to accept the political situation as it stood. To challenge it would be an affront to the natural order of things. This notion had an obvious attraction for those in authority. Should anyone protest against the prevailing system, it was easy for the holders of power to denounce such opposition as disruptive and, therefore, improper. It is notable that in Chinese history the severest punishments were imposed on rebels against the existing order. The savage penalties that were inflicted were

Quietism

The acceptance of fate.

Key term



Rebels being publicly executed. Pinioned in wooden cages, the condemned men, with a bar under their chin, stood on a set of planks or bricks which were withdrawn at intervals over a period of three days. The result was slow strangulation. What do such executions reveal about the Chinese attitude to crime and punishment?

intended to express the horror that Chinese society felt towards those who transgressed its basic rules.

The mandarins

It was the predominance of Confucianism in Chinese life that secured the position of the **mandarins** as a dominant class in China. The mandarins were scholars trained in the subtleties of Confucian learning. They went through a series of rigid examinations, which, once passed, gave them an exclusive right to positions in the government and civil service. The mandarins became a social and political élite, which zealously guarded its privileges. It was no accident that the concept of an unchanging society became integral to Chinese culture.

The mandate of heaven

Change, nonetheless, did occur naturally. After all, people die – even emperors. How, then, in Confucian thought were such changes to be explained? The answer lay in the principle known as the **mandate of heaven**. This concept is best understood as the sanctioning of change after it has occurred. Care has to be taken in interpreting the term ‘heaven’: the word does not correspond with the Christian concept of a place of eternal joy reserved for those who live a godly life on earth. ‘Heaven’ in its Chinese sense is best defined as a dynamic or force that both causes and justifies change. The word ‘fate’ is perhaps a more appropriate translation. What this amounted to in practice was that emperors or dynasties who replaced others based their right to do so on the notion that they were acting entirely in keeping with the natural laws of harmony. A rebel, therefore, who challenged the existing system and was defeated remained a rebel, deserving of condign punishment. However, a rebel who challenged the existing system and was victorious ceased to be a rebel. His success proved that he was the legitimate inheritor of the mandate of heaven.

Mention of the emperors in the previous paragraph introduces a key feature of government as it had evolved in ancient China. The emperor had become the principal ruler and magistrate, entitled to complete obedience from his subjects and government officials. The position, which was hereditary, gave the holder an absolute authority that can best be compared with the Western notion of the **divine right of kings**. Obedience to proper authority, both familial and social, was a fundamental duty for Chinese citizens. They could fulfil the requirements of the Confucian code no better than by totally accepting the orders and instructions they were given and by honouring without question the place in society in which they found themselves.

This **hierarchical** sense of deference and loyalty to proper authority was a marked characteristic of Chinese society: subjects obeyed emperors, wives obeyed husbands, children obeyed parents. In Chinese tradition, an undutiful child was regarded with particular distaste. There are many recorded instances of adult sons and daughters who had brought discredit on their

Key terms

Mandarins

An élite class of scholars.

Mandate of heaven

The force of history that justifies the holding of power by those in authority.

Divine right of kings

The notion that a monarch has a god-given and, therefore, unchallengeable authority to govern.

Hierarchical

Describes the system in which people are ranked in value according to the authority they hold.

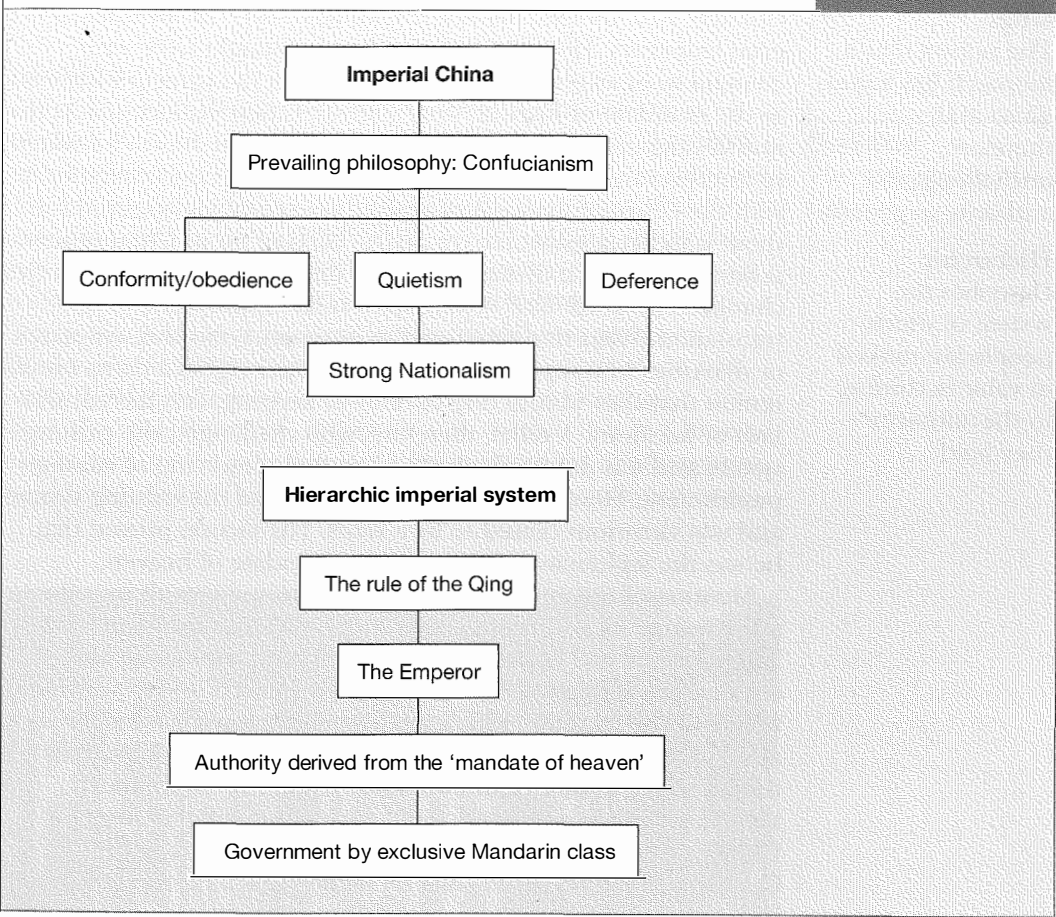
family being thrown to their death down wells by outraged relatives. Such behaviour illustrates the demanding Chinese concept of family and social discipline. It helps to explain the lack of **individualism** and the veneration of conformity that has been such a constant feature of Chinese culture. The **totalitarianism** associated with twentieth-century Chinese politics was not a novel imposition. It was the continuation of an ancient tradition.

Individualism
Emphasis on people as individuals rather than as members of society.

Totalitarianism
A system in which the state has complete power over the people.

Key terms

Summary diagram: Imperial China



Key question

How did China see its place in the world in 1900?

Key dates

McCartney mission to China: 1794

Opium wars: 1839–42 and 1856–60

Key terms

Sino-centric

Inward looking, preoccupied with China. The prefix 'Sino' means Chinese.

Forbidden City

The extensive but exclusive area in Beijing where the emperor lived and ruled and to which access was denied to all but selected guests.

Kowtow

The requirement that, when first entering the emperor's presence, the visitor showed respect by prostrating himself face down and tapping his head nine times on the floor.

Western imperialism

The spread in the nineteenth century of economic and political control by European powers over parts of Asia and Africa.

2 | Imperial China and the Outside World

The Chinese word for China is *zhongguo*, meaning 'the middle kingdom' or 'the centre of the world'. This is a clear example of the essentially **Sino-centric** nature of Chinese thinking, which resulted from its centuries of detachment from outside influences. To the Chinese, anything alien was by definition inferior, and this perception obviously determined China's dealings with foreign nations. The notion that China was wholly self-sufficient, both culturally and materially, meant there was no value in maintaining contact with foreigners. Yet, on occasion, China did need goods and materials from outside. What developed, therefore, was an elaborate tribute system. China would enter into commerce with other nations, but any trade in which it engaged was regarded as being made up of gifts received from inferiors.

Ironically, what China gave in return was often greater in amount and worth than what it received. But this strange pattern of commerce preserved the notion that China was self-sufficient. Striking examples of this notion in operation are to be found in Sino-British relations. In the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries a number of British delegations approached the Chinese emperor with proposals for closer trading links. The Chinese answer on every occasion was to thank the British for their courtesy but to point out that, since Britain had nothing of real value to offer China, there was no point in establishing such relations. When, in 1794, King George III's representative, Lord McCartney, was eventually allowed to enter the **Forbidden City** in Beijing (Peking) to be received by the emperor, he caused acute diplomatic embarrassment by refusing to **kowtow** in the traditional way. Such disregard of Chinese sensibilities may now be looked back on as anticipating the trauma that China was to experience when **Western imperialism** began to impose itself a few decades later.

European domination of China

China's concept of its own unique greatness was severely shaken by its enforced contact with the West, beginning with the opium wars in the middle decades of the nineteenth century. The first open conflict broke out in 1839 when Britain demanded that China increase its purchases of opium from British India and Burma. The drug had become widely used in China and was a major source of income to the British. When the Chinese authorities ordered the ports to be closed, Britain dispatched gunboats to impose its will. The inability of the Chinese to match this European firepower came as a shatteringly disruptive revelation. It brought into question the hitherto unchallenged notion of Chinese supremacy.

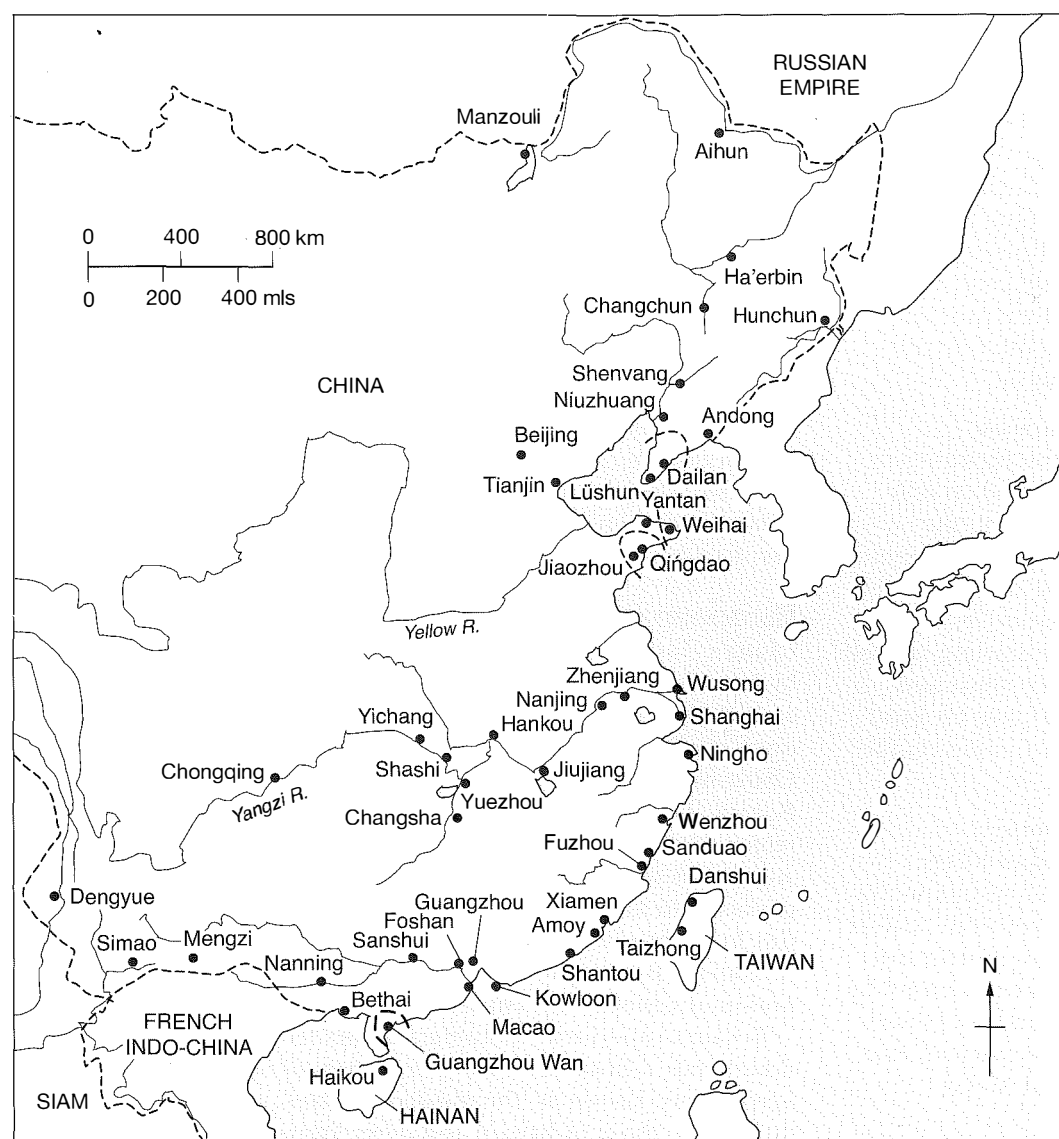
Britain's superiority in military affairs led directly to economic dominance. China was forced, in a series of one-sided agreements, known as 'the unequal treaties', to subordinate its interests to those of Britain and other Western powers including France, Germany and the USA. The enforced agreements created

over 50 'treaty ports', which were subject to Western control, and established a series of **concessions**. These were areas within the major cities controlled by individual European powers whose laws were enforced on any Chinese living there.

The sense of humiliation that the Chinese felt over these developments stimulated the revolutionary movements that developed later in China. The Chinese were bitterly resentful but were incapable of mounting effective resistance. The autocratic but ineffectual imperial government with its centre in Beijing proved powerless to stop Western encroachments. Indeed, successive Qing emperors and governments compromised with the occupying powers in order to maintain imperial authority within China. No longer could the Chinese delude themselves

Concessions
International settlements which were, in effect, European mini-states in China.

Key term



The foreign 'treaty ports' established in China by 1900.

China defeated in war with Japan: 1895
Formation of Hong Kong as a British colony: 1898

that they were culturally, politically or scientifically self-sufficient. Such beliefs were undermined by the reality of China's subjection to the West and also by its heavy defeat at the hands of the Japanese in a war over territory in 1895.

The 'scramble for concessions'

The defeat of China in the Sino-Japanese war prompted a number of Western powers to tighten their hold on China. In the 1890s, in the 'scramble for concessions', France, Britain, Russia and Germany forced the Chinese to enter into a further series of 'unequal treaties', in which the European nations extended their territorial and commercial interests in China. One especially notable example occurred in 1898 when Britain consolidated its hold over Hong Kong, a region that consisted of three distinct areas: Hong Kong island, Kowloon and the New Territories. In 1842, in the Treaty of Nanjing, China had been forced to cede the island of Hong Kong to Britain in perpetuity. In the Beijing Convention of 1860, the Qing government had granted Britain, again in perpetuity, possession of Kowloon harbour directly facing Hong Kong. In 1898 Britain took over the rest of Kowloon peninsula. This fresh acquisition, known as the New Territories, was ceded not in perpetuity but on a 99-year lease. This completed the creation of Hong Kong as a British **Crown colony**.

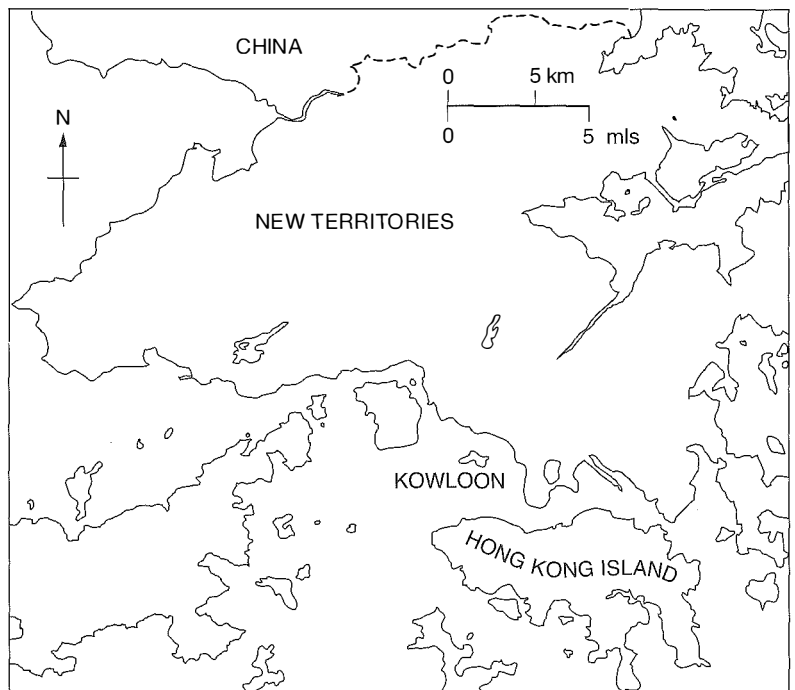
There seemed to be a real possibility that China might suffer the same fate as Africa, which was currently being divided between the European imperial powers in the '**scramble for Africa**' (1870–1914). In 1904, a British force, having marched into the far-western border province of Tibet, obliged the Manchu

Crown colony

An overseas territory directly governed by Britain.

'Scramble for Africa'

Between 1870 and 1914 there was fierce competition among the European imperialist powers to establish colonies in Africa.



Hong Kong colony.

government to recognise Tibetan independence. This, in effect, was an acknowledgement of Britain's control of the region, which, in an earlier century, the Qing dynasty had taken great pride in incorporating into China. The Russians in a similar move at this time demanded that China recognise their influence in Outer Mongolia.

As the Manchu power weakened in the first decade of the century the ability of the West to direct Chinese affairs increased.

China and the USA

What saved China from further fragmentation was the attitude of the USA, which had recently entered the world stage. Despite its anti-colonial tradition, America had begun to develop its own brand of imperialism. The USA had played no part in the scramble for Africa, but it was determined to assert itself in the Pacific region. It adopted a policy for preventing the same subdivision of China as had occurred in Africa. Through its Secretary of State, John Hay, the USA in 1899 warned off the other imperial powers. In diplomatic but unambiguous terms, Hay informed them that America was not prepared to see China's economy fall under their control. No country was entitled to force the Chinese to grant it preferential tariffs; China must be left free to develop its trade and commerce with whom it chose. Although few of the powers were happy with this **open door** doctrine, none was prepared at this stage to challenge the USA directly over it.

China's ambivalent attitude towards the West

Chinese protests against Western domination were frequent but largely ineffectual since they lacked leadership and co-ordination. Frequent strikes and the damaging of industrial machinery clearly expressed the Chinese workers' objection to foreign control but did little to threaten it. What undermined attempts to develop an effective anti-foreigner movement was the inescapable fact that large numbers of Chinese had come to depend for their livelihood on the Western presence. This was particularly evident in the major cities such as Beijing, Guangzhou and Shanghai, where thousands of Chinese workers were employed by foreign companies or in the international concessions. Western favours could not be rejected out of hand. Foreign capital was necessary for China's survival and foreign companies provided jobs for the Chinese.

It has to be said that while the West exploited China, not all Chinese were reluctant to be exploited. Many were prepared to tolerate the poor wages and conditions because the Chinese domestic economy had nothing better to offer them. Moreover, the abuse of workers was not something brought by the West. It was traditional in China. The eagerness of peasants to leave the land and work in Western-owned factories indicated how precarious and grim their lives had been previously. The same was true of workers in locally owned industries. Chinese bosses were not known for the humane treatment of their employees.

Tibet granted independence from China: 1904

Adoption of open door policy by USA: 1899

Key dates

Key question

What was the American attitude towards China?

Open door

The US policy aimed at preventing European powers imposing unfair commercial agreements on China.

Key term

Key question

Why had China's relations with the West become a mixture of detestation and admiration?

Sweatshops

Crowded, unhealthy premises, at high risk of fire, where unscrupulous bosses exploited cheap labour.

Indigenous

Home-grown, locally developed.

Foreign devils

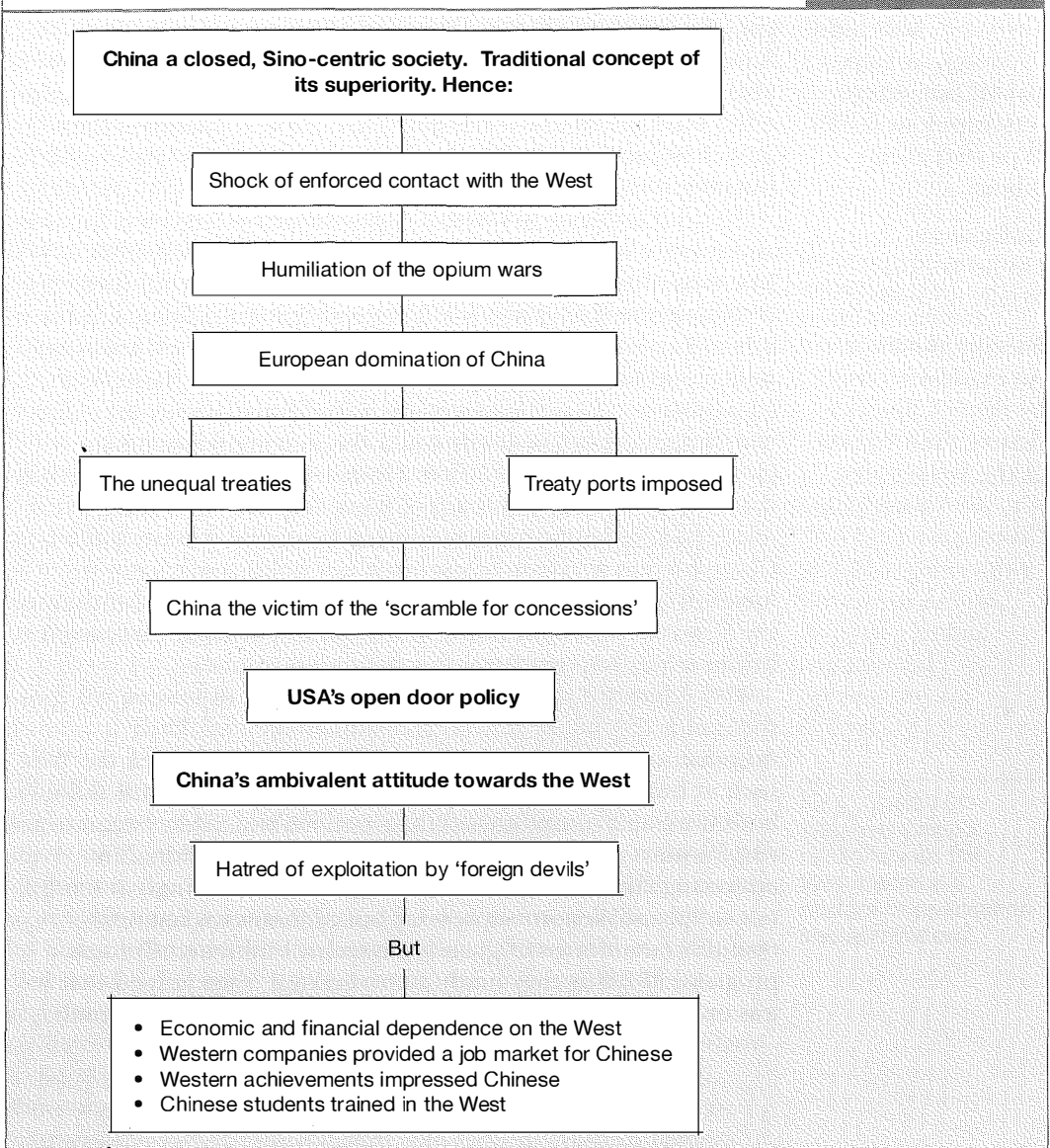
An expression used by many Chinese to denote their hatred of the Westerners who dominated China.

China's small-scale domestic industries had been run as **sweatshops** of the most oppressive kind. Another important consideration was that the presence of Western companies brought work opportunities to Chinese women, who were now able to supplement the meagre family income. A further positive effect was that Western industrial expansion encouraged the growth of **indigenous** Chinese business. China was introduced to the arts of industrial management and training.

The consequence of China's dependence on foreign companies and finance was the development among the Chinese of a love-hate attitude towards the West. On the one hand, they deeply detested what the foreigner was doing to China. On the other, they found it hard to suppress admiration for the obvious military and technological accomplishments of the West. As a consequence, many Chinese came to believe that only by expelling the **foreign devils** could the independence and greatness of China be restored. However, the means of achieving this would be to copy and adapt those very Western qualities which had led to the current subjection of the Chinese. Since China had no tradition of participatory politics and since its imperial governments were unable or unwilling to lead resistance, the frustration of the Chinese led them to conclude that progress in China was impossible except through revolution.

This educative process was increased by the experience of those thousands of young Chinese who studied abroad. Their introduction to practices which had become standard in the West, such as training in applied technology and management skills, both fired and compromised their nationalism. They began to ask why Western advances had not been achieved in China. In answering their own question they became increasingly resentful, not simply of Western supremacy but of their own national traditions and forms of government which inhibited Chinese progress. Much as they might hate the West, they judged that it was only by a Western path that they could achieve their goals.

Summary diagram: Imperial China and the outside world



3 | The Last Years of Imperial China 1900–11

The '100 Days'

The beginning of the end of imperial China may be dated from 1898. In that year the Manchu government introduced a series of reforms that became known as the '**100 Days**'. The measures, which were all based on Western models, included:

- major modifications of the civil service
- innovations in education
- extensive industrial reorganisation.

Key question
What problems beset the Qing dynasty between 1900 and 1911?

'100 Days'
The period of reform, starting in 1898, intended by the Manchu to divert opposition and dispel criticism.

Key term

Progressive elements

Those members of the court who wanted China to modernise.

Reactionaries

Those members of the court who opposed the modernisation of China.

Boxers

Anti-Western secret societies, whose name derived from the martial arts they practised.

Key question

Why did the Boxer Rising fail?

Boxer Rising: 1900–1

The aim behind the reforms was to buy off the government's Chinese critics who had been angered by the Manchu failure to prevent the spread of foreign concessions in China in the 1890s and by the pitiful performance of the imperial armies in the Sino-Japanese war in 1895. The **progressive elements** around Emperor Guangxu (Kuang Hsu) had persuaded him that reform would convince the Chinese people that the imperial government was still in control. Unfortunately for him, the progressives were outweighed by the **reactionaries** at court. The Empress Cixi (Tzu-hsi) and her ultra-conservative faction overawed the emperor and outmanoeuvred his supporters. Appalled by the speed and range of the attempted reforms, Cixi took over the government. Guangxu was obliged to retract his former support of the reformers, all of whom were dismissed, many of them being executed or imprisoned. What the failure of the '100 Days' had revealed was both the crippling lack of cohesion among the advocates of reform in China and the strength of conservatism in Chinese politics. These divisions were to persist as a constant feature of China's history in the first half of the twentieth century.

The Boxer Rising 1900–1

Cixi, whose hatred of reform was matched by her detestation of foreigners, now attempted to use the national feelings that the '100 Days' had generated to launch a nationwide campaign against the 'foreign devils' in China. She gave her backing to the **Boxers**, a collective term for an assortment of anti-Western secret societies, which viewed the Christian Church as their chief enemy. By 1900, the Boxers had begun to perpetrate violent attacks on Chinese Christians and foreign missionaries. With Cixi's approval, this extended into a series of indiscriminate massacres of Westerners. Cixi now judged it opportune to order the international settlements in Beijing to be besieged.

A Japanese officer wipes his sword after beheading a number of defeated Boxer prisoners in 1901. Why are there both Japanese and Chinese troops among the watching soldiers?



What followed showed that she had badly misjudged the situation. Cixi's appeals to the regional governors to send troops to Beijing to form a Chinese army were largely ignored. The reality was that the government in Beijing had neither the strength to enforce compliance from the provinces nor the prestige to attract their help. Without provincial support, Cixi's war on the foreign powers had no chance of succeeding. Indeed, rather than assist the Manchu government, a number of provincial leaders made common cause with the foreigners by promising to protect Western nationals. Within a short time, the Western powers had raised an army to which nine nations contributed, although the majority of the troops were provided by Japan. Once this international force had reached Beijing, it had little difficulty in breaking the siege of the legations and crushing the Boxers. Cixi and the emperor fled south to Xian (Sian) in Shaanxi province.

Having crushed the rising, the Western occupiers imposed severe penalties:

- China had to pay \$450 million in reparation.
- Arsenal and fortifications were destroyed.
- Foreign troops were stationed permanently in and around Beijing.

The Manchu dynasty was allowed to continue, but events had destroyed what little power it had held. Cixi's support of the Boxers had proved as unwise as it had been ineffectual. The failure of the Boxer Rising was a profound humiliation for the imperial court. When the Emperor and Cixi returned to Beijing in 1902 it was an inglorious affair. There was now little popular sympathy for the Manchu dynasty. Those Chinese who were prepared to fight for their nation's freedom from foreign control regarded recent events as proof that the royal government was incapable of leading the people to liberation.

Further Manchu attempts at reform

In a desperate attempt to sustain the dynasty's flagging fortunes, Cixi was prepared to countenance the reintroduction of the reforms which she had previously so vehemently opposed. Constitutional and administrative changes were introduced; among the most striking were the creation of provincial assemblies and the ending of the traditional Confucian examination for civil-service entrants. The intention behind the reforms was clear – to rally support for the imperial government – but the results were not always as intended. The belated attempt of the Qing to present themselves as reformers was unconvincing. Chinese progressives saw the reforms as concessions grudgingly granted by a reactionary government. For them, the idea of the Qing dynasty turning itself into a modern **constitutional monarchy** was too great a stretch of the imagination. Moreover, the far from negligible cost of the reforms had to be met by increases in taxation, which further alienated the commercial and financial interests on whom they were imposed.

Key question

What measures did Cixi introduce in her attempt to save the Qing dynasty?

Constitutional monarchy

A form of government in which the ruler does not have absolute authority and is required to act in co-operation with elected representatives.

Key dates

Workers' protest against US anti-Chinese immigration laws: 1905

Death of Emperor Guangxu and Empress Cixi: November 1908

The dissatisfaction of ordinary Chinese in the face of Qing impotence expressed itself in 1905 when workers engaged in a widespread boycott of American goods. The protest was directed primarily against the adoption of immigration laws in the USA which specifically discriminated against the Chinese, but it was also intended to embarrass the Qing government over its failure to take the lead in condemning American policy. Although interesting as an example of Chinese resentment, the incident remained merely one of a rash of uncoordinated anti-foreigner reactions.

Yuan Shikai and the Regency

In November 1908, the plight of the Manchu dynasty suddenly and dramatically deepened with the death within 24 hours of both Emperor Guangxu and Empress Cixi. This left the dynasty in the hands of a two-year-old boy, Pu Yi, with the deceased emperor's brother, Prince Chun, acting as **regent**. The moment appeared to have arrived for all those who for personal or political motives wished to see the imperial system enfeebled, if not destroyed. Nevertheless, the new regent endeavoured to preserve the royal house by continuing with the reforms that Cixi had sanctioned. In an attempted show of strength, Prince Chun dismissed from office General Yuan Shikai (Yuan Shih-k'ai), the commander of the Beijing army. Yuan might best be described as an over-mighty subject. He had used his military position to become a political threat to the Manchu government. On the pretext that Yuan's war wounds, which had left him with a pronounced limp, made him an undignified presence at court, the regent instructed him to take early retirement. The order, which was deliberately worded so as to make Yuan appear ridiculous, was meant to pay him back for an earlier act of disloyalty to the previous emperor. Yuan hobbled off, vowing retribution.

Prince Chun had intended his actions as a sign of authority, but to opponents of the imperial system the absurd episode was simply added proof of how much of an anachronism the royal court had become. It was one thing for the government to dismiss a difficult individual; it was another for it to deal effectively with the growing opposition of whole groups of disaffected Chinese. Reforms which did not go far enough politically or economically, but which, nevertheless, increased the burden of taxation, frustrated the entrepreneurial business classes. The large number of tax revolts in China during the first decade of the century was an indicator of the widespread resentment felt towards government policies.

Key term

Regent

An individual who rules until the monarch is old enough or sufficiently capable of taking power himself.

Key question

What problems did China's railway boom create for the Manchu rulers?

The railway question

A particular issue that aroused anti-Manchu feelings was that of the railways. Between 1895 and 1911 there was a boom in railway construction in China, which attracted considerable international investment. The expansion of railways and the increase in rolling stock was a nationwide development that promised to bring

prosperity to most regions of China. This raised a political problem for the Manchus. Most of the railways were owned and run by provincial companies. If significant amounts of capital were to go to the companies, the result would be an increase in local financial and political independence, a prospect that was viewed by Beijing as a dangerous challenge to its central authority.

In order to wrest control of China's communication system from the provincial companies, the imperial government undertook what amounted to a railway **nationalisation** programme; owners would be compensated but not to the full value of their holdings. To raise the necessary capital to pay the compensation, the Qing government opted to increase taxes at home and negotiate loans from the West. It was, in effect, seeking to keep central control at the expense of increased international indebtedness. Thus to the scandal of displaced owners and cheated shareholders was now added the humiliation of further dependency on Western bankers. The disaffected commercial lobby now played their part in organising open opposition to a government that appeared to be willing to sacrifice China's economic interests. Revolution was in the air.

Sun Yatsen and the Nationalists

It is significant that revolutionary ideas had made their greatest initial headway among the 10,000 Chinese emigrants living in Japan. The Tongmenghui (Alliance League), the forerunner of the **Guomindang** (Kuomintang), was formed in Tokyo in 1905. Its inspiration and leader was Sun Yatsen. Since the early 1890s, Sun had been a fierce campaigner against China's imperial system of government. His basic political belief was that China could not modernise unless it became a **republic**; he regarded the rule of the Manchu Chinese as moribund. His anti-government views made him *persona non grata* with the result that he was in exile for the greater part of the time between 1895, when he had led an abortive rising in Guangzhou (Canton), and 1911. Whenever possible during this period he returned to Japan because he considered that 'there, nearer to China, we could more successfully carry out our revolutionary plans'. Sun recorded the upsurge in revolutionary activity that followed the Boxer Rising and the humiliating involvement of the Manchu in its failure:

At this time nearly all the provinces began to send students to Japan to receive their education there. Amongst the students who came to Tokyo there turned out to be many people with young and clear heads. They seized on revolutionary ideas at once, and soon entered the revolutionary movement. All the arguments of the students of that day, and all their thoughts, turned around revolutionary questions ... This revolutionary movement amongst the Chinese students found its way into China ... During this period the popular movement grew stronger and stronger ... This period I consider to be the beginning of the epoch of the wide development of the Chinese revolutionary movement.

Railway boom:
1895–1911

Key date

Nationalisation
The takeover by the state of companies and enterprises that had previously been privately owned.

Key term

Key question
What were the main revolutionary notions that inspired Sun Yatsen and the Nationalists?

Guomindang
The Chinese Nationalist Party (shortened to GMD or Nationalists), formed in 1912.

Key terms

Republic
A form of government in which there is no monarch and power is exercised by elected representatives.

Persona non grata
An officially unacceptable person, an outlaw.

Profile: Sun Yatsen 1866–1925

- 1866 – Born in Guandong province
- 1879 – Moved to Honolulu
- 1879–82 – Educated at Iolani School, Honolulu, where he learned fluent English
- 1887–92 – Studied Western medicine in British Hong Kong
- 1892 – Qualified as a doctor
- 1895 – As head of the Tongmenghui led an unsuccessful coup against the Qing
- 1895–1911 – In exile in Europe, Japan, Canada and the USA
- 1896 – Seized in London by Chinese government agents but released after intervention by the British government
- 1912 – Returned to China to become president of new republic
 - Handed presidency to Yuan Shikai
 - Formed the Guomindang (GMD or Chinese Nationalist Party)
- 1913 – Led failed attempt to remove Yuan
 - Fled to Japan
- 1915 – Married Soong Qingling
- 1917 – Returned to China
- 1919 – Reformed GMD
- 1920 – Established Guanzhou (Canton) as GMD's southern base
- 1921 – Became president of breakaway military government in Guangzhou
 - Supported the formation of the Chinese Communist Party
- 1923 – Formally enunciated his 'Three Principles of the People'
- 1924 – Founded Whampoa Military Academy
 - Organised United Front
- 1925 – Died in Beijing from liver cancer

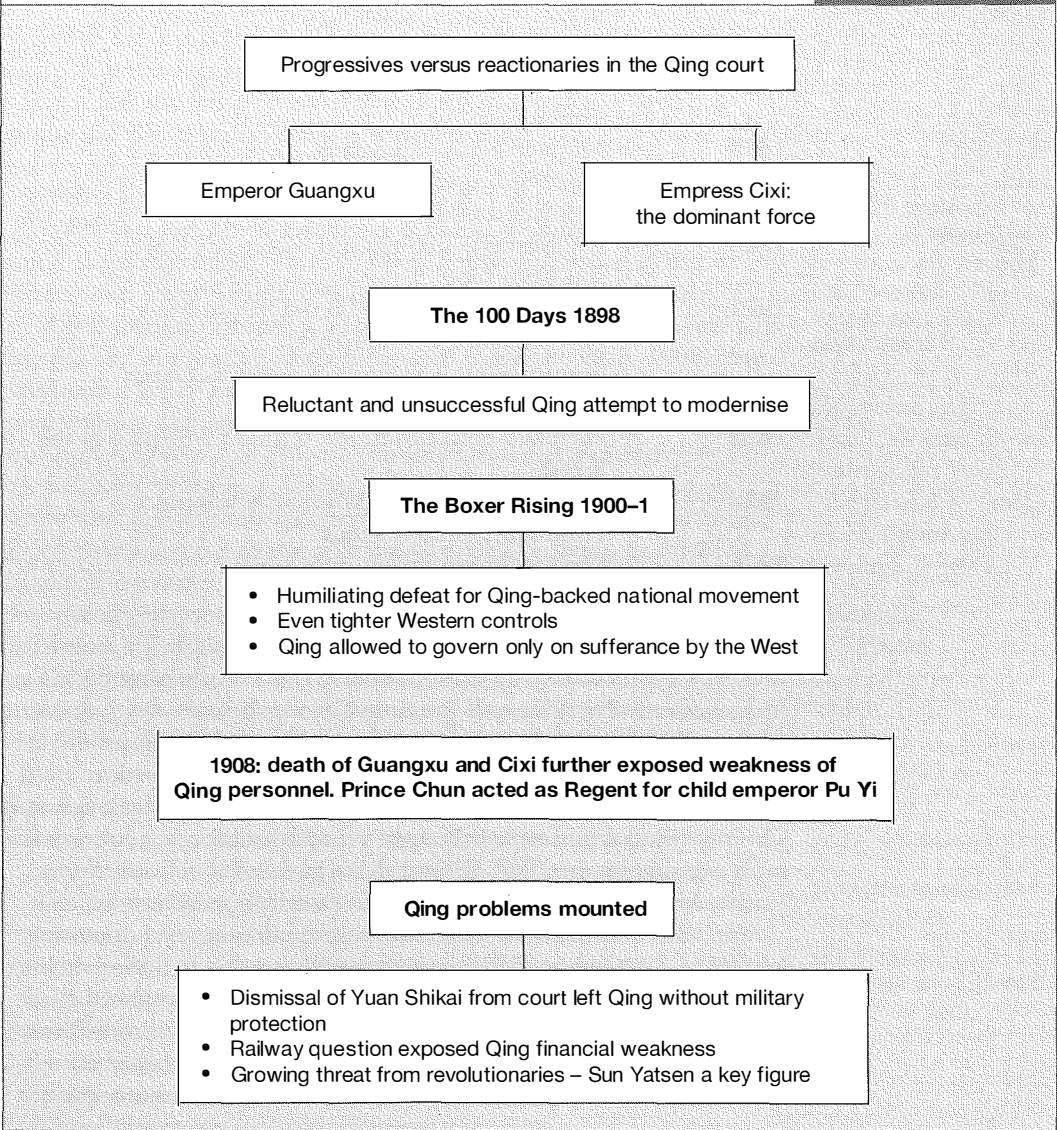
Known as 'the father of the nation', Sun Yatsen was the most influential of the Chinese revolutionaries who sought to regenerate their nation by removing foreign control and reasserting China's independent character and greatness. It was he who first pushed China towards modernity. Although president of the Republic for a brief period in 1912, and leader of the GMD, Sun seldom held real power. His great contribution lay in the field of ideas; it was he who provided a pattern of thought on which other revolutionaries, most notably his protégé, Chiang Kaishek, and the Communist leader, Mao Zedong, developed their political programmes.

Sun, who had been educated abroad, qualifying as a doctor, wished to see China adopt progressive Western principles, such as democracy, nationalism and socialism. His party formalised these aims as the 'Three Principles of the People'. However, so different had the Chinese political tradition been that it is unlikely the Chinese understood or interpreted concepts such as democracy

and representative government in a Western sense. But, for Sun and those he led, this did not matter; the appeal of Western ideas lay in their potency as slogans with which China could begin to reclaim its former dignity. As Sun put it: ‘The merit of an ideology does not lie in its logic; whether it is good or bad depends upon its suitability to a certain circumstance. It is good if it is beneficial to both China and the world; otherwise it is bad.’

The revolutionary plans of which Sun spoke were drawn from his foreign experience and education, which had convinced him that modernisation was possible for China only if it adopted progressive Western political and economic concepts.

**Summary diagram: The last years of Imperial China
1900–11**



Key question

Why did the Qing dynasty collapse in 1911?

Key date

'Double Tenth' rising at Wuhan (Wuchang): 10 October 1911

Key term

'Double Tenth'

The mutiny at Wuhan on 10 October 1911 which began the revolution.

4 | The 1911 Revolution

Such was the decline in support for the Manchu government that the last years of its life between 1908 and 1911 may be fairly described as a revolution waiting to happen. All that was needed was a spark. This was provided on 10 October 1911, known in China as the '**Double Tenth**'. On that date at Wuhan, a city on the River Yangzi (Yangtze) in Hubei (Hupei) province, troops refused to obey an order to suppress a group of dissidents. The incident was of no great moment in itself; local difficulties of this kind had been frequent in recent Chinese history. However, in the charged circumstances of the time, military insubordination took on an added significance. A rash of similar mutinies occurred in neighbouring provinces. Seizing the moment, local political revolutionaries joined with the military in defiance of Beijing. By late November, all but three of China's provinces south of Beijing had declared themselves independent of central government control.

The role of Yuan Shikai

The Manchu dynasty was in crisis. Its survival depended on its mounting a swift and resolute response. But to achieve this Beijing would have to call on loyal commanders in the provinces, and these were hard to find. The Manchu government had lost military control of the localities. This left only one recourse: to dispatch the Beijing army southwards to reimpose the regime's authority. The government appealed to Yuan Shikai, who had earlier been dismissed from court (see page 15), to return and lead the Beijing army against the rebels. Yuan expressed a willingness to do so, but only on his terms. He marched south, easily retaking a number of rebellious regions, but when his army reached Wuhan, the site of the 'Double Tenth', he deliberately held back from seizing it. His aim was to come to terms with the revolutionaries. The truth was that Yuan had no love for the court which had formerly humiliated him. While pretending to organise resistance to the growing opposition, he used his new authority to betray his masters by plotting their overthrow.

Yuan was in no sense a revolutionary; he was motivated as much by a dislike of republicanism as by his vendetta against the Manchus who had humiliated him. He would allow the Manchu dynasty to fall but he had no intention of replacing it with a permanent republic. His ultimate objective was to resurrect the empire with himself as emperor. It was a matter of personal ambition. He saw in the situation an opportunity to use his military strength to lever himself into power.

Events worked to Yuan's advantage. In November, delegates from the rebellious provinces gathered in Nanjing (Nanking) to declare the establishment of a Chinese Republic. Sun Yatsen, who was in the USA and had therefore played no direct part in the events surrounding the 'Double Tenth', was invited to be the Republic's first president. He returned to China and was installed as president on 1 January 1912. It was at this point that Yuan

made a decisive move. Calculating that, without military backing, Sun and the Nationalists would be unable able to create a genuine republic, he offered them a *quid pro quo*; if Sun would stand down and acknowledge him as president, Yuan would use his military strength and political influence in Beijing to establish a workable republican constitution and persuade the Manchu to abdicate without further resistance.

The Qing abdication, February 1912

No clear account of the negotiations between Yuan and the Nationalists has survived, but it seems there were misgivings on both sides. However, once Sun Yatsen, who was very aware of how weak and poorly organised his Nationalist Party was, had expressed his willingness early in February to hand over the presidency to Yuan, the deal was struck. Yuan then presented an ultimatum to the Manchu dynasty: abdicate or be overthrown by force. There were hawks among the courtiers who urged that the dynasty should at least go down fighting, but the regent and Longyu, the **Dowager Empress**, refused to contemplate further bloodshed. On 12 February 1912 Longyu issued a formal abdication decree on behalf of the five-year-old Emperor Pu Yi.

By observing the nature of the people's aspirations we learn the will of heaven ... I have induced the emperor to yield his authority to the country as a whole, determining that there should be a constitutional republic. Yuan Shikai has full powers to organise a provisional Republican government to treat with the people's forces on the methods of achieving unity so that five races, Manchus, Mongols, Chinese, Muslims and Tibetans may continue together in one Chinese Republic with unimpaired territory.

Quid pro quo
Something for something, a balanced exchange.

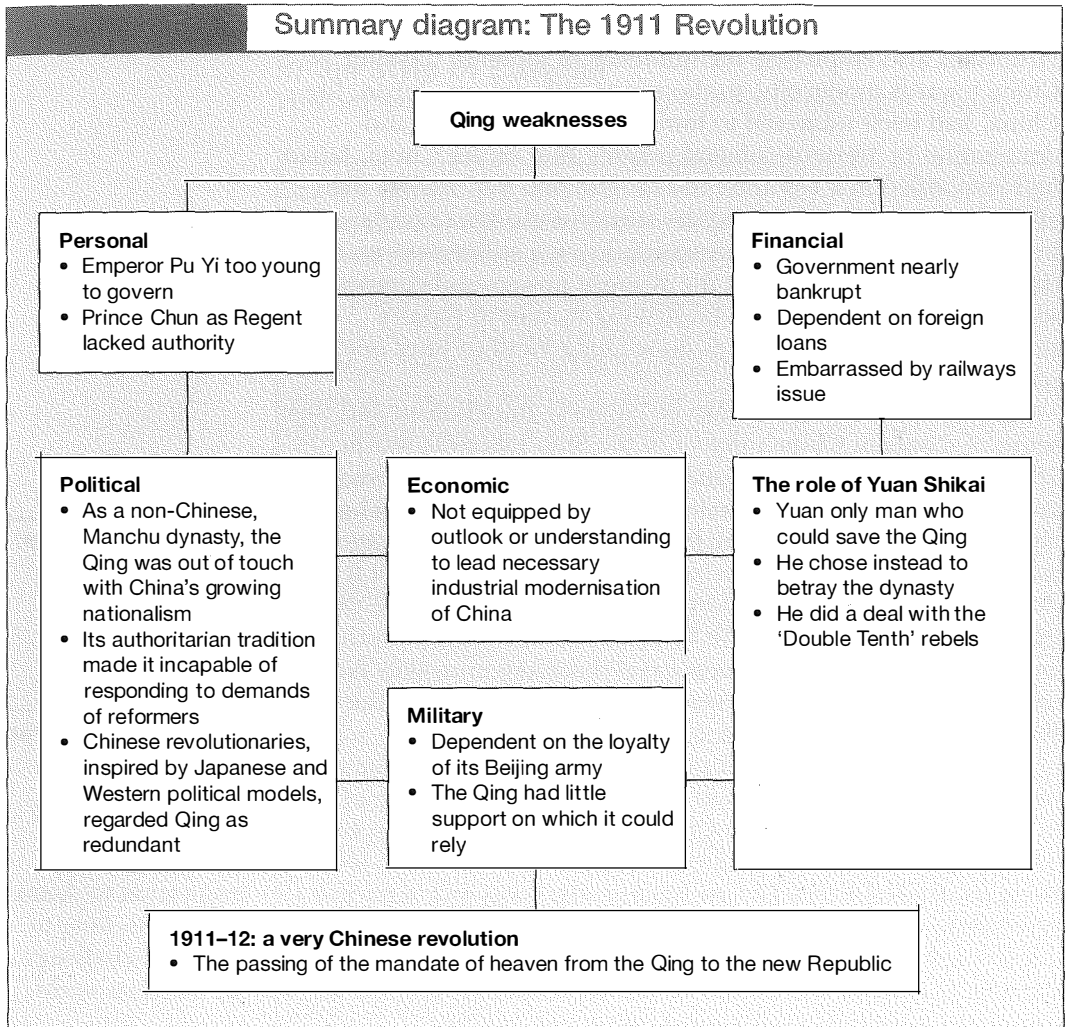
Dowager Empress
The widow of the previous emperor, who kept her royal title as empress.

Key terms

Formal abdication of the Qing dynasty. Chinese Republic established:
12 February 1912

Key date

Summary diagram: The 1911 Revolution



5 | Key Debate

What was the essential character of the Chinese Revolution?

Many scholars now argue that by the first decade of the twentieth century the Chinese imperial system was already doomed. Even had the Manchu government been genuinely prepared to modernise China, it was simply not equipped to undertake such a task. Authoritarian by tradition, it was incapable of making the necessary political adjustment. The further it moved towards reform, the more it revealed the inadequacies of the whole imperial system. Historians in their analysis of the decline and fall of the Manchu now stress that the underlying economic and social changes that had been occurring in China since the intrusion of the West in the 1840s had rendered the imperial system obsolete long before it actually collapsed.

The Japanese model

Historians also emphasise the influence of Japan in pushing China towards modernity. In the nineteenth century, Japan, like China, had been subjected to humiliating interference and domination by Western colonial powers. But, unlike China, Japan had responded in a vigorous and determined way. Rather than allow themselves to remain at the mercy of the West, the Japanese had resolved to remodel their nation in such a thorough manner that it would be able to rival the Western powers and compete with them on equal terms. The striking feature of Japan's reshaping itself was that it was done along Western lines (see page 98).

Notwithstanding their dislike of Japanese imperialism and their sense of shame at China's defeat in the Sino-Japanese war in 1895 (see page 9), the great majority of Chinese revolutionaries and reformers could not avoid seeing Japan as a model. The ambivalence that the Chinese felt towards the West, a mixture of admiration for what it had achieved and repulsion at what it was doing to China, also applied to Japan. The Japanese were the exploiters of China, yet at the same time they were a powerful example of what an Asian people could achieve once they had undertaken reform, as witnessed in their great victory in the **Russo-Japanese war of 1904–5**.

The revolution of 1911–12 was a very Chinese affair. The official statement of abdication declared that the mandate of heaven had passed from the Qing dynasty to the new Republic. The imperial family was granted a subsidy and allowed to remain living in the Forbidden City in Beijing: 1911 was only a partial revolution. What failed to emerge from it was representative government in anything approaching the system that operated in Western Europe or the United States. A number of democratic trappings, including a parliament, appeared, but the **representative principle** was never genuinely adopted. A clean break with the past had not been made. Many of the imperial officials continued to hold their posts, and corruption and factionalism remained the dominant features of Chinese public life.

Efforts have often been made to depict 1911 as a revolution of the **bourgeoisie**, but while China's middle classes may have subsequently benefited from the fall of the Qing dynasty there is little evidence that it was they who initiated the Wuhan rising. That was essentially the work of the military. It is true that the radicals then took the opportunity to join in, but it was on the terms dictated by the military, which remained largely in control of things. A more convincing interpretation of the events of 1911 is to see them as a revolution of the provinces against the centre. The 'Double Tenth' was a triumph of regionalism. It represented a particular phase in the long-running contest between central **autocracy** and local **autonomy**, a contest that was to shape much of China's history during the following 40 years.

Russo-Japanese war:
1904–5

Russo-Japanese war
of 1904–5

The victory of the Japanese over the Russians was an inspiration to Asian peoples seeking to match or challenge the Western world.

Representative principle

The right of people to elect a government and to hold it to account.

Bourgeoisie

Marxist term for the exploiting middle class.

Autocracy

The rule of a single authority, in China the emperor.

Autonomy

Self-government.

Key date

Key terms

2

Warlords, Nationalists and Communists 1912–28

POINTS TO CONSIDER

The collapse of the Qing and the creation of the Republic brought not peace but increased conflict to China. Sun Yatsen's Nationalists had hoped to take power, but they were unable to stop northern-based Yuan Shikai holding power between 1912 and 1916. However, during his five years in office, Yuan solved none of China's basic problems. His death in 1916 ushered in the chaotic period of the warlords during which central government authority became enfeebled. Internal disruption and humiliation at the hands of the foreign powers stimulated an intense nationalism, which culminated in 1919 in a series of demonstrations known as the 4 May Movement. It was also in 1919 that a number of revolutionaries, enchanted by the example of the Russian Revolution in 1917, embraced Marxism. Two years later in 1921, a group of them founded the Chinese Communist Party (CCP). Within three years the Communists had joined the Guomindang (GMD) in a United Front, committed to the defeat of the warlords. These developments are studied under the following headings:

- The rule of Yuan Shikai 1912–16
- The warlord era 1916–27
- The 4 May Movement 1919–25
- The Nationalists under Sun Yatsen 1912–25
- The founding of the Chinese Communist Party 1921
- The GMD–CCP United Front 1924–7

Key dates

1912		Manchu abdication Sun Yatsen ceded presidency of the Republic to Yuan Shikai Guomindang formed
1912–16		Yuan Shikai's rule in China
1913		Yuan negotiated a large international loan for China
1914		Outbreak of the First World War
1915		Japan's 21 Demands
1916	January	Yuan became emperor
	March	Yuan renounced the throne
	June	Death of Yuan

1916–27		Warlord era
1917	June	Failed attempt to restore Qing dynasty
		China joined Allies in the First World War
		Sun Yatsen's GMD government set up in Guangzhou
1918		Sino-Japanese military alliance
1919		4 May Movement began
		Reformation of the GMD
1920		GMD's southern base established in Guangzhou
1920–5		Sun Yatsen leader of the GMD
1921	July	Creation of the Chinese Communist Party
1923		Pact of friendship between Moscow and the GMD
1924		Founding of the Whampoa Military Academy
		USSR's seizure of Outer Mongolia
		GMD–CCP United Front
1925		Death of Sun Yatsen
		30 May Incident
1926–8		Northern Expedition

1 | The Rule of Yuan Shikai 1912–16

Yuan becomes president

Soon after the Manchu abdication, Sun Yatsen's Alliance League declared itself to be a **parliamentary party** and adopted the name Guomindang (GMD). Aware of what little power he and his party had in the north of China, Sun conceded the presidency to Yuan Shikai. This was not an act of generosity. Sun's hope was that Yuan would come south to **Nanjing** to set up a new government. Sun calculated that once Yuan was away from his power base in Beijing it would be much easier to control him and oblige him to honour his commitment to the Republic. It was precisely for that reason that Yuan was determined to stay put. His authority was in the north and he was not prepared to weaken it by an ill-judged move. A Nanjing delegation sent to Beijing to provide him with a presidential escort for his journey south had to return without him.

The Republicans under Sun Yatsen could do little to restrict Yuan at this stage. Their influence was limited to parts of southern China, whereas the centre of government and administration was in the north where Yuan held sway. The plain fact was that Sun Yatsen's Republicans had been outmanoeuvred. They could, of course, have refused to recognise Yuan's presidency. But this would have been no more than a gesture. Whatever the GMD's claims to be a national party, they were a

← **Key question**
What problems confronted Yuan Shikai as president of the Republic?

Manchu abdication:
1912

Sun Yatsen ceded presidency of the Republic to Yuan Shikai: 1912

Parliamentary party
One willing to work within the Republican constitution.

Nanjing
One of the GMD's major strongholds in central China.

Key dates

Key terms

Guomindang formed: 1912

Yuan Shikai's rule in China: 1912–16

Yuan negotiated a large international loan for China: 1913

Secret society

An organisation which restricts its membership, conceals its activities from the public and often acts outside the law.

Consortium

A group of financiers drawn from France, Britain, Germany, Russia, Japan and the USA.

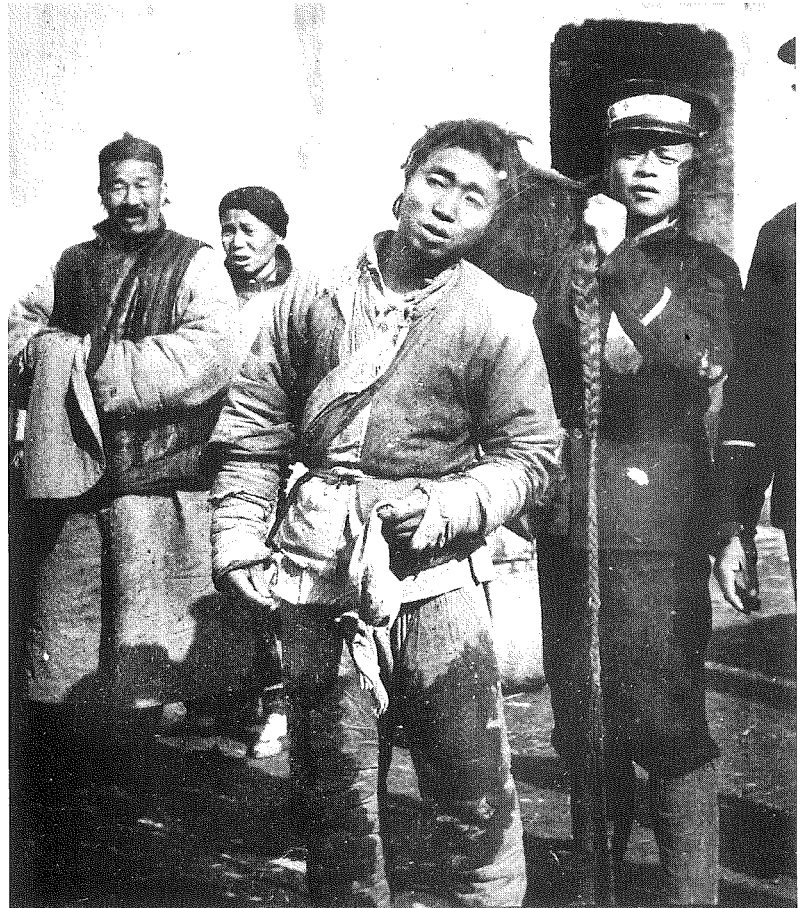
Dollar diplomacy

America's insistence on free trade and fair exchange in international commercial and financial dealings.

regional influence only. Moreover, unused to open political activity, they continued to operate as the **secret society** they had been before the revolution. This was evident in their collaboration with the underworld gangs in China's cities. As Sun Yatsen and some of his more astute supporters acknowledged, the GMD's naivety and lack of experience of democratic politics restricted them to a minor role in the early years of the Republic.

China's foreign loan 1913

Yuan was strong enough to overcome criticism and resistance from the GMD. A striking example occurred in 1913 when Yuan, desperate for means to finance his government, completed the negotiation of a large foreign loan. To secure the money, Yuan Shikai had to accept the demands of an international banking **Consortium** which had been originally set up in 1911 in the final days of the Qing dynasty. The USA had been instrumental in the formation of the Consortium as part of its **dollar diplomacy**, a modification of the open door doctrine (see page 10). To further America's financial interests, US President Taft had personally contacted the Chinese government in 1909 to urge them to accept increased American investment.



After the abdication of the Qing, Republican troops went round cutting off the pigtails of Chinese men. What was this act meant to symbolise?

In 1913, the Consortium eventually offered a loan of \$100 million (equivalent to £25 million), but on terms that required China to pledge its future tax revenues as **security** and to place the administration of Chinese finances in the hands of foreign controllers. Among other concessions wrung from the Republican government was its recognition of Britain's control of Tibet and Russia's of Outer Mongolia. It was clear that Yuan's successful negotiation of the loan had been achieved only at the price of a further loss of Chinese independence. Equally significant was Japan's use of its newly won influence with the Western powers to insist that it be included as one of the Consortium's members. This was further proof both of Japan's superiority over China and of the West's acceptance of this as a basic fact of international relations.

The Second Revolution 1913

Republicans bitterly condemned the severe terms of the loan and accused Yuan of being as guilty of compromising China's sovereignty as the Qing had been. In 1913, in an attempted **Second Revolution**, the GMD tried to organise armed resistance in a number of the southern provinces. But Yuan rode the storm. Ignoring the GMD's **impeachment** of him for exceeding his presidential powers, Yuan either dismissed the military commanders in the key provinces or bribed them into staying loyal to him. His army then rapidly crushed such resistance as remained. It was clear that the Republican parties in China were too ill-organised to mount an effective opposition.

Disappointed, although not altogether surprised, by the failure of the Second Revolution, Sun Yatsen fled to Japan in November 1913. He explained the ineffectual showing of the GMD by pointing out that unless the GMD reorganised itself as a disciplined, centrally directed, body it would be unable to exercise real power in China. It was in Japan that Sun Yatsen now began restructuring his party along these lines. However, for the moment, Yuan Shikai appeared to be in control in China. Having overcome the resistance in the provinces, he sought to consolidate his authority by a series of restrictive measures, which included:

- the permanent suspension of parliament
- the outlawing of a number of parties, including the GMD
- the abolition of the regional assemblies, which had been created under the Manchus and incorporated into the 1912 Republican constitution
- the bringing of tax revenues under central control
- the requirement that local civilian administrators were directly answerable to Beijing.

Unsurprisingly, such steps excited further opposition in the provinces. Despite Yuan's success so far in imposing himself on Republican China, there was a limit to the number of times he could enforce his will. His strength was relative. It relied on the willingness of generals in the provinces to support him. It was

Security

An agreement in 1913 that if China defaulted on its loan repayments its tax revenue would be forfeit.

Second Revolution

An unsuccessful attempt in 1913 by the GMD to remove Yuan Shikai.

Impeachment

Formal censure of Yuan Shikai by the Republican parliament.

also, as the negotiated loan of 1913 indicated, dependent on his ability to raise enough capital to run his government. His financial needs had already forced him to borrow heavily, a move that had left China with crippling foreign debts. Significantly, a key member of the international consortium that had advanced the loan had been Japan. It was that country that in 1915 seized the moment to emphasise its superiority over China.

Japan's 21 Demands 1915

The outbreak of the First World War in 1914 had provided Japan with further opportunity to strengthen its grip on China. Both the Japanese and Chinese had good reasons for offering to help the Allies: each hoped to gain the territories which Germany held in the Far East. In response to Britain's appeal for naval assistance, Japan actively supported the Allies from August 1914 onwards. China, however, did not enter the war until 1917. This gave Japan an obvious precedence over China in the eyes of the Allies. The struggle in Europe also gave Japan a freer hand to interfere in China while the Western powers were preoccupied with their own war effort. In 1915 the Japanese government presented Yuan Shikai with the '21 Demands', a set of impositions that, if fully accepted, would have destroyed China's independence. The following extracts indicate the character of the Japanese demands:

The Chinese government engages to give full assent to all matters upon which the Japanese government may hereafter agree with the German government relating to the disposition of all rights, interests, and concessions which Germany possesses in relation to the Province of Shandong.

The Chinese central government shall employ influential Japanese as advisers in political, financial, and military affairs.

The police departments of the important places (in China) shall be jointly administered by Japanese and Chinese.

China shall purchase from Japan a fixed amount of munitions of war (say 50 per cent or more of what is needed by the Chinese).

The Chinese appealed to the Western powers for support but received little help. The USA accepted that Japan's **territorial contiguity** with China entitled it to the Chinese areas it claimed. Britain was disturbed by those demands which it considered would result in too great an extension of Japanese naval power in the Far East, but, once Japan had shrewdly withdrawn those particular clauses, the British insisted that China accept the remainder. Yuan, who, for political and financial reasons, wanted to keep on good terms with Japan and the West, finally gave in to the demands.

Yuan's surrender created a violent outburst of anger among the Chinese. Demonstrations and strikes occurred widely in Beijing and other provincial cities. Significantly, the resentment was

Key dates

Outbreak of the First World War: 1914

Japan's 21 Demands: 1915

China joined Allies in the First World War: 1917

Key term

Territorial contiguity
Geographical proximity.

directed as much against the new Republican government as against Japan. All the main sections of the Chinese community currently dissatisfied with the Republic – students, traders, lawyers, teachers and even some local officials – came together in open and spontaneous defiance. Yuan’s capitulation to the Japanese had further weakened his position as president and had damaged the reputation of the young Republic.

Yuan becomes emperor 1916

Yuan’s basic problem was that while he was certainly more powerful than any single group or interest in China, his authority was never absolute. It was his awareness of this that pushed him towards the idea that he had long held of resurrecting the monarchy with himself as monarch. If he were to become emperor, he would command a degree of obedience that he could not hope to obtain merely as president. In response to what he claimed to be a spontaneous appeal from the people, but which, in fact, had been organised by his supporters at his prompting, Yuan announced late in 1915 that for the sake of the nation he would restore the imperial title and accept it for himself. On New Year’s Day 1916, he was ceremonially enthroned as emperor.

It was a vainglorious affair. Rather than unite the nation and make his rule more acceptable, Yuan’s self-elevation to emperor aroused fiercer and more determined opposition. A succession of provinces declared their independence from Beijing and rose in revolt. More serious still was the defection of the generals in Yuan’s own army. For some time they had been increasingly resentful of Yuan’s dictatorial and dismissive treatment of them and they informed him they would not serve him as emperor. No commander can survive without the loyalty of his officers. Seeing the writing on the wall, Yuan renounced the throne in March 1916. Three months later he died from stomach cancer.

←

Key question

What did Yuan Shikai hope to gain from re-creating the imperial system?

Yuan became emperor: January 1916

Yuan renounced the throne: March 1916

Death of Yuan: June 1916

Key dates

Profile: Yuan Shikai 1859–1916

- 1859 – Born in Henan province
- 1876 – First of his 10 marriages, during which he fathered 32 children
- 1876 – Failed to gain entry to civil service, developed a military career
- 1885–90 – Appointed Chinese imperial representative in Korea
- 1894 – His diplomacy failed to prevent Sino-Japanese war
- 1895 – Recalled to China, thereby avoiding personal responsibility for China's defeat
 - Appointed commander of the New Imperial Army
- 1898 – Played an ambiguous role in attempted anti-Qing coup
- 1908 – Dismissed from court
- 1908–11 – Plotted revenge on Qing
- 1911 – Following Wuhan rising, appointed prime minister of Qing government
 - Did a deal with the rebels and called on the Qing to abdicate
- 1912 – Became president of the Chinese Republic
- 1913 – Began repressive measures against GMD
 - Negotiated with international financiers for a large loan for China
- 1914 – Attempted to remove all democratic limits on his power
- 1915 – Obligated to accept Japan's 21 Demands
- 1916 – Installed as emperor on New Year's Day
 - Abandoned imperial title in March
 - Died from cancer in June

Yuan Shikai was undoubtedly a self-seeking opportunist but he should not be dismissed simply as a careerist who subordinated China's needs to his own wish for power. Modern historians, while accepting that he was motivated by personal ambition, point out that he did attempt to tackle China's most pressing needs. Despite being eventually overwhelmed by the problems he faced, Yuan's attempts at administrative and economic reform had merit. Arguably, his struggle to impose himself on the localities was a recognition on his part of a fundamental problem; unless there was an effective restoration of strong central authority, China stood little chance of developing the cohesion that would enable it to grow into a modern nation state. Yuan has been aptly called a 'modernising conservative'.

There is also the consideration that, though Yuan Shikai had his faults, so, too, did his Republican opponents. The Republic that replaced the Manchus was not well served by the mixture of naivety and corruption that passed for politics in that period. After Yuan's death, events were to show that none of the individuals or parties involved in the early Republic had any real answers to China's constitutional and political problems. Whatever Yuan Shikai's failings may have been, he had represented some degree of authority and order. With his passing there was no one capable of preventing China from sliding into further confusion and fragmentation.

Summary diagram: The rule of Yuan Shikai 1912–16

Yuan's objective: ultimately to become emperor

Yuan's methods

- Outmanoeuvred Sun Yatsen and GMD to become president
- Employed military force and presidential powers to crush the 'Second Revolution'
- Negotiated international loan to meet Republic's financial needs
- Accepted Japan's '21 Demands'
- Became emperor in 1916

Yuan's achievement

- Created a degree of stability in troubled times
- Introduced administrative reforms

Yuan's legacy

- China's indebtedness to foreign powers
- China's subservience to Japan
- China still mired in political in-fighting

2 | The Warlord Era 1916–27

On Yuan's death a confused period of in-fighting among Beijing army commanders followed, from which General **Duan Qirui** (Tuan Chi-jui) emerged as premier. Although his authority was very limited since central rule was breaking down in China, he attempted to crush his opponents by force. This resulted in violent clashes on the streets of Beijing. Hoping to exploit the disturbed atmosphere, General Zhang Xun (Chang Hsun) marched on the capital in June 1917 with the aim of restoring the Qing dynasty. Zhang's efforts ended in confusion and failure and Duan Qirui retained office as premier.

Absence of strong central government

The disorder and vying for power at the top that followed Yuan's death in 1916 clearly illustrated that central authority in China had become enfeebled. The Republican government under Duan Qirui continued nominally to function in Beijing, but it exercised little real power. It was split between rival factions, the most prominent being the Anhui, the Fengtien and the Chihli, groups named after the region from which they came. Although they styled themselves parties, none of them represented a clearly defined principle and they were barely distinguishable from each other. They were no more than cliques bidding for power. While the forms of central government remained intact, it was evident that the Republic was beginning to fragment.

The weakness of the Republican government was most evident in its difficulty in maintaining an army strong and loyal enough

Key question

Why did China decline into warlordism after Yuan Shikai's death?

Warlord era: 1916–27

Failed attempt to restore the Qing dynasty: June 1917

Duan Qirui
(1865–1936)

Prime minister of the Republic 1916–20.

Key dates

Key figure

to impose central authority on the provinces. It became impossible to sustain civilian government in these areas. As a direct consequence, the local regions fell under the domination of what were, in effect, a series of private armies, whose commanders-in-chief assumed civil as well as military authority. The power of the sword predominated. Within their own provinces, the military commanders or **warlords** became autocrats who administered their own legal, financial and taxation systems and invariably became a terror to the local people. The dominance of the warlords for so long in so many parts of China was a commentary on the Republic's inability to establish strong central government. Rather than create political stability, the Republic had produced a political vacuum which the warlords had chosen to fill.

Key question

What were the chief characteristics of warlord rule?

Warlord rule

Two broad phases are identifiable in the warlord years, 1916–20 and 1920–7. The warlords of the earlier period achieved their position largely by default; that is to say, they happened to be holding provincial military governorships at the time when the central authority of the Republican government in Beijing began to break down. They tended to be strongly reactionary in outlook. Although there was continuity after 1920, many warlords holding power well into the 1920s and beyond, there was also a tendency after that date for new military commanders to appear who did not owe their positions to previous Republican appointment. They were opportunists who seized power knowing that the central government was incapable of stopping them.

The common military character of their rule has sometimes led to the warlords' being regarded as a single movement, but in reality they represented a wide variety of attitudes and aspirations. The following examples suggest how different the warlords were from each other:

Key terms

Warlords

Powerful local generals who exploited the weakness of the central government to set themselves up as rulers in their own areas.

Queue

The traditional pigtail worn by men in the Manchu era.

CCP

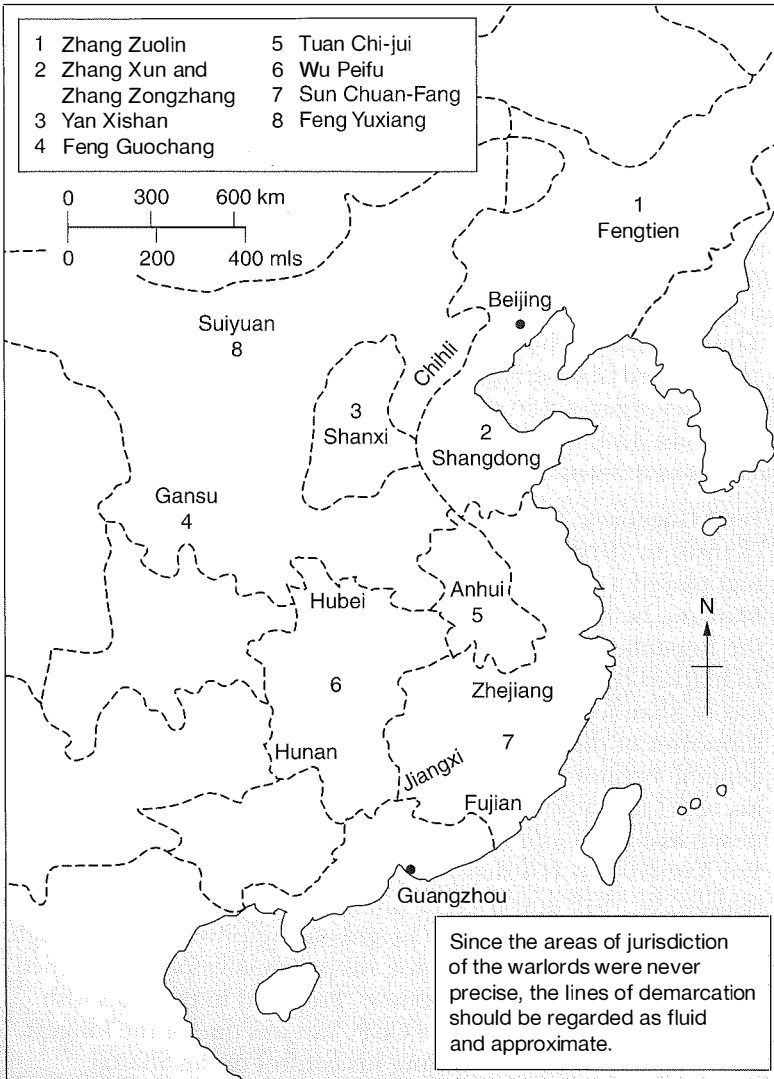
The Chinese Communist Party.

- Feng Guochang (Feng Kuo-chang), who took control of Gansu (Kansu) in 1916, had also been one of Yuan's lieutenants and had played a central role in the 1911 rebellion against the Manchu; he had subsequently risen to become vice-president of the Republic.
- In marked contrast was Zhang Xun (Chang Hsun), whose base was in Shandong (Shantung) province. He was a staunch supporter of the Manchu dynasty and was styled the 'pigtailed general' because he continued to wear the **queue** as a mark of his belief in traditional Manchu forms. In 1917 Zhang made an unsuccessful attempt to restore Pu Yi to the imperial throne.
- Yan Xishan (Yen Hsi-shan) had become powerful in Shanxi (Shansi) by 1916 and tried to run the province as a separate region avoiding conflict with neighbouring provinces. Although he was a tough military dictator, his progressive policies earned him the title the 'model governor'. Prepared to do deals with both the Nationalists and the **CCP**, Yan was one of the longest surviving warlords, maintaining his control of the Shanxi

region from the first year of the Republic in 1912 until the defeat of the Nationalists in 1949.

Among the warlords who took power after 1920 were:

- Feng Yuxiang (Feng Yu-hsiang), known as the ‘Christian general’, became celebrated for baptising his troops *en masse* with a hosepipe; spraying them with water while shouting the baptismal prayer through a megaphone. Feng had risen from an illiterate peasant background in Sichuan to become a self-taught upholder of a bizarre mixture of Confucian, Christian and Buddhist teachings. A strikingly individual feature of Feng’s rule was his conviction that the province should be governed by moral values. He would not tolerate improper behaviour by his troops and made them sing improving hymns in place of the coarse marching songs they customarily bawled.
- As different from Feng as it was possible to be was Zhang Zongzhang (Chang Tsung-chang). Zhang was a depraved



Warlord China.

bandit who fought his way to power in Shandong province by 'splitting melons', his jokey euphemism for slicing open his opponents' heads with a sword. He took a pathological delight in terrorising the population and destroying the resources of the province.

Whatever their separate aims and individual quirks, the warlords did have one common characteristic: none of them was willing to give up his private army or submit to outside authority. As long as they ruled, China would stay divided. Moreover, in spite of the rare warlord who had genuine concern for the people of the region he controlled, the prevailing pattern of warlord rule was oppression and terror, as expressed in this lament of one of the victims:

Poor people of Sichuan, for 10 years now we have suffered the scourge of militarism, more destructive than the floods, more destructive than savage beasts. Will it continue until not a single man, not a single hut remains in this wretched land? Ah! These military governors and their officers! We must have soldiers, people say, so that the country will be strong. We must have armies to protect ourselves from foreigners. And the armies are continually recruiting men. And the people become poorer and poorer! ... where an army has passed, nothing grows but brambles. This is the case with us, where armies pass through again and again. Our situation has become intolerable.

Key question
What was the political effect in China of warlord rule?

The impact of warlordism on Chinese politics

Warlord authority was inadvertently strengthened by the Republic's political divisions. The competition for power between Sun Yatsen's Nationalist government in Guangzhou and the Republican government in Beijing meant that neither was strong enough to impose itself on the warlords. Indeed, the reverse happened. To maintain such authority as they had in their respective regions the Nationalists and the Republicans were obliged to compromise with the more powerful warlords and do a series of deals with them, sometimes appealing to them for military assistance.

Although, the GMD would later become the internationally acknowledged government of China, there was little in the early 1920s to distinguish the Nationalists from the other warlord groups. For obvious expedient reasons, foreign governments in seeking to protect their interests tended to liaise with those Chinese leaders who, regardless of their legal status, seemed to have genuine power. One prominent example was Wu Peifu, the warlord of Hubei and Hunan provinces, who defied the authority of Sun Yatsen's Nationalist government in Guangzhou. Another was Zhang Zuolin (Chang Tso-lin), warlord in the Beijing area, whose power was such that it was he rather than the nominal Republican government in Beijing whom foreign diplomats chose to recognise.

The warlord record

Despite its manifest tyranny, there were some positive features to warlord rule. Advances were made on a number of fronts.

Economic

Some of the warlords had modern ideas regarding agriculture and industry. Zhang Zuolin adopted an industrial development programme with the specific intention of preventing a Japanese economic takeover of Manchuria. Yan Xishan introduced industrial training schemes and endeavoured to improve the quality and range of local services in Shanxi province.

Political

The warlord period was important for the reaction it produced. The disunity and distress that characterised the time intensified nationalist feelings in China. This produced a solidarity among Chinese **radicals** and gave direction and purpose to a revolutionary movement that otherwise might have continued to dissipate itself in factionalism and local rivalries.

Cultural

It was no accident that China's **literary and intellectual renaissance** reached its high point in the 1920s – the worst years of warlord rule. As evident in the 4 May Movement (see page 37), the humiliation of the nation at the hands of warlords and foreigners gave the Chinese a common sense of grievance. It was this that eventually checked the fragmentation of Republican China by providing a cause around which the Chinese could unite. Ultimately, the two major revolutionary parties, the GMD and the CCP, would engage in a long and violent struggle for supremacy, but what united them initially was their shared resentment against warlord rule.

Radicals

Those Chinese who believed that sweeping political and social changes were necessary if China was to be truly modernised.

Literary and intellectual renaissance

In the 1920s, there was a huge increase among Chinese writers and artists of works dealing with China's national identity and character.

Key terms

Summary diagram: The warlord era 1916–27

Circumstances encouraging warlordism

- Weakness of central government after 1916
- Presence in China of powerful individual military leaders
- Rivalry between Republican government in the north and the GMD in the south
- Foreign readiness to liaise with influential warlords

Common features of warlord rule

- Power of individual warlords in their own regions
- Collaboration of political parties with the warlords
- Suppression and suffering of people in the warlord areas

Some positive results of warlordism

- Industrial and economic reforms in certain areas
- Intensifying of resolve among opponents of warlord rule to create a lawful, civil society
- Anti-warlord grievances stimulated an intellectual renaissance

Key question

In what sense was the 4 May Movement an expression of Chinese nationalism?

Key date

4 May Movement began: 1919

3 | The 4 May Movement 1919–25

The term, the 4 May Movement, refers to the sustained feeling of resentment in China against Japan in particular and the imperialist occupiers in general. This reaction was most notable among China's intellectuals, who, disillusioned by the failure of the 1911 Revolution and the Republic to achieve real advances for the country, were further dismayed by the refusal of the West in 1919 to extend the principle of **self-determination** to China. The 4 May Movement was of central importance in Chinese politics between 1919 and 1927 and played its part in preparing the ground for the reorganisation of the GMD in 1919 and the creation of the CCP in 1921. It took its name from the first day of the violent demonstration in Beijing, which followed the news of China's humiliation at the Paris Peace Conference of 1919 (see page 38).

Key question

How was China regarded by the West?

Key terms

Self-determination

The principle that nations were entitled to shape and plan their own development free from outside interference and direction.

Tokyo

Japan's capital city and centre of government.

Vassal state

A nation effectively under the control of another state.

Western attitudes towards China 1914–19

To understand how China came to be humiliated it is necessary to examine the attitude of the Allied powers – France, Russia and Britain – towards China between 1914 and 1919. At the start of the European struggle in 1914, the Allies had urged both China and Japan to declare war on Germany. Japan did so, but then put pressure on the Beijing government to delay its entry into the war. The Japanese motive was to prevent China's improving its international standing. In addition, Japan obtained from the British a secret promise that they would not press for China's entry without first consulting **Tokyo**. Armed with this guarantee, Japan then, in the first month of the war, seized the German territories in China, including Shandong province with its key port of Qingdao. At the time, the Japanese declared that these possessions would eventually be returned to China, but the emptiness of that promise became evident in 1915 when Japan's notorious 21 Demands threatened to reduce China to a Japanese **vassal state** (see page 29).

Britain's reluctance to take China's side at this point arose from its concern to avoid offending Japan as a major war ally. By 1915 it was becoming clear that the European war would be a protracted one. Britain and the Allies simply could not afford to risk losing Japan's support. However, it was this same reason, the mounting demands of the war effort, that led the Allies in 1917 to renew their appeal to China to join the hostilities against Germany. Up to that year the Chinese had maintained their neutrality. If the Chinese were to be persuaded to join the war they would have to be convinced that an Allied victory would guarantee their recovery of the disputed territories that Japan had seized.

US involvement

The Americans played a key role at this juncture. Having themselves joined the war against Germany in April 1917, they urged China to do the same. The USA suggested to the Chinese

that if they fought for the Allies this would earn them a place at the post-war conference table where they would be in a position to claim their rights. Many Chinese, including Sun Yatsen and the GMD, remained unconvinced by this American analysis. Nevertheless, the Beijing government judged that the USA, which under its president, Woodrow Wilson, had entered the war avowedly 'to make the world safe for democracy', was more to be trusted than the European Allies. Strengthened by a substantial US loan, China formally declared war on Germany in August 1917.

This time Japan raised no objection, not because it now accepted China's territorial rights but because it had already obtained formal commitments from the Western Allies that they would continue to recognise the priority of Japanese claims to German possessions in China. Britain, France, Russia and Italy had all given secret pledges to support Japan in any post-war settlement.

More significant still, the Chinese had already been betrayed from within. Duan Qirui, China's premier and chief representative in the negotiations with the Western powers, had attempted to win Japanese backing so as to strengthen his position as head of the Beijing government in the uncertain period that followed Yuan Shikai's death. In return for Japanese loans and military aid, Duan agreed in secret talks that his government would fully recognise Japan's special privileges in China. This was extended into a formal Sino-Japanese military alliance early in 1918, a one-sided agreement that simply formalised Japan's superiority over China in the way that previous 'unequal treaties' had (see page 7).

Sino-Japanese military alliance: 1918

Key date

The Allied treatment of China during and after the war

After entering the European war China played no direct role in the fighting, but its contribution to the Allied effort was far from insignificant. Over 150,000 Chinese volunteers went to the Western front where, in addition to working in munitions factories, they dug graves and maintained 90 miles of Anglo-French trenches. The Chinese believed that such endeavour would be rewarded by favourable attention being given to their claims in the post-war settlement. However, the Allies saw the Chinese as mere **coolies**, who, when the war ended on the Western Front in November 1918, were made to stay in Europe as labourers clearing up war damage.

The disdain of the Allies became even more evident at the **Versailles Conference**. Late in April 1919, the victorious Allies, gathered at Versailles in France, dismissively informed the Chinese that Germany's concessionary rights in Shandong province were not to be returned to China but were to be transferred instead to Japan. This was a direct reneging on the promise made to Duan Qirui by the Allies in the previous year, the commitment which had finally persuaded China to enter the

Coolies

Used disparagingly to denote the contempt many in the West felt towards the Chinese as perceived inferiors.

Versailles Conference

The meeting of the victor nations at Versailles in France in 1919 to draw up the peace treaty and reshape the map of Europe.

Key terms

First World War on their side in 1917. The Chinese delegation refused to accept the settlement but were powerless to prevent its becoming part of the Versailles Treaty. Their protests were simply ignored. The Chinese had gone to Versailles hoping to achieve three main results:

- the return of Shandong to China
- the withdrawal of the foreign concessions in China
- the cancellation of Japan's 21 Demands of 1915.

In the event, they had gained none of these. When the news of the Versailles betrayal reached China there was an explosion of anger. How intense the Chinese sense of nationalism could be when outraged had been shown in 1915 in the disturbances that had followed Yuan Shikai's acceptance of Japan's 21 Demands. China's major cities now experienced the same reaction. Chinese protesters took to the streets, to vent their rage against the Allies, the Japanese, and also against the Chinese government that had been unable to prevent the humiliation at Versailles. Government ministers were physically attacked and anti-Japanese boycotts were organised in Beijing and Shanghai. Within a month the protests had spread to 20 provinces and demonstrations and strikes occurred in over 100 towns and cities. The Chinese government delayed its formal ending of the war with Germany until September 1919 and it was another four years before China signed a separate treaty with Germany. But this gesture of independence failed to mollify the protesters. A Western observer described the turmoil in Beijing:

All the educational institutions struck, formed processions and marched around the city. They intended to hold a mass meeting in the central park, but the police and military drove them back and made numerous arrests. This was the greatest mistake the government could have made, for if the students had been allowed to hold the meeting they would not have had the opportunity of making themselves martyrs.

During the next few days excited students could be seen in small parties in every street, working themselves into a state of delirium by telling the passers-by of the indignities being thrust upon them through the fault of the pro-Japanese members of the Cabinet, whom they rightly stated were nothing more than the paid agents of Japan.

This movement is the strongest move of its kind that the Chinese have made. Not only has it spread all over China, but in Australia, Singapore, Hong Kong, Vladivostok, and even as far as America. Already it has caused great alarm in Japan. This boycott is different to all others. On previous occasions it has been the Chinese merchants who have been the mainstay of such attempts, but this time it is the consumer who is carrying it on.



A gathering of 4 May protesters in front of the Tiananmen Gate in Beijing. Their banners bear such slogans as 'Reject the Versailles Treaty', 'Down with China's Internal Traitors', 'Destroy the 21 Demands', 'No Trade with Japan'. In what way do the slogans illustrate the feelings of the demonstrators?

The passion and purpose of the demonstrators was typified in a Shanghai incident in which one of the student protesters ran out of red paint while writing the slogan 'Give us back **Qingdao**' in large characters on a white sheet. He bit into his arm at the elbow and tore the flesh away down to his wrist. He then wiped his brush along his bleeding arm so that he could finish the banner with his own blood. Onlookers applauded.

Qingdao

A major port in Shandong province, also the birthplace of Confucius.

Key term

Longer term consequences

The most significant aspect of the 4 May reaction was the response of Chinese students and intellectuals. The radical thinkers in the universities turned even more eagerly to revolutionary theory to justify their resistance. What the 4 May Movement did in the 1920s was to give a sense of direction to radicals and revolutionaries who regarded the ejection of the foreigner as a necessary stage in China's regeneration. Anti-Western and anti-Japanese demonstrations continued to occur throughout the early 1920s. The authorities managed to contain the unrest but what they could not control were the growing doubts about the ability of the Republican government to represent China's true interests. It was such doubts that provided fertile opportunities for radicals to spread their propaganda.

Summary diagram: The 4 May Movement 1919–25

Long-term causes

- Chinese resentment at subjection to foreigners
- Chinese disillusion with the Republic's record
- Allies' disdainful dismissal of Chinese war effort

Immediate occasion

The rejection by the Allies at Versailles of:

- China's claim for restoration of its territories
- The failure to extend the self-determination principle to the Chinese people
- China's demand for the abrogation of Japan's 21 Demands

Long-term consequences

- Encouragement of radical and revolutionary ideas in China
- Strengthened the GMD
- Prepared the ground for Chinese Communism

Features

- Outrage among Chinese nationalists and progressives
- Fierce anti-foreigner feelings
- Particular anger against Japan
- Frustration with impotent Republican government

Key question

In what ways did Sun Yatsen shape the GMD in this period?

4 | The Nationalists (GMD) Under Sun Yatsen 1912–25

The intense patriotism that the 4 May Movement stimulated proved of major benefit to Sun Yatsen. Disappointed by his failure to make the best of the 1911–12 revolution (see page 28), Sun had resolved to reform and reinvigorate the GMD. Debarred from China for much of the period 1912–20, he spent a large part of the time in Japan reorganising his party with Japanese support. It is interesting to note that not all Japanese were happy with their country's domination of China. A small but significant minority believed that the genuine liberation of Asia from foreign control required that Japan and China should act together in a common anti-Western policy. As a practical expression of that belief, 600 Japanese students had gone to China in 1911–12 to join the revolution there.

However, the collapse of the Manchu dynasty made little immediate difference to China's subordination to Japan. The rivalry between Yuan Shikai and Sun Yatsen and the weakness of the early Republic left the Tokyo government unimpressed by China's efforts at recovery. The notion of mutual Sino-Japanese interests did not entirely disappear but the prevailing view in Tokyo was that the chronic weakness of China called for a policy of exploitation not co-operation. Nevertheless, Japan continued to be a haven for exiled Chinese revolutionaries.

The Guangzhou government

Sun returned to China in 1917 and set up a rival government in Guangzhou (Canton) to challenge the Republican regime in Beijing. Initially, he had only limited success in Guangzhou and moved north to Shanghai where, in the wake of the 4 May Movement, he rallied sufficient support to be able to declare in 1919 that the Guomindang had been reformed. One of Sun's major achievements was in persuading many **expatriate** Chinese to contribute funds to his newly formed party. A year later Sun returned with renewed hope to Guangzhou in his home province of Guangdong. This time his confidence was justified. Many of his former revolutionary colleagues, who had been lukewarm towards him since his defeat by Yuan Shikai in 1912, now pledged their support. Guangzhou thus became in 1920 the major southern base of the GMD. It was there during the final five years of his life that Sun developed the ideas and organisation that enabled the GMD to become the dominant force in Chinese politics for the next quarter of a century.

The 'Three Principles of the People'

It was in a speech at Guangzhou in 1923 that Sun Yatsen formally enunciated the political ideology that he had developed during his years as a revolutionary. He spoke of this in terms of the 'Three Principles of the People', which, he claimed, were inspired by US President Abraham Lincoln's **Gettysburg address**. Sun described his three principles as 'national sovereignty, democracy, people's welfare' and explained what he meant by these:

National sovereignty: Today our urgent task is to restore our lost nationalism and to use the force of our 400 million people to avenge the wrongs of the world. Only when imperialism is eliminated can there be peace for mankind. To achieve this goal, we should first rejuvenate Chinese nationalism and restore China's position as a **sovereign state**.

Democracy: There is a difference between the European and Chinese concept of freedom. While the Europeans struggle for personal freedom, we struggle for national freedom. As far as we are concerned, personal freedom should never be too excessive. In fact, in order to win national freedom, we should not hesitate to sacrifice our personal freedom.

People's welfare: What is the basic fact about China? It is the grinding poverty of the Chinese people.

Solving the problem of people's livelihood does not stop with the limitation of the size of private capital. More important is the development of national capital, namely the development of government-owned enterprises. We should first have the political power to protect our native industry so that it will not be encroached upon by foreign powers.

Sun Yatsen's GMD government set up in Guangzhou: 1917

Reformation of the GMD: 1919

GMD's southern base established in Guangzhou: 1920

Sun Yatsen leader of the GMD: 1920–5

Expatriate Chinese living abroad, most numerous in Singapore, Malaya and Indonesia.

Key question
What revolutionary programme did Sun Yatsen develop at Guangzhou?

Gettysburg address
A speech, in honour of the war dead, delivered by President Lincoln in 1863 during the American civil war (1861–5) in which he defined the purpose of the struggle to be the establishment of 'government of the people, by the people, for the people'.

Sovereign state
An independent, self-governing nation.

People's welfare
Sometimes loosely translated as 'socialism'.

Key dates

Key term

Key terms

Key question

Why, in his reorganisation of the GMD, did Sun put such emphasis on the military?

The reforming of the GMD

Sun Yatsen's formal stating of the 'Three Principles of the People' in 1923 was a key moment in the growth of the GMD. He had provided his party with positive objectives and helped to shape its ideas into a definite programme. The principles called on revolutionaries to think beyond mere protest and consider practical ways in which they could tackle their nation's needs and advance its interests. The emphasis was on the improvement of the conditions not of individuals but of the people as a whole. The throwing off of the foreign yoke and the reassertion of China's independence were not ends in themselves; they were to be the prelude to the raising of the Chinese people from the poverty and backwardness that they currently suffered. The 'Three Principles of the People' gave moral purpose to revolution. Whether those principles could be achieved and that purpose honoured in the savage world of Chinese politics was the question that now had to be answered.

The importance of the GMD as a military force

Sun Yatsen was aware that, no matter how idealistic and well-intentioned his newly formed GMD might be, it could achieve nothing unless it was militarily strong. Such was the violence and lawlessness of warlord China that a party needed an army if it was to overcome its enemies. That was why, as well as developing his party's political ideas and building up its financial base, Sun devoted his attention to the construction of a military base at Guangzhou. The main outcome was the founding in 1924 of Whampoa Military Academy, a centre dedicated to the training of GMD army recruits. This proved of major significance since from that point on the GMD became essentially a military organisation. All the party's leading figures, most notably Sun's successor, Chiang Kaishek (Jiang Jieshi), were products of the Academy, branches of which were later established in other Nationalist strongholds, such as Nanjing and Chengdu.

Key date

Founding of the Whampoa Military Academy: 1924

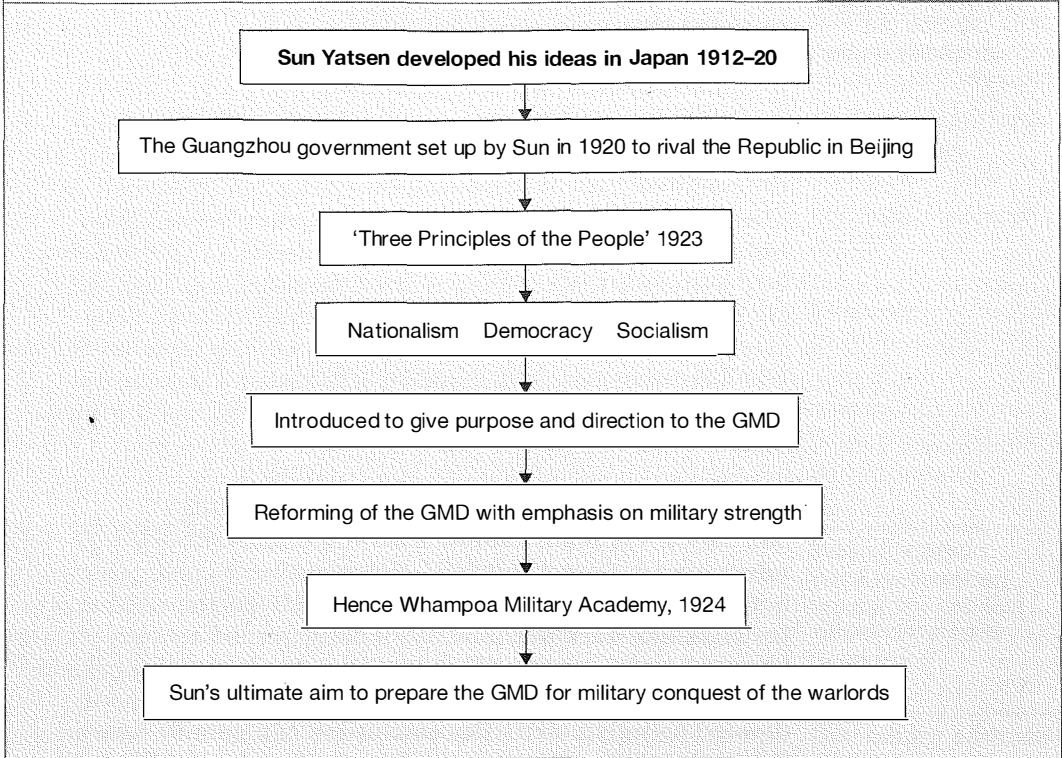
Key term

Comintern
Communist International, a body set up in Moscow in 1919 to organise international revolution by requiring foreign Communists to follow the Russian path.

Sun's plans for China's enforced reunification

Although an ailing man by 1924, Sun Yatsen spent the final year of his life in an energetic attempt to lay the basis for China's enforced reunification. On several occasions he travelled north to Beijing and also to Japan for talks with northern regional leaders. All this was complementary to his preparations for a showdown with the warlords. It was his conviction that until the warlords were broken by force and made to acknowledge some form of superior central authority, China had no realistic prospect of coming together as a united nation. One of the most remarkable features of Sun's policies in his later years was his co-operation with the **Comintern** and with China's own Communist Party.

Summary diagram: The Nationalists (GMD) under Sun Yatsen 1912–25



5 | The Founding of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) 1921

The appeal of Western revolutionary ideas

The revolution that led to the fall of the Qing, the creation of a Republic and the 4 May Movement was not confined to politics. Historians frequently allude to the first quarter of the twentieth century in China as a time of ‘intellectual revolution’, a reference to the quickening of interest in those Western ideas that offered a solution to China’s besetting problems. The University of Beijing became the centre of this renaissance. Professors **Chen Duxiu** (Chen Tu-hsiu) and **Li Dazhao** (Li Ta-chao) encouraged their students to challenge the Confucian-dominated ideas of traditional Chinese scholarship. This was not simply an intellectual pursuit. Indeed, pure theory was seldom attractive to radical Chinese scholars. They were looking for practical answers to real problems. A political theory was appealing to the Chinese only insofar as it could be applied in the real world.

The attitude was an aspect of the utilitarian approach that had long been a characteristic of Chinese politics. The common feature of Chinese revolutionaries was their rejection of the obsolete imperial system that had failed China and had allowed foreigners to impose themselves on the nation. What they were seeking was a programme that would offer a solution to China’s

Key question

What developments led to the founding of the CCP in China in 1921?

Chen Duxiu
(1879–1942) and
Li Dazhao
(1889–1927)

Both played major roles in providing the intellectual justification for the 4 May Movement.

Key figures

ills. The revolutionary movements at this time, whether of the right or of the left, were essentially nationalistic. They were all driven by a desire for Chinese regeneration.

Key question
Why were Chinese progressives so impressed by the Russian Revolution?

The model of the Russian Revolution of 1917

There was a striking similarity in the position of Russia and China in the early twentieth century. Both countries had recently been defeated by Japan, both were trying to come to terms with the need for economic and political modernisation, and both were poor relations when compared with the advanced, wealth-producing nations of Western Europe and the USA. There was, therefore, much about Russia that appealed to Chinese revolutionaries and reformers.

This attraction was intensified when the Chinese learned of the **Bolshevik** success in the **October Revolution**. Chinese intellectuals wrote admiringly of the achievements of **Lenin** (see page 46) and the Bolsheviks in taking power and establishing a workers' state. Admiration increased when the Chinese learned of the Bolsheviks' defeat of the **foreign interventionists** in Russia in the period 1918–20. Here was a living example of the overthrow of Western imperialism, made more impressive by the fact that the nations which the Bolsheviks had repelled were the very same as those currently occupying China.

The influence of Marxism in China

The revolutionary ideas of **Karl Marx** (see page 46) had been known in China since the beginning of the century, but what gave them special relevance and appeal was the apparent failure of the 1911 revolution and of the Republic that followed to advance China's cause. Disillusioned Chinese radicals turned impatiently away from what they regarded as the failure of democracy in China. They were drawn instead to another Western philosophy, but this time one that had been rejected by the West. The fear with which the imperialist nations regarded Marxism gave it an added attraction for the Chinese.

To the young intellectuals who became attracted to Marxist ideas, the great inspiration, therefore, was the successful October Revolution in Russia in 1917. They could now observe Marxism in action in anti-imperialist and anti-capitalist Russia. The rejection of Western values, implicit in the Bolshevik Revolution, appealed greatly to Chinese revolutionaries for whom the main attraction of **Marxism–Leninism** was its explanation of the '**imperialist phase of capitalism**', the process which had led to China's current humiliation at Western hands. When one of the first actions of the new Soviet state proved to be the renunciation of Russia's traditional claim to Chinese territories, the respect of revolutionaries in China for the Bolsheviks rose to new heights.

Bolshevik Russia and China

Judging that the unstable situation in China made it ready for revolution, the Russian Bolsheviks made immediate contact with the Chinese Marxists. One of the first moves of the Comintern

Bolshevik

The Russian Communist Party.

October Revolution

The seizure of power in Russia by the Bolsheviks in the name of the workers in October 1917.

Foreign

interventionists

A large number of countries, including Britain, France and Japan, sent forces to Russia to fight against the Bolsheviks during the Russian civil war of 1918–20.

Marxism–Leninism

The body of Marxist ideas as interpreted and applied by Lenin.

Imperialist phase of capitalism

According to Marxist theory, the stage of history when the capitalist nations progressed from exploiting their own domestic markets to seizing and exploiting overseas territories.

was to send agents to China. Lenin's interpretation of imperialism became especially relevant at this point. The Bolshevik leader's main argument was that Western colonialism marked a definite predetermined phase in the **dialectical process**. As capitalism began to strangle itself through overproduction and competition for declining home markets, it sought to survive by exploiting overseas territories, either as dumping grounds for surplus produce or as sources of cheap raw material and labour. Imperialism was thus an expression of capitalism in crisis. It followed that the historical role of the exploited colonial peoples was to rise up against their oppressors so as to achieve not only their own liberation but also the collapse of international capitalism.

In 1918, **Joseph Stalin**, the Bolshevik Commissar for Nationalities, gave exact expression to the Soviet concept of imperialism as it applied to China:

The imperialists view the East as the fountain of their happiness because it contains an unaccountable amount of natural resources such as cotton, petroleum, gold, coal, and iron ore. In view of its wealth, is the East not the imperialists' 'sweetest fruit'? The imperialists want not only the East's natural resources but also its 'obedient' people, the 'cheap' Oriental manpower which they can utilise for their own selfish purposes. They wish to recruit from these 'obedient' people enough 'boys' to form the so-called 'coloured' army and to use this army to crush their own revolutionary workers at home. This is the reason they call their Eastern colonies and semi-colonies 'inexhaustible' manpower reserves.

The purpose of us Communists is to wake up the oppressed Oriental peoples from their 100 years' slumber and to imbue their workers and peasants with a revolutionary spirit to conduct an uncompromising struggle against the imperialists.

The Marxist–Leninist theory of imperialism offered the Chinese both an explanation of why they had been humiliated by the West and a means of restoring their former greatness. In October 1920, Lenin declared to a Chinese delegation visiting Moscow, 'The Chinese revolution will finally cause the downfall of world imperialism.' Lenin's concepts determined the Soviet approach to colonial struggles. However, although this was not realised at first, his ideas contained a basic flaw which was permanently to distort Soviet Russia's relations with revolutionary China. Lenin equated the movements for national liberation from colonialism with the struggle of the **proletariat** against capitalism. The weakness of this idea was that in few countries did the stage of social and economic development fit the dialectical theory.

It certainly did not apply in China, which had yet to develop a genuine proletariat; in an overwhelmingly rural population of 500 million, scarcely three million could be classified as industrial workers. If China was to experience a revolution of the people, it would have to come from the peasants in the countryside. Yet the

V.I. Lenin (1870–1924)

The outstanding revolutionary who led the Bolsheviks to power in Russia in the October Revolution.

Karl Marx (1818–83)

The German revolutionary who explained history in terms of the dialectic, a constant struggle between the exploiting and exploited classes, the haves and the have-nots.

Joseph Stalin (1878–1953)

Lenin's successor as leader of the Soviet Union in 1924, which he ruthlessly dominated until his death.

Dialectical process

The successive series of class conflicts, which, Marxists believed, would culminate in the victory of the working class over capitalism.

Proletariat

The industrial working class, destined, in Marxist analysis, to be the final victor in the dialectical process.

Creation of the
Chinese Communist
Party: July 1921

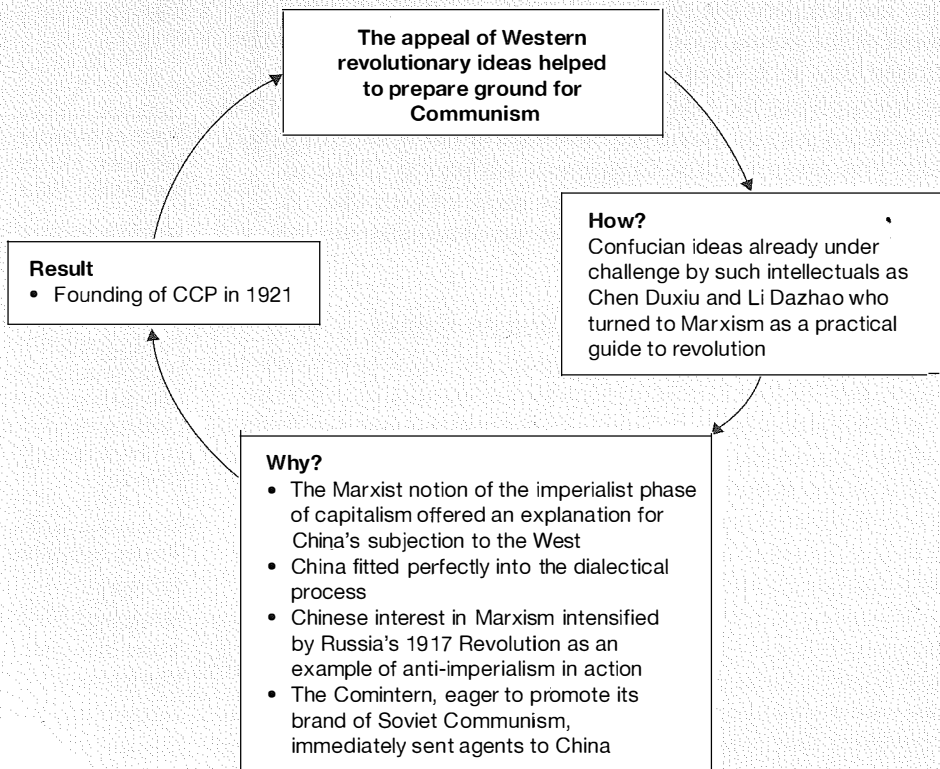
Comintern, committed to the concept of proletarian revolution, was to persist throughout its 24 years of activity in China (1919–43) in instructing the CCP to develop as an urban party and pursue an urban revolution.

However, these anomalies lay in the future. In the early 1920s the relations between Moscow and the Chinese Communists were cordial. Two Comintern agents, Grigor Voitinsky and Henk Sneevliet (also known as Maring), were instrumental in the formal setting up of the CCP in July 1920. Twenty representatives from various provinces gathered in Shanghai to adopt a basic revolutionary programme and elect an executive committee with Chen Duxiu as the secretary general. A year later, in 1921, Chen's protégé, Mao Zedong, representing Hunan province, joined the party.

July 1921

Although July 1921 is officially regarded as the date of the founding of the CCP, the evidence is that the party had been formed a year earlier. But, out of reverence for Mao, who was not at the 1920 meeting, the formal date in official CCP histories is always given as 1921.

Summary diagram: The founding of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) 1921



6 | The GMD–CCP United Front 1924–7

The CCP, although a tiny party numerically, containing only 50 members in 1921, had some success during the next two years in organising strikes and boycotts in Shanghai and Hong Kong. However, its attempt in 1923 to organise a railway stoppage in the Beijing region, an area under the control of the warlord Zhāng Zuolin (see page 35), was a calamitous failure. It was the CCP's ineffectiveness in the face of warlord power that convinced the Comintern that the Chinese Communists were incapable of being a genuinely revolutionary force on their own. The way forward, it argued, was for the CCP to ally itself with the other major revolutionary party in China, the GMD. The Comintern urged the young Communist Party to co-operate with Sun Yatsen, whose brand of socialism it interpreted as wholly compatible with Marxism. In 1923, the Comintern agents, Adolf Joffe and Michael Borodin, made direct contact with the GMD, offering to assist with money and military supplies.

Sun Yatsen and the Comintern

For his part, Sun Yatsen was very willing to respond to Moscow's overtures. Confronted by powerful warlords, his GMD government in Guangzhou was finding it difficult to make good its claim to authority in southern China. Furthermore, Sun genuinely admired the structure and discipline of the Russian Bolshevik Party. He saw common ground between their revolutionary programme and his own 'Three Principles of the People'. He accepted the requests of the Comintern that the members of the young CCP should be allowed to join the GMD. Sun hoped that such co-operation would encourage Moscow to continue supplying the GMD with money and ammunition. The outcome was a pact of friendship between Moscow and the GMD in 1923. This prompted the Comintern advisers in China to renew their call to the CCP to throw in their lot with the Nationalists in advancing a broad-front revolutionary force in China.

The Soviet Union's attitude towards China

The Soviet Union's willingness to support the Nationalists and its urging of the Chinese Communists to form an alliance with the GMD are explained by its broader international concerns. Feeling vulnerable in a hostile world, the Soviet Union was concerned to safeguard its Far Eastern frontiers. Co-operation with the GMD was more likely to secure Russian interests in Mongolia and thus preserve it as a buffer against the growing strength of Japan. It was such thinking that lay behind the Soviet Union's seizure of Outer Mongolia in 1924 from China and its insistence that the Beijing government recognise its right to retain hold of the Chinese Eastern Railway, which provided the **trans-Siberian railway** with a short-cut to its Pacific terminus. These moves were clear evidence that, when it came to a question of its own national concerns, Soviet Russia was less than wholly committed to the

Key question

What factors led to the formation of the United Front in 1924?

Key question

Why was Sun willing to co-operate with the Comintern?

Pact of friendship between Moscow and the GMD: 1923

USSR's seizure of Outer Mongolia: 1924

Key dates

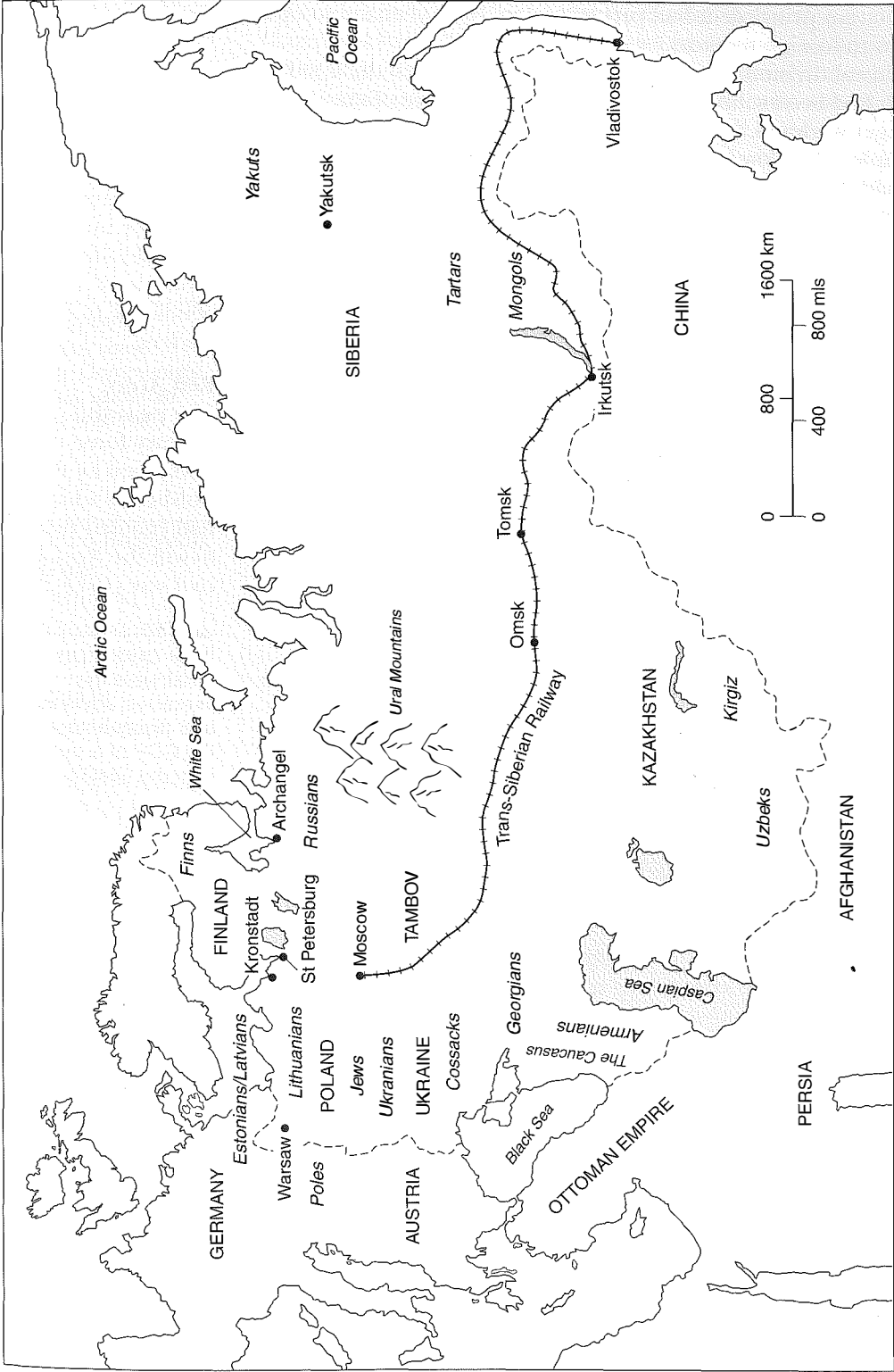
Key question

What motives lay behind the Soviet Union's involvement in revolutionary China?

Trans-Siberian railway

Stretched 3750 miles from Moscow to Vladivostok, connecting Russia's European and Asian territories.

Key term



China, Russia and the trans-Siberian railway.

proletarian principle it had proclaimed in 1918 of abandoning all claims to foreign territory.

Political divisions and conflict within China suited the USSR, which had been willing initially to give aid to some of the stronger warlords, General Feng in northern China being an example. The Comintern had even considered asking the CCP to ally with the more powerful warlords, but it subsequently saw greater prospects in urging an alliance with the Nationalists. The Comintern's belief that the revolutionary future lay with the Nationalists was shown by the efforts it put into reorganising the GMD along Soviet lines. In 1924, Borodin played a major role in drafting a new GMD constitution, which, out of deference to Sun Yatsen, was nominally based on the 'Three Principles of the People', but which was clearly Leninist in character.

In keeping with Lenin's concept of **democratic centralism**, power was concentrated in the hands of the leaders and great emphasis was placed on the need for an effective GMD army. Pointing to the success of the **Red Army** in Russia, the Comintern argued that, without a similar military organisation, the Chinese revolutionaries would be incapable of overcoming either the warlords or the imperialist occupiers.

Chinese Communist arguments for alliance with the Nationalists

Initially, a majority of the Chinese Communists believed that a common front between themselves and the Nationalists was the best means of both destroying the warlords and expelling the foreigners, aims which were fundamental to all revolutionaries. It is important to stress that the CCP and GMD were both revolutionary parties. The Nationalists under Chiang Kaishek would later come to be regarded as reactionaries, but it is noteworthy how progressive many of them originally were. That is certainly how they were seen by Moscow, which eased the CCP's path to co-operation with the GMD by acknowledging that the creation of a **soviet system** was not immediately necessary in China; the priority for revolution was national unity against the warlords and imperialists. This view was formally adopted as party policy by the CCP at both its second and third congresses in 1922 and 1923 when it voted for union with the GMD:

In the absence of a strong proletarian class, it is natural that there cannot be a strong Communist Party, a party of the masses to meet the demands of the forthcoming revolution. Therefore, the Communist International has decided that the Chinese Communist Party should co-operate with the Guomindang and that the Chinese Communists should join the Guomindang as individuals.

We shall preserve our own organisation after we have joined the Guomindang. Moreover, we shall do our utmost to attract to our party revolutionary elements of true class consciousness from the Guomindang leftists as well as members of labour organisations.

The purpose is to gradually expand our organisation and to strictly

Democratic centralism

The notion that in a truly revolutionary party the members owed absolute loyalty and obedience to the leaders.

Red Army

The powerful military force developed by the Bolsheviks which had enabled them to win the Russian civil war (1918–20).

Key question

What were the perceived advantages and disadvantages to the CCP of a merger with the GMD?

Soviet system

A rigidly structured political organisation which excluded all non-Communists.

enforce our party discipline so that the foundation of a strong Communist Party with mass followings will be eventually established.

The small capitalist class we have in China will quickly develop and become strong after the success of the democratic revolution, and it will certainly take a position opposite to that of the proletarian class. Then we proletarians must deal with the capitalist class and proceed with the second stage of our struggle, namely, the establishment of a proletarian dictatorship based on an alliance between workers and poor peasants.

Key question

Why were some Chinese Communists uncertain about an alliance with the GMD?

Communist doubts

Yet, even at this early stage, there were those in the CCP who were uneasy at the thought of a union along the lines advocated by the Comintern. Chen Duxiu was concerned that the Russian advice derived from an incomplete understanding of the situation in China. He considered that the aims of the GMD were too imprecise for it to be accepted as a truly revolutionary force and he was disturbed that so many of the GMD's members came from the **moneyed bourgeois elements** of China's east-coast cities. One calculation was that 90 per cent of the GMD's funding came from one city alone – Shanghai.

Comintern agents made light of Chen's anxieties, assuring him that the GMD was dominated not by the bourgeoisie but by the **left GMD**. Chen was urged to dwell on what united China's two revolutionary forces, hatred of warlordism and foreign imperialism, rather than on what might divide them. The Comintern repeated its instruction that the CCP join the Nationalists. Overawed by the reputation of the Russian Bolsheviks as the leaders of world revolution, most CCP members swallowed their misgivings and did as they were told. The outcome was the formation in 1924 of the GMD–CCP United Front.

The 30 May Incident 1925

The argument for the existence of the United Front was bolstered by an event in 1925, which may be regarded as marking the climax of what had begun in 1919 with the 4 May Movement (see page 37). In Shanghai, on 30 May 1925, a large crowd marched in protest against an earlier shooting of Chinese workers by Japanese factory guards. Frightened by the scale of the march, the British commander of the international settlement in the city ordered his forces to scatter the protesters with rifle fire, an overreaction that resulted in 12 deaths. The revolutionary parties immediately exploited the outrage among the Chinese to organise further strikes and riots. Attacks were made on foreign legations amid scenes reminiscent of the Boxer Rising (see page 13). For days, Guangzhou and Shanghai became impossible to govern. An uneasy peace was eventually restored but the incident had revealed how intense anti-foreigner sentiments had become.

For Chinese revolutionaries, the 30 May affair added weight to their conviction that China's internal and external enemies could be overcome only by force. This was a truth which all realists

Key terms

Moneyed bourgeois elements

Industrialists, businessmen and bankers.

Left GMD

The pro-Moscow Marxist sympathisers within the Guomindang.

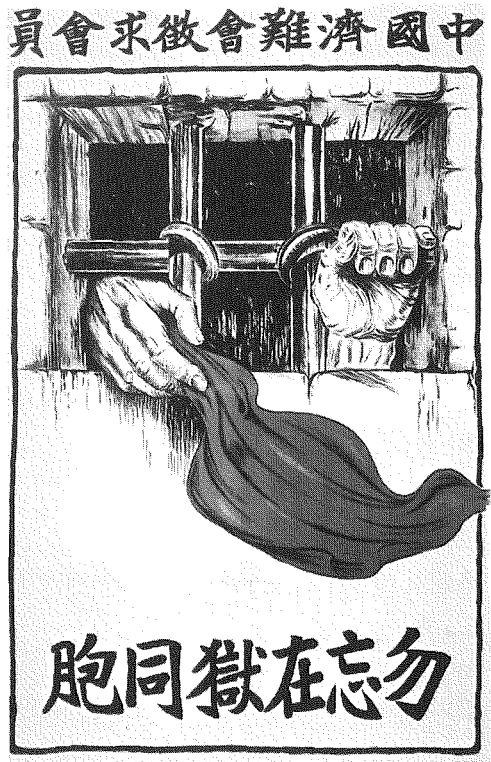
Key question

What impact did the 30 May Incident have on GMD–CCP relations?

Key dates

The GMD–CCP United Front: 1924

30 May Incident: 1925



This poster, declaring 'Forget not your brothers in jail!' was issued shortly after the 30 May Incident by the CCP. To whom was the poster intended to appeal?

accepted. The chief beneficiary from this stress on the role of the military was Chiang Kaishek, who shortly before the 30 May Incident had become the leader of the Nationalists. In 1924 he had been appointed commander-in-chief at the Whampoa Military Academy at Guangzhou, the GMD's military headquarters. Chiang then used his leadership of the **National Revolutionary Army (NRA)**, which that position gave him, to overcome his rivals within the GMD in the succession struggle that followed the death of Sun Yatsen in March 1925.

National Revolutionary Army (NRA)
The GMD's military wing.

Key term

Death of Sun Yatsen: 1925

Key date

The political effect of Sun Yatsen's death

The death of Sun Yatsen in 1925 was a highly significant moment in Chinese politics. It had the effect of releasing the anti-Communist forces within the GMD which Sun had previously held in check. Chiang Kaishek's success in the GMD power struggle was a victory for the military in the party, the element that had close relations with the Chinese middle class and which was opposed to the social revolutionary policies of the CCP. Chiang had not shared his predecessor's belief that the CCP could be easily absorbed into the GMD and then rendered harmless. Although Chiang, along with nearly all the leading members of the GMD, had received training in Moscow in the early 1920s, he had acquired no love for Marxism. His conviction was that the Communists represented an internal challenge that had to be crushed.

Key question
In what ways were the relations between China's two main political parties altered by Sun Yatsen's passing?

However, Chiang knew that the Communists were not the only obstacle. Before he and his Nationalists could take full power in China, the warlords, who still controlled large areas of central and northern China, had to be broken. The time was ripe; the 30 May Incident in 1925 had created a mood of national anger that could now be turned against warlordism. Chiang planned to combine his two objectives, the destruction of the warlords and the obliteration of the Communists, into one major campaign. He could not, of course, openly declare his second objective until the first had been achieved. As long as the warlords were undefeated the GMD–CCP United Front had to be preserved; he still needed the CCP as military allies.

Despite the evidence of Chiang's hostility to Communism and the Soviet Union, the Comintern continued to urge the Chinese Communists to work with the GMD in the United Front. The result was the joint planning of a Nationalist–Communist campaign aimed at the annihilation of warlord power. In July 1926, in his southern base in Guangzhou, Chiang Kaishek made a passionate speech calling on all true revolutionaries to join his Nationalists in a national crusade to destroy the warlords. His speech marked the beginning of the 'Northern Expedition'.

Key question
How successful was the Northern Expedition?

The Northern Expedition 1926–8

In campaigning against the warlords, the United Front selected three main targets:

- Wu Peifu, who was master of an area known as the Central Plains, between the Yellow and Yangzi rivers
- Sun Chuanfang, who dominated much of eastern China
- Zhang Zuolin, who controlled northern China between Beijing and Manchuria.

The Front's strategy was to surround the individual warlord armies, cut their **supply lines** and steadily crush them. This often resulted in brutal warfare with heavy casualties. Nevertheless, by the summer of 1927, United Front forces had captured the key cities of Wuhan and Shanghai, effectively ending Wu Peifu's hold over central China.

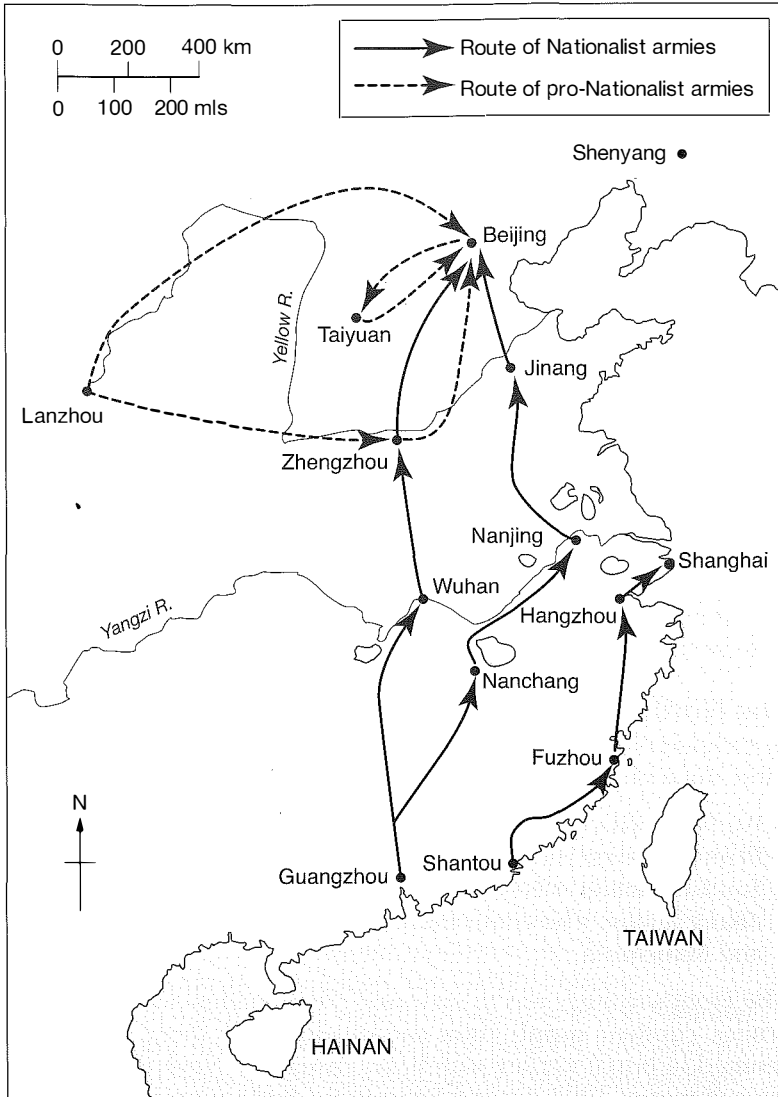
Sun Chuanfang was more difficult to overcome, since his forces put up a particularly fierce resistance. In 1927 his army of some 100,000 launched a series of counterattacks which badly damaged the Nationalist forces. It was only after Chiang Kaishek had built up an army of 250,000 that he was able, in 1928, to outnumber and overcome Sun Chuanfang's forces.

However, although delayed by Sun's spirited defiance, the Alliance was not to be denied. Once Zhang Zuolin, the warlord of the Beijing area, had been finally driven out in 1928, the GMD was in a position to announce that it was now the legitimate government of China and that it would rule from the new capital of Nanjing.

One consistent advantage to the Nationalists during the Northern Expedition was the hatred that most of the people living under the warlords felt towards their oppressors. This made

Key date
Northern Expedition: 1926–8

Key term
Supply lines
The vital links between an army and its ammunition, equipment and food sources.



The Northern Expedition 1926–8.

the local population willing to pass on information to the Front forces and on occasion join them in the struggle. A good example of this was the work of Mao Zedong as a Front organiser in Hunan. His links with the **peasant associations** in the province proved invaluable in enabling the Front's units to drive through Guanxi and Hunan and outflank the warlord armies. In 1926, Mao's endeavours earned him the official accolade 'son of Hunan'.

The Communist contribution to the Front's victory

There was little doubt that the Communists had made a vital contribution to the victories of the GMD–CCP alliance. Apart from contributing troops, Communist workers had caused great trouble for the warlord forces through acts of sabotage and by

Peasant associations
Self-protection organisations formed by local communities in the rural areas.

A United Front poster of 1926 calling on peasants, merchants, soldiers and students to fight the evil imperialists and warlords who are throttling China. How effectively does the poster make its point?



organising disruptive strikes and boycotts. Mao himself attributed the United Front's successes to the co-operation between the Nationalist and Communist forces: 'there was unity between officers and men and between the army and the people, and the army was filled with a revolutionary militancy'.

Mao's enthusiasm is a reminder of how easily the Chinese Communists had let themselves be fooled by Chiang Kaishek at this juncture. Chiang had launched the Northern Expedition with two aims: the declared one of breaking the warlords, the undeclared one of destroying his allies in the Front, the Communists. Confident by 1927 that the warlords were effectively beaten and that he no longer needed Communist support, Chiang began openly to implement the second of his aims. He had already begun to purge his party of Communist sympathisers. During 1926 he had dismissed a number of CCP officials from their posts in the GMD, arrested several Comintern advisers and removed his closest challenger, **Wang Jingwei** (Wang Ching-wei), from office.

Chiang Kaishek turns against the CCP

Despite the growing evidence of Chiang's active antagonism towards them, the Chinese Communists were slow to react. This was largely because the majority of them were still in thrall to the Comintern, whose continuing line was that the United Front must be maintained at whatever cost. It remained Stalin's belief that the GMD was a truly revolutionary force in China and that the

Wang Jingwei
(1883–1944)

Leader of the Left GMD, who later betrayed his country by becoming head of a Japanese puppet regime in Nanjing in 1940.

Chinese Communists were incapable on their own of achieving revolution. As Stalin saw it, the most fitting role the CCP could play at this stage of history was that of martyrs for the cause of international Communism. He had no qualms about obliging the CCP to follow a policy that was soon to bring it to the verge of destruction.

Official accounts written later by the CCP maintained that Mao Zedong had not been hoodwinked at this time and that he had always suspected Chiang Kaishek of evil intent. However, the available evidence suggests that, although he certainly reacted swiftly once he grasped the full extent of Chiang's betrayal of the United Front, Mao had been among those leading Communists who had initially fully backed the formation of the Front and the Northern Expedition.

The results of the Northern Expedition

In July 1928, Chiang Kaishek officially declared that, since it had achieved its main purpose of defeating the warlords and reuniting China, the Northern Expedition could now be regarded as completed. Equally important for him was that the expedition had given him the means and opportunity to embark on a programme for the extirpation of his chief enemy, the Communists. However, subsequent events were to undermine his claim of victory over the warlords. The defeat of warlordism was only partial:

- Not all the warlords had been crushed.
- A number of them agreed to accept the GMD's authority only on condition that they were allowed to keep their private armies.
- Others were won over by being offered positions in the GMD Party or government.

The warlords remained a significant factor in Chinese politics. It is arguable, therefore, that the Nationalists did not so much conquer the warlords as come to terms with them. This was the constant assertion made by the CCP in its propaganda against the Nationalists. Indeed, it was often said by the opponents of Chiang Kaishek that he was no more than a warlord himself and that the only difference between him and the others was that he was more successful. The assertion was that Chiang had used his military base in Guangzhou to make a grab for power by launching a challenge against the legitimate Republican government in Beijing. The relative weakness of Chiang's position had two main results:

- It prevented him from ever fully controlling China.
- It intensified his determination to destroy the Communists, whom he regarded as the main obstacle to his exercising complete power.

Key question
How successful was the Northern Expedition?

Summary diagram: The GMD–CCP United Front 1924–7

Why was it formed?

- GMD and CCP convinced no revolution was possible unless the warlords were removed
- Many revolutionaries belonged to both parties
- Sun Yatsen on good terms with the Comintern and willing to co-operate
- Comintern had greater faith in GMD as a revolutionary force
- CCP initially too small to act effectively on its own
- Left GMD eager for alliance with Communists

United Front formed in 1924

- 30 May Incident 1925 confirmed the need for the Front

Impact of Sun's death in 1925

Chiang Kaishek maintained Front in order to:

- Attack warlords successfully
- Prepare for attack on the Communists

The Northern Expedition 1926–8

- Largely successful in scattering the warlords
- Even before the Expedition's completion Chiang had begun his attack on the CCP

3

Nationalist Triumph and Communist Survival 1927–36

POINTS TO CONSIDER

Having overcome the warlords, Chiang Kaishek turned on his Communist allies in the United Front and set out to destroy them in the White Terror. He came close to achieving this. The Communists survived only by fleeing to the mountains of Jiangxi, where they created the first Chinese soviet. However, over a period of six years, in a series of encirclement campaigns, Chiang's forces surrounded the Jiangxi base and the Communists were again forced to flee. By a stupendous effort, known as the Long March, they evaded the Nationalist armies and in 1935, after a year's journey, reached Yanan in the north where, under Mao Zedong's leadership, they began to build a new Communist soviet. The Communists' preoccupation between 1927 and 1936 with the sheer struggle to survive gave Chiang and the Nationalists the chance to impose their authority on China. How they used that authority is one of the following themes covered in this chapter:

- The White Terror 1927
- Nationalist China 1928–37
- The Jiangxi Soviet 1928–34
- The Long March 1934–5

Key dates

1927	White Terror unleashed Autumn Harvest Rising
1928	Nationalist government established in new Chinese capital, Nanjing
1928–34	Jiangxi Soviet
1929–34	GMD's encirclement campaigns
1930	Futian Incident
1931	Japanese occupation of Manchuria
1934–5	The Long March
1935	Zunyi meeting

1 | The White Terror ('The Shanghai Massacre') 1927

As soon as Chiang judged that the Northern Expedition would be ultimately successful against the warlords, he intensified his attack on the Communists. This reached its climax in the 'White Terror' in Shanghai in April 1927. Shanghai had witnessed the growth of a powerful trade union movement under the direction of **Zhou Enlai**, and the formation of a workers' army that was so effective that it had been able to undermine the local warlord's attempt to block the advance of Chiang's Nationalist forces. Yet, only days after entering the city, Chiang turned savagely on the very people who had earlier given him a hero's welcome. Backed by Shanghai's industrialists and merchants, who were eager to crush the trade unions, and by those living in the international



Key question
Why were the Communists not prepared for the White Terror?

White Terror
unleashed: 1927

White
A common term for Chiang's Nationalists, in contrast to the Reds, the Communists.

Zhou Enlai (1898–1976)
One of the ablest members of the CCP, he helped Mao to rise to power and later became Communist China's outstanding foreign statesman.

Leaders of the Green Gang, Shanghai's most notorious underworld organisation, with whom Chiang Kaishek colluded in his plotting of the White Terror. The robed figure (centre) is Du Yuesheng, known as 'Big-eared Du', the charismatic chief of the gang. What were the political implications of the GMD's association with China's gangster world?

Key date

Key term

Key figure

The beheading of captured Communists in Shanghai in 1927; such scenes were common during the White Terror. Why was Chiang prepared to go to such extreme lengths to crush the CCP?



settlements, who were frightened by the growing tide of anti-foreigner demonstrations, Chiang's troops engaged in an orgy of killing. Using the information passed to them by the city's **triads** and **Green Gang**, they dragged out 5000 known Communists and their sympathisers and executed them by shooting or beheading. Similar anti-Communist **coups** were carried out by Chiang's GMD armies in a number of other cities, including Guangzhou.

In Mao Zedong's home province of Hunan, the death toll of Communists during the White purges was around a quarter of a million. In Changsha, the provincial capital, over 3000 suspected Communists were butchered in one day. Mao recorded the details:

The brutal punishments inflicted on the revolutionary peasants include such things as gouging out eyes and ripping out tongues, disembowelling and decapitation, slashing with knives and grinding with sand, burning with kerosene [paraffin] and branding with red-hot irons. In the case of women, they would run string through their breasts and parade them naked in public, or simply hack them to pieces.

Notwithstanding all the signs of Chiang's deadly intentions during the previous year, the CCP had been outwitted. Loyal to the Comintern's instructions, the Communists had committed themselves to the Northern Expedition, not realising that Chiang wanted their support only in order to break warlord rule before turning on them.

The Autumn Harvest Rising, August–September 1927

There were belated attempts at CCP resistance, the most notable being the Autumn Harvest Rising led by Mao Zedong in Hunan in August 1927. The rising was intended as more than just a

Key terms

Triads

Violent Chinese secret societies.

Green Gang

Said to be the controlling force in Shanghai, this racketeering organisation, which dealt mainly in prostitution and drug running, was notorious for bribing police and government officials to co-operate in its illegal operations.

Coups

Successful military risings.

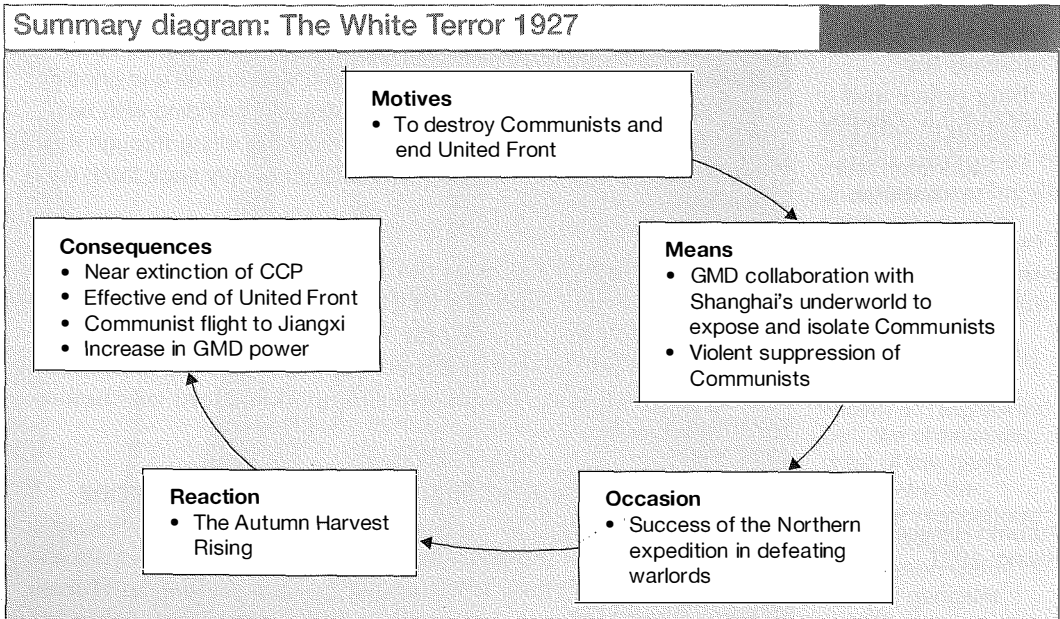
Key date

Autumn Harvest Rising: 1927

military action. It was a late but determined assertion of the CCP's independence and, therefore, a deliberate defiance of Moscow's order that, despite the White Terror, the United Front must be maintained. Mao co-signed a statement issued by the CCP leaders which condemned Chiang Kaishek for his betrayal of Sun Yatsen's memory and for destroying the revolutionary alliance. Chiang, said the statement, was the 'scum of his party and the swindler of the people'.

In preparing the rising, Mao had hoped to use his contacts with the peasant associations to gather an army of 10,000. As it happened, he was able to raise only a third of that number. This force was never enough to threaten the entrenched Nationalist units in Changsha, where the main part of the rising took place. Mao's troops were easily scattered and he had to flee. Mao later described how he been captured by a GMD unit near Changsha and had avoided being executed only by bribing a guard to release him. With peasant help, he had then managed to reach safety. A significant consequence of the failure of the rising Mao had organised was that it convinced him of the need to resort to guerrilla tactics and to avoid pitched battles.

Not only the Autumn Harvest Rising, but all the other CCP campaigns undertaken against the Nationalists in late 1927 suffered defeat. By the end of that year, it seemed that the White Terror had achieved its objective: the CCP was in a desperate plight and appeared to be on the point of being totally overwhelmed. That the Communists survived at all was because a contingent of them rejected the Comintern's orders and fled to the mountains of Jiangxi (Kiangsi) province. Mao was one of those who led the breakaway. For the next seven years, the remnants of the CCP were to be engaged in a struggle in Jiangxi to survive against continual Nationalist harassment.



Key question

How successfully did Chiang Kaishek and the GMD establish their authority in China in this period?

Key date

Nationalist government established in new Chinese capital, Nanjing: 1928

2 | Nationalist China 1928–37**Chiang Kaishek's plans for Chinese development**

The defeat of the warlords by the United Front and the near destruction of the Communists in the White Terror appeared to give Chiang Kaishek the freedom to shape the new China according to the GMD's policies. From Nanjing, which in 1928 officially replaced Beijing as China's capital, Chiang planned to build Nationalist China on the basis of the 'Three Principles of the People' (see page 42). There is no doubt that he was sincere in this, but, as he saw it, the uncertain conditions in China as it struggled to adopt modern ways did not permit him to introduce democracy immediately. There were too many difficulties in the way. That is why he turned to Sun Yatsen's definition as a guide. Sun had taught that the circumstances in China meant that the 'Three Principles of the People' could not be put into effect until China had gone through three stages of development:

- a preliminary stage which would witness the overthrow by the Nationalist armies of China's internal and external enemies
- an intermediate stage of GMD dominance during which the people would be educated in political knowledge and values
- a final stage in which the now enlightened people would play their part in turning China into a full democracy.

Chiang claimed that the preliminary stage of development had been achieved by the defeat of the warlords. China was now at the second stage, which required that the GMD take on the role of government and teacher and instruct the Chinese people in political understanding. What this meant in reality was that Chiang's Nationalist government claimed the right to govern until such time as it considered China ready for democracy. It provided a justification for authoritarian control by Chiang and the GMD. A symbol of this was the dismantling of the remnants of the Republican regime in Beijing, which was renamed **Beiping** to indicate that authority had passed south to Nanjing. Still more representative of the shift of power was the moving of Sun Yatsen's embalmed body from its temporary grave in Beijing and its reburial in a magnificent mausoleum built into the hills overlooking Nanjing.

Key term

Beiping

Meaning 'northern peace' to distinguish it from Beijing which had meant 'northern capital'.

Chiang's reforms

In keeping with his assumption that the Nationalists had the right to govern without challenge, Chiang introduced a number of reforms from the top. These included:

- China's civil service was modernised by the creation of special administrative departments and training colleges.
- Measures to improve the quality and availability of education were implemented.
- Chinese banks were brought under the central control of the Bank of China.

- The Shanghai stock exchange became an international financial market.
- A National Resources Commission was set up to develop Chinese industry and negotiate foreign trade deals.
- Schemes were adopted to improve urban transport and communication systems. Modern buses and trams appeared on the streets of major cities and railways and airlines spread across China.
- Government subsidies were provided to help the Chinese film industry, based mainly in Shanghai, which became internationally renowned.
- Similar government support enabled fashion houses in Shanghai to compete with Paris and Milan.
- The opium trade was brought under government control.
- Restrictions were imposed on organised gambling rings in cities such as Shanghai.

The Nationalist government's attitude to foreigners

One of Chiang's aims was to reassert some degree of control over the foreign concessions whose presence had angered Chinese revolutionaries for decades. Efforts were made to restructure the legal system within the concessions so that Chinese law and Chinese lawyers played a more central role. Foreign commercial companies were required to pay higher export and import duties. However, because of the constant presence of foreign troops whose numbers had been increased to protect the expatriate population following the anti-foreigner threats that had accompanied such disturbances as the 30 May Incident (see page 51), Chiang was not in a position to attempt the physical removal of foreigners.

Chiang was also handicapped by the hard truth that many Chinese depended for their livelihoods on being employed in the diplomatic offices and commercial agencies which flourished in the concession areas. Nevertheless, the French and British did show a willingness to co-operate with Chiang's request that Communists should not be harboured in the concession areas. Numbers of suspected CCP members and sympathisers were handed over to Nationalist police.

Reliance on foreigners, particularly in economic and financial matters, was one of the great problems that prevented the Nanjing government from achieving the Chinese independence that the 'Three Principles of the People' advocated. Chiang's dislike of the foreign presence in China was real enough but he had to be circumspect in the way he dealt with the issue. He could not afford to be too confrontational. As his various schemes for boosting China's economic and financial standing indicated, he needed foreign support. This became increasingly so after the Japanese threat to China began to grow following the occupation of Manchuria in 1931 (see page 103).

Key question

How did the GMD government deal with the issue of the foreign presence in China?

Third Reich

Hitler's Nazi regime, 1933–45.

Blue Shirts

'The Society for the Practice of the Three Principles of the People', a force largely recruited from young officers at the Nationalist Military Academy in Nanjing whose main task was hunting down suspected Communists.

Gestapo

The notorious Nazi secret police.

Fascist

Referring strictly only to Mussolini's Fascist movement in Italy, the word came to be applied to all the nationalistic, authoritarian right-wing regimes of the period.

Right-wing governments

Nazi Germany, Fascist Italy and Falangist Spain.

German influence in Nationalist China

The Nationalists' foreign ties were also very evident in relation to Chiang's development of the Nationalist army and police forces. In planning to modernise his army, Chiang turned to Germany and close links were formed between the Nationalists and the **Third Reich**. Chiang's chief adviser was General Hans von Seeckt, who headed a German military mission to China between 1934 and 1935. It was Seeckt who suggested reforming Chiang's army into 60 highly trained divisions. Although only a third of these had been created by the time of the Japanese invasion in 1937 (see page 106), Seeckt's influence had been an important one. The Nationalists' tactics, discipline and uniforms were all based on German models and it was Nazi Germany that, until 1936, supplied most of the GMD's weaponry.

A further striking example of German influence was the organisation of Chiang's secret police, known as **Blue Shirts**, on similar lines to the *Gestapo*. It was such associations that led to the suggestion that Chiang Kaishek's regime merited the description **fascist**, since in its authoritarianism, nationalist ideology, and policing methods it paralleled the **right-wing governments** of 1930s' Europe. A central figure in the development of the Blue Shirts was **Dai Li**, whose ruthless leadership of the GMD's secret police earned him the nickname 'the Chinese **Himmler**'. Although puritanical in his public life, he was notorious for getting blind drunk in private.

Dai built up the innocuous sounding Investigation and Statistical Bureau into a highly effective and feared security organisation. By the mid-1930s, Dai had some 1800 agents

**Dai Li (1897–1946)**

A graduate of GMD Military Academy at Whampoa.

Heinrich Himmler (1900–45)

The infamous *Gestapo* chief in Nazi Germany.

Hans von Seeckt, the German general who helped to devise the Nationalists' encirclement strategy, based on the seizure of key bridges and road and river crossing points, as a way of effectively hemming in the Communists.

working for him. Operating outside the law, they were free to arrest and hold suspects indefinitely without having to bring charges against them. They regularly used torture to extract information concerning the names and whereabouts of Communist sympathisers. CCP members were Dai Li's main targets but his agents also used intimidation and threats to prevent even moderate criticism of the Nationalist regime being voiced in the press.

The New Life Movement

Despite the Nationalist regime's preoccupation with economic and military affairs, Chiang Kaishek always spoke in terms of his party and government leading a moral revolution. In this period there were two main themes in his speeches and writings:

- the need of the Chinese people to unite and crush the Communists
- the duty of the Chinese people to elevate the ethical standards of their country by returning to Confucian values of social harmony and by living lives of moral integrity.

He appealed to the people to expose and fight public corruption and called on youth organisations, such as the Boy Scouts and the **YMCA**, to set an example in teaching the young to behave responsibly, especially in sexual matters. To inculcate a sense of shared Nationalist values, he encouraged couples to include a pledge of loyalty to the GMD in their marriage vows. This programme of moral improvement was formalised in 1934 with Chiang's launching of the New Life Movement, intended as a rejection of both Communism and Western capitalism and a reassertion of Confucian values of social harmony. Chiang's wife, Soong Meiling, regarded the New Life Movement, which she defined as 'a direct attempt to compete with the Communist platform of economic and social reform, substituting a retreat to Confucius for an advance to Marx', as being 'the only path for the salvation of the country'.

Key question

What principles inspired the New Life Movement?

YMCA

Young Men's Christian Association, a welfare organisation that Western missionaries had brought to China.

Key term

The weakness of the New Life Movement

For all the idealism that Chiang and his wife tried to generate, the reality was that his government had compromised itself from the first by its need to deal with some of the most disreputable elements in Chinese society. This was apparent, for example, in its attempts to control the use of drugs. Chiang's sincere aim was to bring the distribution of opium under state control, thereby restricting the trade and providing treatment for addicts. But the drug gangs had such a hold on the trade that only by co-operating with them could the government hope to advance its plans. Moreover, considerable illicit funding for the GMD came from donations from gangster groups such as the Green Gang. The Nationalists were not in a position to forgo such income. There was also the very powerful recent memory of the assistance given by the drug-dealing secret societies and triads to the Nationalists in 1927 in Shanghai. Without that help in exposing

Key question

What factors undermined the New Life movement?

Profile: Soong Meiling 1898–2003

- 1898 – Born into a wealthy business family in Shanghai
- 1907–20 – Educated in the USA
- 1927 – Married Chiang Kaishek
- 1934 – Helped to initiate the New Life Movement
- 1937–45 – Travelled worldwide promoting China's war effort
- 1943 – Formally addressed the United States Congress
- 1945 – Became a member of the Nationalist government
- 1949 – Fled with Chiang to Taiwan
- 1975 – Became a virtual recluse after Chiang's death
- 1976–2003 – Resided in New York
- 2003 – Died, aged 105

Meiling, who was Chiang's third wife, proved a huge asset to him. It was through her as an interpreter and adviser that he learned of Western ways. Meiling, who had been educated in the USA, was the sister of T.V. Soong, China's richest financier, and the sister-in-law of Sun Yatsen. Described by an American official as 'exuding charm at every pore', Meiling contributed greatly to Chiang's advancement in Chinese and American high society. Exquisitely dressed and vivacious in manner, Madame Chiang, as she became known, was rumoured to have seduced many members of the American delegations in China. She certainly used her sex appeal to turn heads wherever she went and became the darling of the Western media. Insisting on gold taps in her bathroom, refusing to sleep in the same bed-sheets two nights running and rarely wearing the same outfits more than once, she was renowned for her luxurious lifestyle. Her fame and influence led to her being called China's last empress.

and isolating the Communists, Chiang could not have launched the White Terror which had taken him to power. Chiang owed the gangs a large favour.

The same contradictions applied to Chiang's attempt to find a middle way between communism and capitalism. The narrow basis of his financial and political support and the heavy costs of his military campaigns meant he could never genuinely abandon capitalism. Despite Chiang's supposed distaste for capitalist methods, in order to raise the money his government needed, he had to rely on the GMD's association with Western commercial and financial interests. The character of the party was determined by the manner in which it acquired its finance.

Key question

What difficulties prevented Chiang Kaishek from fully achieving his political aims?

The GMD's basic problems in government

The underlying political weakness of the GMD was that the social composition of its membership meant that it could never become a mass party. The GMD claimed that its revolutionary purpose was to serve the Chinese population as a whole by implementing the 'Three Principles of the People', but in practice it became the representative of particular minority interests. Chiang Kaishek's GMD party was largely drawn from the merchants and

businessmen who operated in the ports and cities. Such men had little sympathy for the rural peasants, which meant they were no more interested in improving conditions in the countryside than they were in paying for welfare in the urban areas.

Therein lay the GMD's crippling limitation as a political party. China's most pressing problem was the poverty of its people. Yet, notwithstanding the Nationalists' commitment to honouring the third of Sun Yatsen's principles – the people's welfare – no sustained attempt was made to tackle the issue. This was very evident in the cities where beggars and starving children were a common sight.

The GMD's failure to alleviate peasant poverty

Less obvious, though worse in extent, was the poverty of the peasants in the countryside. But there was little in the Nationalists' approach to government that allowed it to make a genuine effort to introduce the land reforms that China needed and the GMD had originally promised. Among the measures that Chiang's government had been expected to implement had been:

- the ending of landlord control and exploitation of the peasants
- the extension of property rights to the peasants
- protection of the peasants against being forced to pay excessive rents
- the guarantee of fair prices being paid to the peasants for their agricultural produce.

Yet the Nationalists in office left these aims largely unachieved. In mitigation, it should also be stressed how limited the GMD's power actually was in China. At no time did the Nationalist government control more than one-third of China or two-thirds of its population. It is true that these were quite substantial proportions in themselves, but, given the strength of Chinese regionalism and the distribution of the population, the authority exercised by the GMD was far from complete.

A clear example of this was the Nanjing government's failure, in the face of resistance from the local ruling factions, to carry through its declared policies of land reform and fair rents. Moreover, despite the impressive victories of the Northern Expedition, the warlords still held sway in a number of provinces (see page 56). The GMD's limited control became still more restricted after 1931 when the Japanese occupied Manchuria (see page 103), a humiliating reminder of how far China was from being an independent nation.

Japanese occupation
of Manchuria: 1931

Key date

The Nationalist record

Nationalist supporters could claim that in its first period of government the GMD under Chiang Kaishek had:

- overthrown the warlords
- gained international recognition
- taken steps towards the creation of workable governmental and legal systems.

Key question
How successful had
Chiang's Nationalist
government been in
the period 1928–37?

Yet while these were considerable achievements, it could be argued that they were far outweighed by failures:

- The Nationalist government had proved unable to tackle China's most urgent social and economic problems.
- It had betrayed its own sense of moral purpose by aligning with some of the worst elements of the Chinese underworld.
- It had turned to coercion and authoritarianism in order to consolidate its power.
- It had been powerless to prevent a widespread famine occurring in China in the years 1934–5 which caused the death of 30 million Chinese.
- Chiang's preoccupation with crushing his Communist opponents had diverted vital energies away from the structuring of an ordered civil society.
- Such progress as had been made towards removing foreign dominance from China was undermined by the Japanese occupation of Manchuria that began in 1931.

Summary diagram: Nationalist China 1928–37

GMD aims

- To implement GMD rule as the intermediate stage of China's modernisation



Period of GMD dominance during which the people would be guided politically and morally:

- To fulfil the 'Three Principles of the People'
- To achieve moral regeneration of Chinese people
- To reassert Chinese independence



GMD methods

- Suppression of opposition
- Reforms: legal, economic, administrative, diplomatic and military
- The New Life Movement



GMD's record

- Important internal reforms
- International recognition

But



Gap between aspiration and achievement

- New Life Movement undermined by GMD's alliance with gangsterism
- Reliance on foreign money and employment prevented true independence
- Land policies ineffectual – peasants worse off
- Chiang's preoccupation with crushing the Reds diverted resources from social and economic reforms

3 | The Jiangxi Soviet 1928–34

When Mao and his fellow refugees from the White Terror (see page 60) reached the relative safety of the foothills of the Jinggang mountains in 1928, they began to organise the first **Chinese soviet**. Mao Zedong arrived in Jiangxi with certain advantages over his party rivals. His denunciation of the now discredited United Front had added greatly to his political reputation, while that of leaders such as Chen Duxui (Chen Tu-hsiu), who had advocated maintaining the Front, had correspondingly diminished. According to Mao's own writings, the White Terror had confirmed a judgement to which his experience as party organiser among the workers and peasants in Hunan province had already led him; namely, that co-operation with the GMD would destroy the Chinese Communist movement. He resolved that the CCP must revert to being a separate, independent force.

Mao's view of revolution

Mao's attitude was not simply a reaction to the evidence of Chiang's murderous intentions. He now judged that the United Front's revolutionary policy had been based on a false reading of the situation in China. The GMD, under direction from the Comintern, had adopted a strategy of urban revolution, which the CCP had then sanctioned by its willingness to form the Front. Yet, for Mao, the real China was not urban but rural. It was a simple matter of population distribution. The Front's policy of fomenting insurrection in the cities and towns ignored a stark reality – the great mass of the Chinese people were peasants living in the countryside.

In the official CCP histories that were written later, Mao's claims that he had opposed the policy of the United Front were accepted at face value. His judgement was praised on two counts:

- that he realised early on that the GMD was concerned solely with establishing its own dominance
- that he had grasped the key fact that the distribution of the population in China meant that revolution had to come from the rural not the urban areas.

This second point was of crucial importance since it directly contradicted the Comintern's instruction that revolution had first to be pursued in the towns and cities. However, more recent analyses suggest that Mao's account may have been a matter of *post facto* self-justification. Mao did not become fully committed to rural revolution until the later 1920s after his experience of the CCP's failure in the towns. Moreover, he had fully supported the United Front until, with the launching of Chiang Kaishek's White Terror in 1927, its threat to the CCP became evident.

Regardless of the arguments about the precise timing of Mao's conversion to the notion of peasant revolution, what is true is that the statistics clearly illustrate the accuracy of his judgement (see Figure 3.1).

Key question

Why were the Jiangxi years such a critical period for Mao and the CCP?

Jiangxi Soviet:
1928–34

Key date

Key question

What was Mao's assessment of the revolutionary situation in China?

Chinese soviet

Originally meaning a council in Russian, the word soviet came to be applied to Communist organisations and bases which Mao set up.

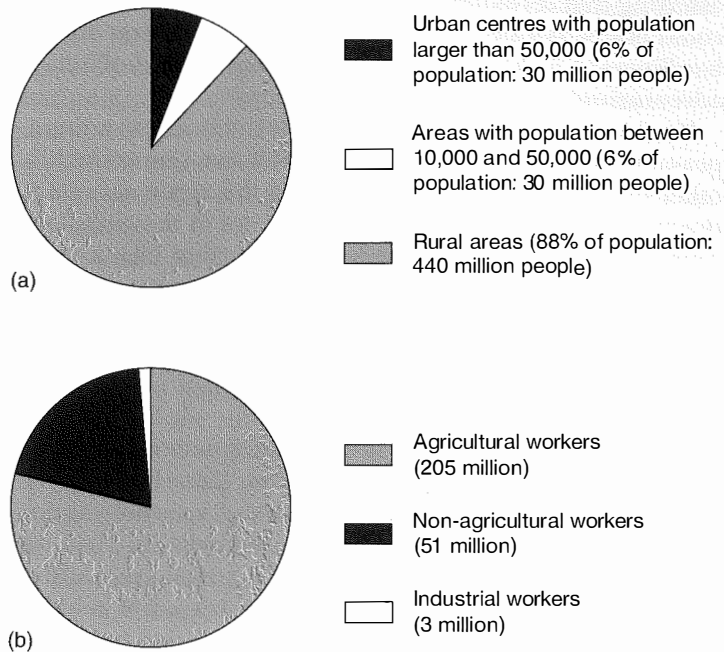
Post facto

After the event.

Key terms

Figure 3.1:

(a) Location of the population of China in 1933 (500 million people). (b) Labour sectors for a total workforce of 259 million in 1933.



Key question
What revolutionary role did Mao ascribe to the peasants?

Key term
Reds
A term adopted by Mao's Communists to describe themselves, red being the colour of revolutionary fervour.

Key figure
Li Lisan (1899–1967)
A Moscow-trained Communist who pushed the Comintern view (the 'Li Lisan line'), which demanded that the CCP concentrate its revolutionary activities in the urban areas.

Mao's view of the Chinese peasants

Mao, unimpressed by Soviet Marxist orthodoxy and in defiance of Comintern instructions, made the peasants the dynamic of the Chinese revolution. In his own words: 'If we allot 10 points to the revolution, then the urban dwellers rate only three points, while the remaining seven points must go to the peasants.' It was Mao's belief in the truly revolutionary potential of the peasantry that inspired his organisation of the CCP's Jiangxi base between 1928 and 1934. In this period he taught his small but growing band of **Reds** that there was no necessity to wait for the growth of an industrial proletariat in China. Genuine revolution would be achieved by the peasants:

Within a short time, hundreds of millions of peasants will rise in central, south, and north China with the fury of a hurricane; no power, however strong, can restrain them. They will break all the shackles that bind them and rush towards the road of liberation. All imperialists, warlords, corrupt officials, and bad gentry will meet their doom at the hands of the peasants. All revolutionary parties and comrades will be judged by them.

Mao told his followers that it was their task to unleash the huge potential of the peasantry: 'The peasants are the sea; we are the fish. The sea is our habitat.' Mao had already begun the process of shaping Marxism to fit the Chinese situation. This put him at variance with the orthodox urban Communists, such as **Li Lisan** and Chen Duxui, who continued to follow the Moscow line in

asserting that revolution was a logical progression whose stages could not be skipped at will. Frequent attempts were made by the hardliners to make Mao conform. He was accused of 'reckless adventurism'.

Yet, Mao, as leader of the Jiangxi Soviet, was recruiting peasants into the ranks of the party at a rate unmatched in any other CCP-held areas. He was winning the argument in a very practical way. The truth was that it was not in the cities but in the countryside that the CCP was making its gains. The urban Communists began to appear increasingly out of touch with the real situation in China. Their orthodox theories counted for little in the face of Mao's manifestly successful approach.

The Futian Incident 1930

In insisting on the correctness of his interpretations and in fighting for his position within the party, Mao showed a terrifying ruthlessness which remained a hallmark of his whole career. A fearful example of this was the 'Futian Incident' in 1930 when he conducted a violent two-month purge of a rival unit within the Jiangxi Red Army, whose members he suspected of being either GMD agents or supporters of Li Lisan. In the course of crushing what he regarded as a military and political revolt, Mao Zedong ordered the torture and execution of nearly 3000 officers and men. A CCP report gave this description of the way information and evidence was extracted from suspects:

The method used was the carrot and the stick. The 'carrot' meant extracting confession by guile. The 'stick' meant thrashing suspects with ox-tailed sticks and hanging them up by their hands. If that had no effect, next came burning with incense or kerosene [paraffin] lamp. The worst method was to nail a person's palms to a table and then to insert bamboo splints under the fingernails. Torture ceased only after confession.

Maoist sympathisers have argued that rather than being an example of Mao's vindictiveness, Futian illustrates his grip on realities and his willingness to take hard decisions, qualities without which he could not have survived in the desperate circumstances he faced. Less sympathetic commentators regard Futian as an expression of Mao's uncompromising determination to eliminate rivals who blocked his path to personal power. They point to a particularly sinister aspect of Mao's tactics – his use of secret police to root out and expose the ringleaders of the revolt.

Party struggles at Jiangxi

The Futian Incident did not end the opposition to Mao. Throughout the Jiangxi years he was involved in an ongoing battle to assert his authority within the party. His major challengers were **Wang Ming** and **Bo Gu**. In the early 1930s, these men were part of the 'Wang Ming faction', also known as the **Twenty-eight Bolsheviks**. The core of their challenge was

Key term

Twenty-eight Bolsheviks
A particular set of Communists who had been trained in Moscow and came back to China with instructions to make the CCP conform to Soviet and Comintern concepts of revolution

Key question

What did the Futian Incident reveal about Mao's approach to leadership?

Key date

Futian Incident: 1930

Key figures

Wang Ming (1904–74)
A pro-Moscow Communist hardliner who never fully accepted Mao's essentially Chinese interpretation of Marxism.

Bo Gu (1907–46)
One of the 'Twenty-eight Bolsheviks', he came to have a working but uneasy relationship with Mao.

Key question

What internal opposition did Mao contend with at Jiangxi?

Key terms

Stalinist line

In the Soviet Union in the 1930s, Stalin was completing a ferocious policy of collectivisation, which involved stripping the peasants of their property and removing those who resisted.

Rightist

A derogatory term that lacked specific meaning but was used to attack CCP members thought to be anti-revolutionary.

Key date

GMD's encirclement campaigns: 1929–34

Key question

What strategy did Chiang's Nationalists employ in their campaigns to destroy the Reds at Jiangxi?

Key term

German military advisers

In building up the GMD's armed forces after 1928, Chiang relied heavily on German military experts to train his army and navy.

basically the same as the one advanced in the Li Lisan line; Mao was criticised by the pro-Moscow elements in the party for ignoring Comintern instructions and acting independently. A particular point of contention was Mao's insistence that the particular conditions in China determined that revolution must first come in the countryside; he rejected the Comintern's demand that the CCP put all its efforts into preparing risings in the urban areas.

Wang Ming and Bo Gu caused considerable trouble for Mao; on a number of occasions they tried to isolate him by suggesting that he was defying the will of the party by not following a **Stalinist line** in his approach to the peasants. Mao's response was always to point out that foreign Communists, no matter how eminent, did not have sufficient knowledge of China to dictate what policies should be followed. He spoke out against the Chinese peasants' being too severely treated, drawing a distinction between grasping landlords, who deserved to be dispossessed, and rich peasants' who could be persuaded to give up their land and join the peasant movement. For this, he was attacked by the Wang Ming faction as a **Rightist**.

Mao survived such criticism thanks largely to three factors:

- He was one of the outstanding generals in the party. The CCP could not cope without his military skills and those of his loyal Red Army commander Zhu De.
- As a result of his field research, Mao had an unrivalled knowledge of the Chinese peasantry. This meant he dominated any discussion of the party's peasant policy.
- By 1934, such was the Nationalist threat to Jiangxi that squabbles over party policy became secondary to the sheer necessity of physical survival.

The GMD's encirclement campaigns 1929–34

The CCP's internal rivalries took place against the background of the Nationalists' constant effort to crush the Jiangxi base. Chiang, who was similarly troubled by factional difficulties within his own party, was nonetheless resolute in pursuing the Communists. He was still intent on completing the White Terror. In 1929, on the recommendation of his **German military advisers**, he adopted a series of encirclement campaigns aimed at denying resources to the Reds until they finally broke. The encirclement was achieved by squeezing the Communists into an ever-shrinking area by targeted aerial bombing and by means of **pillboxes** (see page 74) and manned blocks on the roads and waterways leading in and out of the CCP strongholds.

The massive siege began to work. By 1934, a succession of serious defeats for the Reds convinced Mao that to continue to defend the Jiangxi base would prove suicidal. He was no more prepared to listen to those in the party who argued that they should stay and die as revolutionary heroes than he had been at the time of the White Terror seven years earlier. Mao then agreed with the collective decision that was taken to make a desperate

breakout. No fixed destination was selected since there was no known base to which the fleers could safely transfer. The initial aim was simply to escape. Decisions on where to head for could be made later.

It was in this confused fashion that the Reds departed on what was to prove one of the great odysseys of history, the Long March. In a pretence that the decision to flee Jiangxi was made freely rather than being forced on them by the GMD's encirclement, the CCP announced that 'the Chinese Red Army of workers and peasants has chosen to march north to resist the **Japanese incursion**'. The main body of marchers, which Mao later joined, set off in October 1934.

Pillboxes

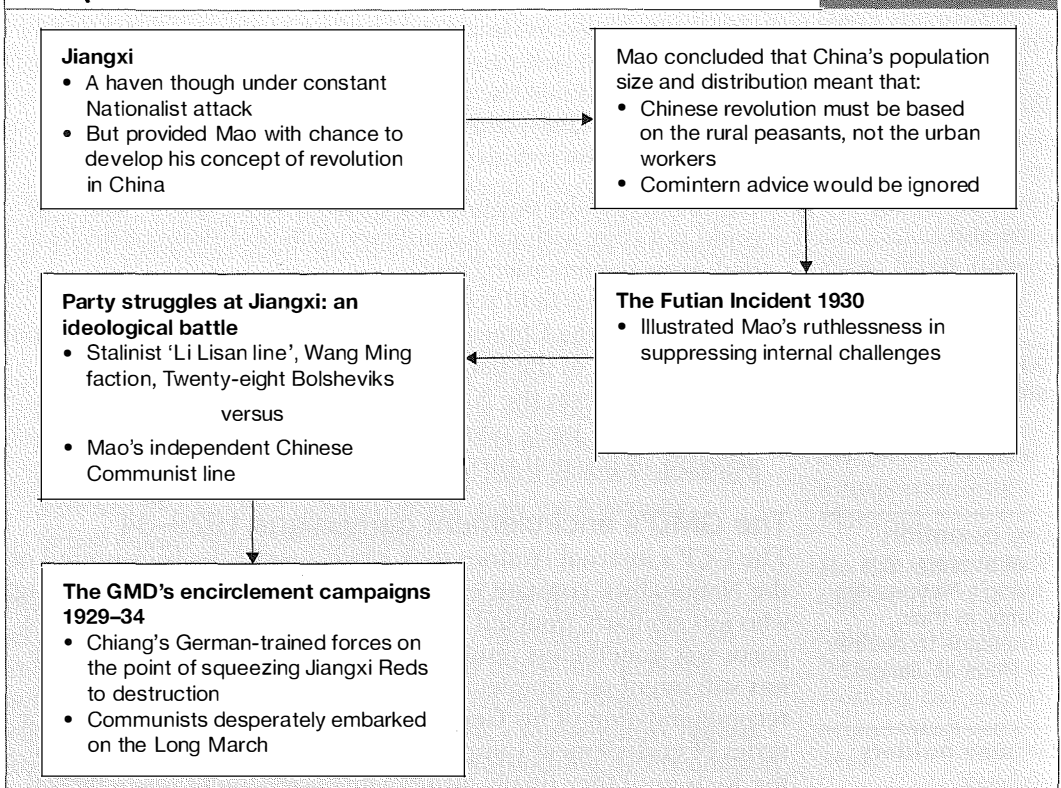
Small, rounded turrets made of thick concrete and containing narrow apertures through which machine guns, operated by one or two men, could traverse a full 360°.

Japanese incursion

The occupation of Manchuria.

Key terms

Summary diagram: The Jiangxi Soviet 1928–34



4 | The Long March 1934–5

What began as a rout ended as a legend. After a year's desperate marching, the Communists finally reached sanctuary in Yanan in Shaanxi province. Even after allowing for the hyperbole and exaggeration that has become attached to the Long March, the feat remains an extraordinary one. It is worth noting its outstanding characteristics:

- The journey from Jiangxi to Yanan took a year, from October 1934 to October 1935.

Key question

What consequences did the Long March have for Mao and the CCP?

The Long March: 1934–5

Key date

- The distance covered was 6250 miles – the equivalent of marching from London to Lagos, or New York to Los Angeles, and back, at an average of 17 miles per day.
- The march crossed 11 provinces, 18 mountain ranges, 24 rivers, and numerous desert areas and quick sands.
- The marchers fought 15 pitched battles and almost daily skirmishes against the GMD forces trying to destroy them.
- In the course of the march, over 60 towns and cities were occupied.
- Of the 100,000 who set out scarcely 20,000 survived to reach Yanan.

The sheer physical scale of the Long March helped to give it a political significance, which Mao defined in these terms:

It is a manifesto, an agitation corps, a seeding machine. It proclaims to the world that the Red Army is an army of heroes. It announces the bankruptcy of the encirclement attempted by the imperialists and Chiang Kaishek. It declares to approximately 200 million people of 11 provinces that only the road of the Red Army leads to their liberation. It has sown many seeds in 11 provinces, which will sprout, grow leaves, blossom into flowers, bear fruit and yield a crop in future. The Long March ended with our victory and the enemy's defeat.

The concept of martyrdom for the cause became enshrined in Communist lore. Comradeship, dedication and self-sacrifice were now the watchwords of the party. The march created a brotherhood among the survivors; all the leaders of the Chinese People's Republic from 1949 until the mid-1990s were veterans of the Long March: Mao Zedong, Zhu De, Zhou Enlai, Lin Biao, Liu Shaoqi and Deng Xiaoping. The marchers, with their willingness to undergo suffering without complaint, were an extraordinary example of the Confucian principle of accepting and adapting to whatever fate brings. The poems Mao wrote during the march were very much in the Chinese literary tradition of embracing nature as a measure of human achievement:

I desire to compare our height with the skies;
In clear weather, the earth is so charming,
Like a red-faced girl clothed in white.
Such is the charm of these rivers and mountains,
Calling innumerable heroes to vie with each other in pursuing her.
The emperors Shih Huang and Wu Ti were barely cultured,
The emperors Tai Tsung and Tai Tsu were lacking in feeling,
Genghis Khan knew only how to bend his bow at the eagles.
These all belong to the past – only today are there men of feeling!

The Zunyi meeting 1935

Mao Zedong had not been the only leader of the march, but he was the one who emerged from it with the greatest prestige among his fellow Communists. By the time they reached Yanan he had achieved a remarkable supremacy in the military and political counsels of the CCP. During the march, what proved to be a crucial party gathering had been held at Zunyi (Tsunyi) in Guizhou (Kweichow) province early in 1935. At the meeting Mao successfully exposed the urban Reds as being out of touch with the CCP's real needs. His principal charge was that they had brought the party to its present crisis by abandoning the successful **guerrilla tactics** in the countryside and opting instead for pitched battles in the urban areas. In a key vote on the issue, the majority of the members supported Mao, a decision that marked the end of the predominating influence of the pro-Moscow urban element in the CCP.

There had also been a serious dispute over the route the Red armies should follow. Zhang Guotao (Chang Kuo-tao), a rival to

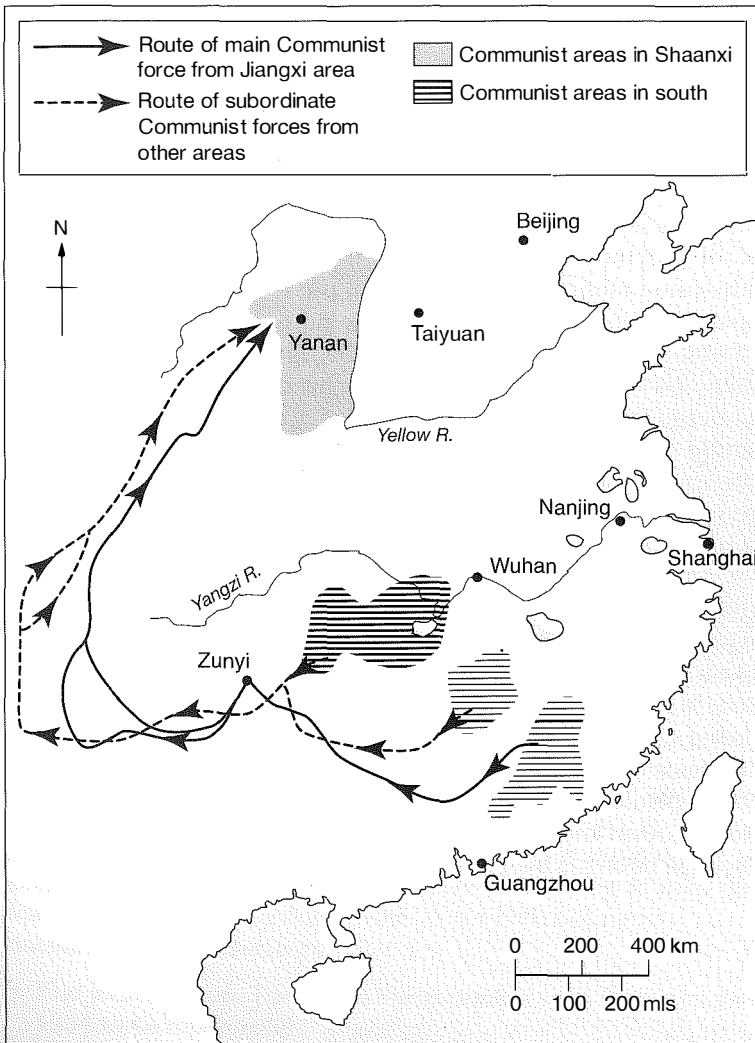
Key question

Why did the Zunyi meeting prove so significant?

Zunyi meeting: 1935

Guerrilla tactics

A hit-and-run style of fighting relying on speed, surprise, knowledge of the terrain and co-operation from the local people.



The Long March
1934–5.

Mao, urged that the marchers divert westwards through Xinjiang (Sinkiang) in order to take them closer to Russian protection. Mao, backed by Zhu De (Chuh Te), insisted that the agreed northern route should be maintained. Zhang broke away but after some months had to admit that the western route he had attempted was impossible. He abandoned it and rejoined Mao's contingent on its northern march. This vindication of Mao's judgement increased his standing within the CCP and meant that he arrived at Yanan as the leading figure in the party.

Key question

Was the Long March
a triumph or a defeat?

Assessing the Long March

The romantic image of the Long March tends to obscure the reality that at the time it was widely seen as a defeat for the Communists. After all, they had been driven out of their southern base and in the course of their flight had lost four-fifths of their number. There was still no certainty that the CCP would survive. As in 1927 at the time of the White Terror, so in 1935 the Nationalists seemed on the point of establishing an unshakeable control of China. Chiang Kaishek and the GMD had been recognised by the Western powers and the Soviet Union as the legitimate government of China, the warlord menace had been subdued and the Communists appeared to be a broken force, confined to a distant province. Although the Nationalists did not yet have total power, they possessed the greatest degree of authority of any group since the fall of the Manchus. The question was: would they be able to use that authority to consolidate their position? The answer to that depended on two key factors: the presence of the Japanese in China and the attitude of Chiang Kaishek.

Summary diagram: The Long March 1934–5

Why undertaken?

- Desperate attempt to avoid annihilation

What began as a rout ended as a victory

Character of the march

- A prodigious physical achievement
- Overcame a range of natural hazards
- Resisted constant Nationalist attacks
- Sheer survival of the marchers seen as a triumph

Results of the march

- Created a legend of Communist heroism
- Zunyi meeting a critical event in Mao's rise to leadership of CCP
- Yanan now provided a base for CCP growth
- Failure to destroy the Reds damaged GMD's reputation

4

Mao Zedong and the Communists at Yanan 1936–45

POINTS TO CONSIDER

Having been close to destruction in 1934, the CCP survived by means of the Long March and in 1936 began to build a new soviet at Yanan, its northern base. It was at Yanan that Mao developed his independent ideas regarding the special nature of the Chinese revolution and ruthlessly imposed them on the party. A deal with Chiang Kaishek, following the Xian Incident in 1936, saw the reforming of the United Front, this time directed against the Japanese occupiers. But the GMD–CCP alliance was never genuine and with its break-up in 1938 the Communists came under renewed attack from the Nationalists. There were thus two wars going on in China: the conflict with Japan and the simultaneous GMD–CCP civil war. How the Communists coped with this while attempting to create a model soviet at Yanan forms the substance of this chapter, which looks at:

- The Xian Incident 1936
- The Communists at Yanan 1935–45
- The role of the Red Army
- The ‘rectification of conduct’ campaign 1942–4
- Mao and the Soviet Union during the Yanan years

Key dates

1935–45	Creation and development of the Yanan Soviet
1935	9 December Movement
1936	Xian Incident
1940	Publication of Mao’s <i>On New Democracy</i>
1941	Russo-Japanese non-aggression pact
1942–4	Rectification Movement
1943	Dissolution of the Comintern

1 | The Xian Incident 1936

Although the Comintern continued to attempt to dictate how the CCP should be run and what ideas it should adopt, the Communist base that Mao Zedong created at Yanan provided him with the opportunity to develop his independent political theories and programme. It was from Yanan that the Red Army went out into the countryside to impose Communism on the local people, this despite the base being subject to intermittent attack from the Nationalists. The task of resisting Nationalist pressure on Yanan was made easier for the Communists by the outcome of an extraordinary event, the Xian Incident of December 1936.

To understand the importance of the incident one has to go back five years to 1931 when Japan had committed its first open act of aggression against China with the invasion and occupation of Manchuria. Over the next six years, Japanese forces pushed out into other Chinese provinces, a clear sign that they intended a full-scale occupation (see page 103). Chiang's response to Japan's moves was low-key and defensive. He believed that China was too large a country for the Japanese to occupy without exhausting themselves; a protracted occupation would mean war and the eventual defeat of Japan. He defined his approach as **trading space to buy time**.

The drawback of Chiang's strategy

However, the policy of avoiding direct conflict with the occupier proved uninspiring and brought obvious political dangers. Chiang's supporters frequently found it difficult to maintain their loyalty. Throughout his time as leader of the GMD, Chiang was subject to opposition from within its ranks. In 1933 it took him over a year to suppress a rising among his troops at Fujian (Fukien), who were reacting against his failure to confront the Japanese.

In 1935, Chiang had suffered further damage to his reputation as a defender of China when Japanese troops fanned out from Manchuria into six other northern provinces. Rather than confront the Japanese, Chiang came to an agreement with them. He withdrew the GMD forces from Beijing and accepted that the newly occupied provinces be recognised as 'autonomous regions' to be administered by pro-Japanese officials. What was considered by many Chinese to have been craven behaviour by Chiang led to the **9 December Movement**, an episode in which outraged students in Beijing, Shanghai and Wu Han took to the streets in protest. The slogans on their banners conveyed the nature of their anger: 'End the New Imperialism', 'Stop the Civil War', 'Unite Against the Japanese Enemy'.

Mutiny at Xian

The culmination of this deep dissatisfaction with Chiang Kaishek's response to the Japanese threat came with a mutiny among his own troops in December 1936. During a visit to Xian in Shaanxi province, which, ironically, Chiang had undertaken in

Key question
What effect did the Xian Incident have on GMD–CCP relations?

Xian Incident: 1936

9 December
Movement: 1935

Key dates

Trading space to buy time
Giving ground to the Japanese which would both overstretch their resources and allow the Chinese the opportunity to build up their own strength.

9 December Movement
The title was meant to convey the continuity between this 1935 protest and the movements of 4 May 1919 and 30 May 1925.

Key terms

**Zhang Xueliang
(1901–2001)**

Sometimes known as the 'Young Marshal', the son of Zhang Zuolin, warlord of Manchuria until his assassination by the Japanese in 1928.

order to berate his GMD forces for their slowness in crushing the Communists, he found the tables turned; he was seized by troops acting under the orders of General **Zhang Xueliang** (Chang Hsueh-liang). Zhang, whose warlord father had been killed by the Japanese, had been persuaded by the CCP to commit himself to the anti-Japanese struggle and to use his contacts with the Nationalists to embarrass Chiang.

After his arrest Chiang was handed over to Zhou Enlai, Mao's closest colleague, who offered to spare his prisoner's life if he would promise to end his persecution of the CCP and lead a genuine resistance against the Japanese. Finding himself in an impossible position, Chiang Kaishek gave in; in December 1936, he sanctioned the formation of the second GMD–CCP United Front, pledged to wage unceasing war against the Japanese aggressors.

Given the bitter relations between Chiang and the Communists, whom he had been trying for a decade to annihilate, it is at first glance surprising that the CCP did not simply assassinate him. That would have been normal Chinese politics. That the Communists refrained from doing so suggests an interesting degree of subtlety on their part. They took a calculated risk that paid off. By allowing Chiang not merely to survive, but to remain as the recognised leader of China, the CCP had won a major propaganda victory. They had shown remarkable restraint in forgoing party advantage for the sake of the nation. The *quid pro quo* was Chiang's formal commitment to:

- cease all attempts to suppress the CCP
- recognise the CCP as a legitimate party
- lead a new united front against the Japanese invader.

The Communists could now claim that it was they who were the genuine nationalists whose prime motivation was their love of China as expressed in their willingness to fight under Chiang's leadership. At the same time, they had undermined the GMD's claim to be the sole representative of the nation. Moreover, although Chiang eventually went back on his word and renewed his attacks on the Communists, Mao and his followers at Yanan had at least gained a temporary respite which they began to use to good effect in their development of the Yanan Soviet.

Summary diagram: The Xian Incident 1936

Context

- Incident arose from Japanese occupation of northern China after 1931
- Chiang's anti-Japanese strategy of trading space to buy time
- Unambitious policy frustrated many Nationalists

Development

- In December 1936, Zhang Xueliang, a Nationalist general, attempted to reinvigorate Nationalist resistance by seizing Chiang
- Chiang handed over to Communists who struck a bargain with him

Outcome

- Communists spared Chiang's life in return for:
- calling off of GMD campaigns against CCP
 - Chiang's recognition of legitimacy of CCP
 - reforming of United Front against the Japanese

2 | The Communists at Yanan 1935–45

Yanan attracted Communist sympathisers from all over China and a number of foreigners came to visit what they regarded as Mao's experiment in creating a new way of Chinese living. To accommodate the thousands of Communists who came to build the new world, caves were dug into the **loess** hillsides of the region. Although apparently primitive, these in fact provided better conditions than the huts, made from straw and wood, with earthen floors, in which most of the peasants had lived previously in their own provinces. The Yanan Communists were soon growing their own food, which, although not sumptuous, staved off the hunger that was the common lot of most peasants. It is instructive to note that in the years in which the Yanan base was created, 1935–6, the international **Red Cross** was attempting to deal with a widespread famine in other parts of China which accounted for 30 million deaths.

With its reliable, if meagre, food supplies, schools and hospitals, the Yanan Soviet provided its inhabitants with a degree of security and welfare that previously would have been unimaginable. But it was not merely their material needs that were catered for; there was a collective air of confidence at Yanan that came from a feeling of great achievement. The survivors of Jiangxi and the Long March had reason to believe their hardships had not been in vain. They had come through and were now in a position to build a new society. This required realism as well as idealism. They were conscious that to survive in Yanan and the other Communist bases they had to develop some form of reliable economy. Necessarily this would have, at least initially, to be an agricultural one. They had to produce and sell

Key question

What quality of life did the people enjoy in Yanan?

Creation and development of the Yanan Soviet: 1935–45

Loess

A soil that has sufficient consistency to enable it to be dug into and shaped without its collapsing.

Red Cross

An international relief organisation which deliberately refrains from taking sides in wars and disputes and works solely to lessen suffering.

foodstuffs. An interesting variant on this was that, at Yanan, Mao's followers became adept at growing and selling **opium**. During the Yanan years, the CCP raised up to 40 per cent of its income from the marketing of opium.

Key question

What revolutionary concepts did Mao develop while at Yanan?

Key terms

Opium

A narcotic drug that had become highly popular and sellable in China, largely as result of British suppliers forcing it on the Chinese in the nineteenth century.

Bourgeois stage

In Marxist theory, the period of history when the middle class, having overcome the previous feudal system, dominate society until the working-class revolution occurs.

Dialectical imperative

The dynamic force that shapes the historical development of the class war.

Ipso facto

By that very fact.

Mao's political ideas

At Yanan, Mao was able to give practical form to his belief that China's revolution must come from the peasants. This was heresy in the eyes of the Comintern; to them the CCP was too small and historically out of phase. Since China lacked an established proletariat, it was incapable of creating a genuinely proletarian revolution. The best that the CCP could achieve would be to help bring about the **bourgeois stage** of revolution by merging with the Nationalists. Peasant revolution was not an end in itself; it was merely the precursor of the final proletarian revolution.

Mao rejected this analysis and replaced it with his own conviction that for China the people's peasant rising would be sufficient to fulfil the **dialectical imperative**. He tended to despise the purely intellectual approach to revolution which emphasised theoretical concepts without taking sufficient account of the actual conditions in China. For him, the term proletarian described not so much a social class as an attitude. Those who were genuinely committed to revolution were *ipso facto* members of the proletariat. Mao later extended the term proletarian to anyone who had suffered oppression at the hands of class enemies.



The type of cave dug into the loess hillside in which the Communists lived at Yanan. The caves provided shelter from the weather and from the frequent GMD air raids. Some caves were so large that they housed theatres, hospitals and a CCP university at which Mao regularly lectured. How might cave dwelling have increased the sense of collective endeavour at Yanan?



Mao studying in his cave at Yanan in 1937. His accommodation consisted of a number of rooms and offices. His most treasured possession was a large wooden bath which was filled with hot water and in which he loved to lie for hours reading and chain-smoking. Outside his cave he grew tobacco and opium. The sale of opium was one of the Yanan Soviet's major ways of raising money. What were the main political and social ideas that Mao developed at Yanan?

Aided by Yanan's geographical distance from Soviet influence, Mao was able to dominate the urban-orientated members of the CCP and bring the party to accept his line of thinking. He was acting very much in the Chinese tradition of taking from a foreign ideology those elements considered to be of practical value for China. He made Marxism fit the Chinese situation, not the Chinese situation fit Marxism. For some years, he had to contend with opposition from within the party over his reshaping of revolutionary Marxism, but by outmanoeuvring and, where necessary, removing opponents, he was able to establish an unmatched authority and so impose his ideas. Mao had few scruples about how he achieved this. It is known that he tightened his political grip by the use of informers and secret police. There is no reason to believe that, in the story of Mao's rise to power in the CCP, the Futian Incident was an isolated occurrence (see page 72).

Communist control in the countryside

During the Jiangxi and Yanan years Mao's tactics for imposing CCP control in the countryside were essentially simple. Once the Reds had infiltrated or seized a village or region, the landowners were driven out or shot, and the area was declared to be **liberated**. This done, the land was immediately reallocated to the peasants, thereby making them supporters of the CCP soviet that was then established. The character of the land expropriation and distribution policy may be judged from the following extracts

Liberated

The Communist term for the areas they brought under their military and political control.

Key term

Key question

How did the CCP exercise its control in the liberated areas?

Profile: Mao Zedong 1893–1976

- 1893 – Born in Hunan province
- 1901–6 – Attended primary school
- 1912 – Joined anti-Qing army in Hunan
- 1912–18 – Trained as a teacher
- 1918 – Joined the Hunan independence movement
- 1919 – Worked as a librarian at Beijing University
- Helped to organise strikes in Hunan
- 1921 – Became a founder member of the CCP
- 1923 – Joined the GMD
- 1924–7 – Involved in planning GMD–CCP alliance against the warlords
- 1927 – Led the unsuccessful Autumn Harvest Rising
- 1927–34 – Created the Jiangxi Soviet
- 1930 – Suppressed a mutiny in the Red Army at Futian
- 1934–5 – Led the Long March to Yanan
- 1935–45 – Created the Yanan Soviet
- 1938 – Married his third wife, Jiang Qing
- 1942–4 – Crushed opposition within the CCP
- 1945–9 – Led the CCP to victory over the Nationalists
- 1949 – Declared the creation of the People's Republic of China (PRC)
- 1949–76 – Led the PRC
- 1976 – Died

Mao Zedong had been shaped by the violent world in which he grew up. All his experiences as a young revolutionary convinced him that unless he was prepared to use brutal, unyielding methods he could achieve little. He believed in the dialectic as the explanation of life. That was why he had become a Marxist and a founder member of the CCP in 1921. He held that all change, all progress, resulted from suppression of the weaker by the stronger.

Having witnessed the collapse of the Qing in 1911, he then moved to Beijing where in 1919 he took up a post as librarian in Beijing University. It was there that he was introduced to Marxist ideas and developed the conviction that if China was to be truly regenerated it would have to undergo a profound social and political revolution. In 1921, Mao became a founder-member of the CCP and over the next few years helped to organise the GMD–CCP United Front against the warlords. With the failure of the Autumn Harvest Rising (1927), which he led in a desperate attempt to prevent the Communists being destroyed by Chiang Kaishek, Mao fled to Jinggangshan. There over the next seven years Mao helped to establish the Jiangxi Soviet, dedicated to achieving a peasant revolution. He frequently rejected the orders from Moscow which instructed the CCP to base its activities in the towns rather than the countryside.

Under threat of annihilation in 1934 by surrounding Nationalists forces, the Jiangxi Communists undertook the legendary Long March with took them to the safety of Yanan in

the north. It was during the year-long march that Mao began to establish his authority over the CCP, an authority that he then ruthlessly consolidated at Yanan where the Communists established their main base between 1937 and 1945. While at Yanan, the Communists gained a not entirely deserved reputation for being foremost in resisting the Japanese who occupied China between 1931 and 1945.

With the surrender of Japan at the end of the Second World War in 1945, the civil war that had lasted intermittently since the late 1920s was renewed. A fierce four-year struggle for supremacy ended with the complete victory of the Communists. Chiang and the GMD were driven from the Chinese mainland to their one remaining stronghold, the offshore island of Taiwan. In October 1949 Mao triumphantly declared that a new Communist society had come into being: the People's Republic of China (PRC). Mao was destined to rule this new nation for the next quarter century until his death in 1976.

from the CCP's Land Law, first drawn up at Jiangxi in 1932 and applied thereafter:

A. Whose land should be confiscated?

Land, houses, and all forms of property that belonged to members of the gentry and landlords.

B. Who should receive land?

The amount of land to be distributed is the same for all tenant farmers and **poor peasants**. Whether the land of the **middle peasants** should be distributed so as to assure that they have the same amount as that of tenant farmers and poor peasants depends on the decision to be made by the middle peasants themselves.

C. How is land to be redistributed?

Tenant farmers, poor and middle peasants, unemployed farm labourers, and unemployed independent artisans. No government official in any of the revolutionary organisations is entitled to land distribution if he is not a tenant farmer, poor or middle peasant, unemployed farm labourer, coolie, or independent artisan.

D. How is land to be distributed among members of the Red Army?

The relatives of a Red soldier will receive land in the same manner as poor and middle peasants. The land they receive shall not be located too far from where they live.

What the CCP's occupation of the 'liberated areas' actually entailed was described by the Western writer **Edgar Snow**. Writing in 1938, Snow observed:

Poor peasants

Those living at mere subsistence level.

Middle peasants

Those who made a small profit from their farming.

**Edgar Snow
(1905–72)**

An American Communist, who travelled with the Red Army and became a confidant of Mao. Although his writings are now regarded as having been too heavily pro-Mao in their bias, they helped greatly in the West's gaining of an understanding of Chinese Communism.

Key terms

Key figure

While theoretically the soviets were a ‘workers and peasants’ government, in actual practice the whole constituency was overwhelmingly peasant in character. Various committees were established under each of the district soviets. An all-powerful revolutionary committee was elected in a mass meeting shortly after the occupation of a district by the Red Army. Under the district soviet, and appointed by it, were committees for education, co-operatives, military training, political training, land, public health, partisan training, revolutionary defence, enlargement of the Red Army, agrarian mutual aid, Red Army land tilling, and others.

The work of all these organisations and their various committees was co-ordinated by the Central Soviet Government, the Communist Party and the Red Army. The aim of soviet organisation obviously was to make every man, woman, or child a member of something, with definite work assigned to him to perform.

Summary diagram: The Communists at Yanan 1935–45

The Yanan Soviet: an attempt to create an alternative form of Chinese society



- Provided a quality of life and degree of security few of its peasant members had hitherto known
- Created a sense of community and brotherhood



- An essentially repressive system
- Total conformity imposed

Mao's political ideas

- At Yanan, Mao developed his revolutionary ideas and created the ideology on which Chinese Communism was based thereafter
- Basic idea – China's peasant revolution would fulfil the dialectical imperative
- Mao's interpretation meant a permanent divorce from Soviet Russian Communism

Communist control in the countryside

- The Yanan base enabled the CCP to ‘liberate’ large areas of the countryside, turning them into pockets of anti-Nationalist, anti-Japanese resistance

3 | The Role of the Red Army

At Yanan, Mao urged that the first task for the CCP was to consolidate itself as a military force. This was not only in order to be able to fight the Japanese and the Nationalists, but also because, as the Long March had shown, the Red Army was the party's major political weapon. It was the means by which the word was to be spread. Until the Yanan period, the Chinese soldier had not stood high in popular estimation. Recruited from the dregs of society, he had traditionally been a terror to the civilian population. The marauding imperial and warlord armies had wrought fearful havoc among the peasantry. But the Red Army was instructed to behave differently. Its duty was to aid and comfort the people. Mao laid down a code of conduct for his troops, which included such instructions as:

- Be courteous and help out when you can.
- Return all borrowed articles.
- Replace all damaged articles.
- Be honest in all transactions with the peasants.
- Pay for all articles purchased.
- Be sanitary and establish latrines at a distance from people's houses.
- Don't take liberties with women.
- Don't kill prisoners of war.

These instructions have a naïve, boy-scout, quality to them, yet they provided a guide which, when followed, endeared the Red Army to a rural population whose previous experience of marching armies had been unremittingly bitter. The political role played by the Red Army during the Yanan years was part of what Mao described as 'the new democracy'. In a series of reflections, which were published in 1940 under the title *On New Democracy*, Mao defined the revolution which the Chinese Communists were leading not as a class movement but as a national one. Faced with the Japanese occupation of China after 1937 (see page 106), Mao declared the aim of his party to be 'long-term co-operation with all those classes, strata, political groups and individuals who were willing to fight Japan to the end'. He appealed to all Chinese of goodwill to unite against the enemies of the nation.

To encourage unity, Mao chose for a time to play down the CCP's threat to the provincial landowners. Its harsh land-confiscation programme was modified so that only those landlords who actively collaborated with the Japanese had their property seized. At the same time Mao was careful not to depart from the party's policy of forcing down excessive rents and prohibiting the **usury** that had so often blighted the lives of the peasants. These programmes were often implemented through CCP co-operation with the local peasant associations, a technique which encouraged non-party members to feel that they were directly responsible for improving their own conditions.

Key question
What political and social role did Mao require the Red Army to play?

Publication of Mao's *On New Democracy*: 1940

Key date

Usury
Charging exorbitant interest on money loans.

Key term

The same applied to the literacy and education schemes that the CCP introduced. Undoubtedly this sensitivity to the wants of the peasants was the most popular of the CCP's policies and played its part in the growth of the party from 40,000 in 1937 to one million by 1945. It was from this expanding membership that the volunteers for the Red Army came.

It was not all harmony, however. Mao's apparently more understanding approach did not mean the Communists had gone soft. Mao was prepared to be expediently moderate at times but all the moves that the CCP made under him had the essential purpose of strengthening Communist control. Historical balance requires that such admiring descriptions as Edgar Snow's of the CCP's organisation of the peasants be matched by reference to Nationalist denunciations of Mao's policies. The removal of the landlord class in the areas where the Red Army held sway could be a brutal process. A Western spokesman for the GMD, wrote in 1935 of the Communists' 'indescribable reign of terror':

The populace was forced to undergo unnecessary hardships and suffering and to live a life of bondage, a veritable nightmare, instead of receiving equality and benefits and good treatment such as they had been led to believe they would receive.

While this might be viewed as Nationalist propaganda rather than objective reporting, it needs to be borne in mind that, notwithstanding its feeling for the ordinary Chinese and its genuine popularity, Mao's regime was fiercely authoritarian. Villages that would not conform to the demands of the Red's land programme were subject to harsh penalties such as having all their crops and livestock confiscated and ruinous taxes imposed on them.

Summary diagram: The role of the Red Army

Mao's concept of the Red Army

- Not simply a military force but also a propaganda weapon
- Soldiers urged to relate to the peasants

In practice

- At its most understanding, the Red Army brought security to the localities
- At its harshest, the Red Army instituted a reign of terror

4 | The ‘Rectification of Conduct’ Campaign 1942–4

For all its claims to be a movement of liberation, the brand of Communism that Mao developed at Yanan was fundamentally oppressive. Discipline and obedience to instructions were required of all those living under it. In one sense this was understandable, given that the regime was engaged in a constant fight for survival against both the Japanese and the GMD. But it went deeper than that. Mao had begun to manifest a belief that was to become a dominant feature of his outlook – the notion of **revolutionary correctness**. He held that, unless the party maintained a constant struggle against wrong thinking, the revolution would be betrayed from within. For Mao, an obvious danger was that those responsible for running the party would become a bureaucratic, self-justifying élite. To fight this tendency, in 1942 he launched a ‘rectification of conduct’ campaign. Party members were to engage in public self-criticism. To assist them in their search for revolutionary truth they were obliged to study prescribed texts, among which Mao’s own writings figured prominently.

The chief organiser of the rectification campaign was Mao’s head of security, **Kang Sheng**. A frightening figure, who dressed totally in black and rode a jet-black horse, Kang, asserting that 70 per cent of the party were infected by **revisionist** ideas, made it his task to expose and punish them. In Mao’s name, Kang ordered the arrest of some 1000 CCP members, many of whom were subsequently imprisoned and tortured.

Peter Vladimirov, a Russian Comintern agent, described the oppressive atmosphere that he observed at first hand in Yanan:

Party discipline is based on stupidly rigid forms of criticism and self-criticism. The president of each cell decides who is to be criticised and for what reason. In general it is a Communist who is attacked each time. The accused has only one right: to repent his ‘errors’. If he considers himself to be innocent or appears insufficiently repentant, the attacks are renewed ... The cruel method of psychological coercion that Mao calls moral purification has created a stifling atmosphere inside the party in Yanan. A not negligible number of party activists in the region have committed suicide, have fled or have become psychotic. Under the protocol of criticism and self-criticism, the thoughts and aspirations and actions of everyone are on full view.

Vladimirov was not exaggerating the psychological effects of the rectification campaign. Sixty Communist Party officials committed suicide rather than undergo public humiliation. Mao did relent a little in the light of such grim news and lessened the severity of the campaign, but he was in no way apologetic about the need for the rectification process itself. He curtly dismissed suggestions

Key question
What methods did Mao use to enforce his authority at Yanan?

Rectification Movement: 1942–4

Revolutionary correctness
The idea that Chinese Communism (Maoism) was a body of political, social and economic truth which all CCP members had to accept and live by.

Revisionist
Reactionary, anti-party thinking.

Kang Sheng (1898–1975)
Trained in Moscow in interrogation techniques, he became Mao’s feared security and intelligence chief.

Key date

Key terms

Key figure

that individual suffering should be allowed to modify party policy. In 1942, he wrote:

Some comrades see only the interests of the party and not the whole. They do not understand the party's system of democratic centralism; they do not understand that the Communist Party not only needs democracy but needs centralisation even more. The party's interests are above personal or sectional interests.

Notable victims of the rectification campaign were **Wang Shiwei** and **Ding Ling**. Wang was a brilliant young Communist writer who in 1942 published an article heavily critical of members of the CCP who lived comfortable lives in Yanan while Red Army comrades were dying in the struggle against the Japanese and the GMD. For this, he was rounded on by those party officials who felt that they had been implicitly accused. Mao, angered by Wang Shiwei's charge that he as leader was deporting himself irresponsibly with pretty young women, backed the officials and chose to attack Wang as representing the **intellectual class** he despised.

Initially, a number of other writers came to Wang's defence. One of these was the feminist Ding Ling, who had joined the CCP only to be shocked by what she regarded as the party's hypocrisy in relation to the principle of female equality. The CCP claimed to treat women as equals, but her experience was that women in the party were in practice treated as inferiors. However, when Ding made her findings public she was brought before a party gathering and accused of insulting the CCP. She broke under the pressure, withdrew her previous criticisms and also abandoned Wang Shiwei. Left friendless, Wang was then subjected to a **show trial** at which he was accused of 'anti-party thinking'. He resisted bravely, refusing to retract what he had written. But his courage earned him a life sentence and eventual execution in 1947 on Mao's personal order. His body was chopped into small bits and thrown down a well.

Wang Shiwei's disgrace had the intended effect. It put the frighteners on the CCP's officials. Between 1943 and 1944, leading party members came forward to engage in public self-criticism. It was an extraordinary spectacle. Expressing contrition for past mistakes, they pledged total loyalty to Mao Zedong and the party. Even Zhou Enlai admitted to having previously been dilatory in supporting Mao Zedong.

Consequences of the Rectification Movement

- Mao had rid himself of opposition and consolidated his position as leader.
- Mao had finally triumphed over the pro-Moscow wing of the party.
- Mao had begun to move towards **cult status** in Yanan.
- Chinese Communism was now so closely identified with Mao personally that it had become Maoism.

Key figures

Wang Shiwei

(1906–47)

The son of a Mandarin scholar, Wang, a believer in social justice, was offended by the CCP's coercive way of promoting Communism.

Ding Ling

(1904–86)

Imprisoned at various times by both the GMD and the CCP, Ding was a prolific novelist and essayist and remained a lifelong feminist.

Key terms

Intellectual class

Although himself possessed of a very powerful intellect, Mao had an abiding distrust of intellectuals, by whom he meant those who merely talked and theorised rather than acting.

Show trial

Public hearings in which the accused is paraded as an enemy of the people.

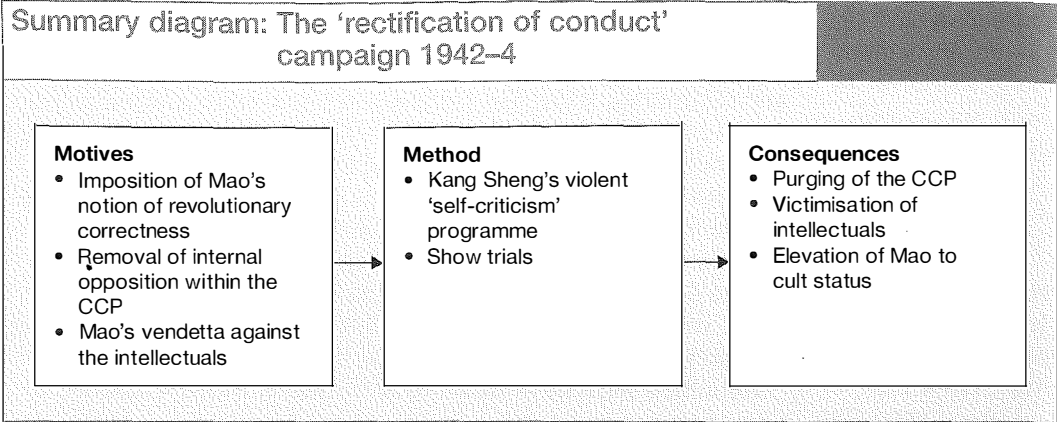
Cult status

A position that entitles the holder to a special veneration among the people.

- Mao's election as Chairman of the Central Committee of the CCP in 1943 was a formal recognition of his dominance over the party.
- By 1945, when the Japanese war came to an end, Mao was being regularly referred to as the '**great helmsman**'.

Great helmsman
A reference to Mao's supposed wisdom and ability in guiding the ship of state.

Key term



5 | Mao and the Soviet Union During the Yanan Years

Throughout the years 1935–45, Mao and his followers received little help from the Soviet Union in their struggle against the Nationalists. Stalin's primary aim was make the Chinese Communists conform to his notions of Marxist revolution. That was why Mao was engaged in a continuous struggle to prevent his party and the Yanan Soviet from being taken over by the pro-Moscow members of the CCP. His success in resisting Soviet pressure reduced Stalin to disparaging Mao and his followers as being Communists only in name: 'they are "white" at heart, even though they wear "red" jackets'.

It was for self-interested reasons that the USSR declined to give the CCP full support in its war with the Japanese. Believing that the Chinese Communists were far weaker than the Nationalists, Stalin gave his main backing throughout the 1930s to Chiang Kaishek. This was not out of any sense of goodwill towards China. Stalin's hope was that by encouraging GMD resistance to the Japanese occupation of China that began in earnest in 1937, Russia would then be less likely itself to be the object of **Japanese expansionism**. Broadly, this policy worked. There was a series of Russo-Japanese incidents in the late 1930s that led to fighting on the Manchurian border, but these were resolved in 1941 with the signing of a non-aggression pact between the Soviet Union and Japan. This held good until August 1945 when, in keeping with a commitment given to the Allies at Yalta in February 1945, the USSR declared war on Japan only days before the Japanese surrender in August of that year.

Key question
Why were relations between the CCP and the Soviet Union so strained during the Yanan period?

Russo-Japanese non-aggression pact: 1941

Japanese expansionism
Stalin's concern was that imperialist Japan would exploit the Soviet Union's problems on its European borders to encroach on Russian territory in the Far East.

Key date

Key term

Barbarossa

The codename for the German invasion of the Soviet Union beginning in June 1941.

Kremlin

Although, strictly speaking, the Moscow palace which housed the Soviet government, the word is often used to refer to the government itself.

Nazi–Soviet pact

A 10-year non-aggression agreement between Germany and the USSR, signed in August 1939.

Mao's differences with Stalin

Despite Stalin's later claim that the creation of the Chinese People's Republic in 1949 (see page 137) owed as much to the leadership and example of the USSR as it did to the CCP's own efforts, Mao could justly claim that his party had survived 25 years of civil war and 15 years of Japanese occupation without help from the Soviet Union. Indeed, had Soviet advice been followed, there would not have been a viable CCP.

An extraordinary incident indicates the antipathy between Mao and Stalin. This relates to the launching of Germany's **Barbarossa** campaign in June 1941. Two days before the attack, Zhou Enlai, who had received his information via the GMD's anti-Japanese spy network, sent precise details of the German invasion plans to the **Kremlin**. These were acknowledged by Molotov, the Soviet foreign secretary, but Stalin declined to act on them, since this would have been to admit the failure of the whole of his diplomacy towards Germany since the **Nazi–Soviet pact** of 1939.

The Russian leader's refusal to face reality in June 1941 very nearly destroyed him and the USSR. Although he subsequently recovered his nerve and became an outstanding war leader, Stalin, in the eyes of Mao and the Chinese Communists, was never again to be fully trusted as a revolutionary. It is true that there would be intermittent *rapprochements* between the Kremlin and the CCP, but these were never to develop into a genuine understanding or a joint sense of purpose.

Key question

What was the significance for China of the dissolution of the Comintern in 1943?

Dissolution of the Comintern: 1943

International Communist revolution

The declared purpose of the Comintern since its founding in 1919.

Liberation Daily

The CCP's chief newspaper.

The dissolution of the Comintern 1943

In 1943, Stalin made a remarkable diplomatic move when he ordered the disbanding of the Comintern. No longer would it operate in China or elsewhere. Striking development though this was, it has to be seen as a part of the USSR's Second World War diplomacy. The chief motive behind it was the Soviet wish to impress its wartime ally, the USA, with its good intentions by publicly demonstrating that it had abandoned its former policy of fomenting **international Communist revolution**. The Comintern's dissolution was a temporary wartime expedient as was evident in its re-establishment in 1947, albeit under another name, the Cominform. Nevertheless, there are grounds for regarding the 1943 dissolution as a tacit admission by the Soviet Union that it was incapable of directly shaping Chinese Communism.

That was how a delighted Mao interpreted it in 1943. It vindicated his persistence in refusing to bow to Soviet pressure during the previous decades. **Liberation Daily** reported a speech he gave to the CCP at Yanan in which he spelled out the reasons why the Comintern had to be dissolved:

Correct leadership should be based on careful, detailed study of local conditions which can only be done by each of the Communist parties in its own country. The Comintern, far away from the actual struggle, can no longer provide proper leadership.

The leadership in each of the world's Communist parties has grown steadily and has become politically more mature. Comrade Mao cited the CCP as an example. The CCP has created its own experienced, veteran cadres of the finest quality.

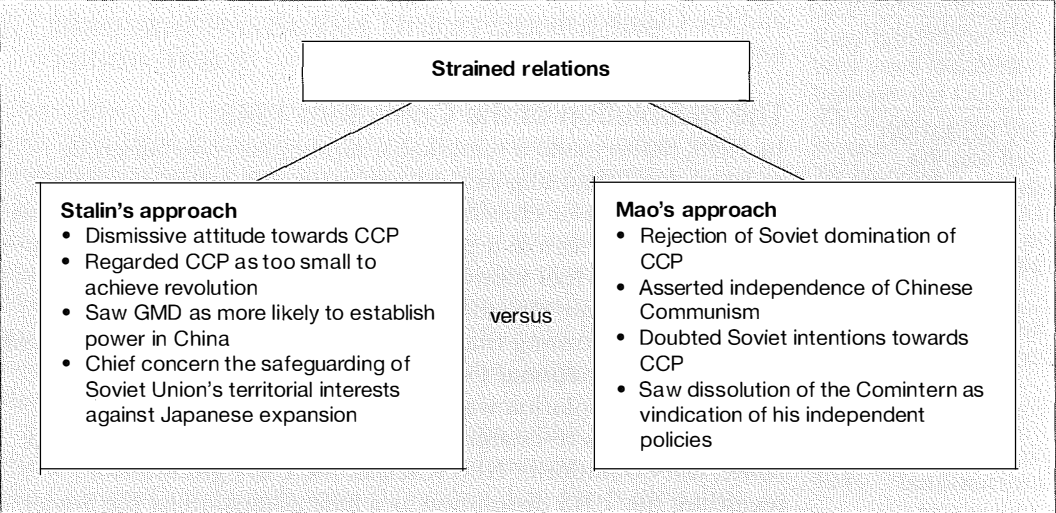
[Unaided], the CCP has done exceptionally well in waging liberation warfare against the Japanese aggression.

Comrade Mao also pointed out that revolutionary movement can be neither exported nor imported. It is the Chinese proletariat who have created and developed the Chinese Communist Party.

The principle of Marxism–Leninism dictates that the organisational form of a revolution should be subservient to the practical need of the revolution.

Essentially what Mao was saying was that the hegemony of the USSR in international Communism was no longer appropriate. China's Communist revolution would be run on Chinese not Russian lines. It was an assertion of Chinese independence and provided a fitting commentary on 20 years of increasing Sino-Soviet estrangement.

Summary diagram: Mao and the Soviet Union during the Yanan years



5

The Japanese Occupation of China 1931–45

POINTS TO CONSIDER

Japan had long harboured designs on Chinese territory and resources. In 1931 it made its first major move by occupying the resource-rich northern province of Manchuria. From that base it began to spread out over other parts of China, establishing, as in Manchuria, Japanese puppet regimes. In 1937 a full-blown Sino-Japanese war broke out when Japan, on a flimsy pretext, decided to extend its control over a much wider area of China. The war was to have a profound influence on China's internal politics and its international relations. These developments are studied under the following headings:

- The origins of Sino-Japanese hostility
- The Japanese occupation of Manchuria 1931–7
- China and Japan at war 1937–41
- China and Japan at war 1941–5
- The sudden ending of the war 1945
- The aftermath of the Japanese war

Key dates

1922	Washington Naval Conference
1927	Tanaka Memorial
1931	Japanese occupation of Manchuria
1933	Japan withdrew from League of Nations
1936	Xian Incident
1937	Sino-Japanese war started Rape of Nanjing
1940	CCP's '100 Regiments Offensive'
1940–4	Wang Jingwei's 'New Government of China'
1941	Pearl Harbor attack brought USA into Sino-Japanese war
1944	Ichigo offensive
1945	Atomic bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki Japanese surrender Soviet–GMD friendship treaty

1 | The Origins of Sino-Japanese Hostility

In the nineteenth century, Japan and China had shared a similar attitude to the outside world. Although traditionally hostile towards each other, these oriental neighbours had for centuries regarded themselves as superior cultures, looking on other peoples as barbarians. Consequently, it came as a great shock to both nations when, in the middle years of the century, they were subjected to the control of the European imperial powers and forced to accept a series of 'unequal treaties' that opened their ports to European shipping (see page 9).

Japan's response, in marked contrast to China's, was swift and successful. The Japanese adopted a series of extensive reforms aimed at rapid modernisation along Western lines. This reassertion of national pride is particularly identified with the **Meiji period**. Abandoning the age-old policy of **Japanese exclusiveness**, the Meiji regime initiated wide-ranging economic, social and political reforms. The most significant change was in regard to the armed services. **Militarism** became a potent expression of Japan's new self-belief. By the turn of the century the Japanese army, structured on the German system, and the navy, modelled on the British, had developed a fearsome military capability. This was dramatically evident in Japan's crushing defeat of China in 1895 and of Russia in 1905 (see page 22). Triumph in war united the Japanese nation, sanctified the concept of martial glory and attracted foreign investment.

At every major point of comparison with Japan – political, economic, military, diplomatic – China came second. Japan entered the twentieth century, united, prosperous, assertive and able to claim equality with the West. In contrast, China was fragmented, bankrupt, subservient and at the mercy of the West. This meant that the traditional Sino-Japanese rivalry would continue into the twentieth century in the form of Japan's persistent efforts to use its strength to exploit China's weakness. The First World War, and the Versailles Treaty that followed, provided the opportunity for Japan to increase its hold on China (see page 38).

Japanese designs on China

In 1919, the USA had declined to join the **League of Nations**, preferring to protect its interests by remaining detached from international associations. In keeping with this, the Americans hosted the Washington Naval Conference in 1922, at which the major maritime nations, including Japan, signed a Nine-power Agreement in which they undertook to recognise each other's respective spheres of influence. The American hope was that the agreement would lessen the threat to the USA in the Pacific posed by Japanese expansionism. Had the agreement been followed by an American offer of trade terms to Japan, that indeed might

Key question

Why had Japan modernised more effectively than China by 1900?

Meiji period

The reign of Japanese Emperor Meiji (1869–1914).

Japanese exclusiveness

Deliberate detachment from contact with other nations.

Militarism

The idea that a nation best expresses its true character through martial strength.

League of Nations

Set up in 1919 as the main body for settling international disputes.

Key question

What place did China have in Japan's expansionist schemes?

Washington Naval Conference: 1922

Key terms

Key date

Tariff

Levies raised on imports.

Greater East Asian Co-prosperity Sphere

Theoretically, co-operation between Japan and China, but in reality Japanese domination of China.

have been the outcome. But rather than encourage commerce, the USA did the reverse; it adopted a high-**tariff** policy which severely restricted its import of foreign goods. The result was that Japan was deprived of an essential trade outlet. Without access to the American market, the Japanese could not accumulate the capital they needed to purchase essential raw materials.

The economic recession that followed in Japan encouraged those elements in its government which argued that only by an aggressive policy of expansion could the nation gain the territories and resources that it required. This, in turn, strengthened the case for further encroachment on Chinese territory as a step towards much wider Japanese control of east Asia and the western Pacific. Such plans were the forerunners of what became known as the **Greater East Asian Co-prosperity Sphere**, a Japanese euphemism for its own imperial expansion.

So, despite having promised in the Nine-power Agreement to respect Chinese sovereignty and to return the disputed territory of Shandong, Japan made little effort to hide its intentions towards China. This intensified the anti-foreigner bitterness among the Chinese. In 1925, there occurred the 30 May Incident, a violent demonstration against the Japanese presence in China (see page 51). However, with China still lacking a strong central government and weakened by the warlords, only token resistance to the Japanese could be mounted at this stage.

Key question

What impact did the Memorial have on Sino-Japanese relations?

The Tanaka Memorial 1927

The disorder created by the 30 May Incident was eagerly seized on by the Japanese as a justification for tightening their hold on China. The War Party, an increasingly dominant influence in Japan's imperial cabinet, demanded the occupation of Manchuria and Mongolia as the first step in Japan's conquest of the whole of Asia. Its view was powerfully expressed in the Tanaka Memorial, a document that took its name from the petition submitted to the emperor in 1927 by General Tanaka, the prime minister. The Memorial urged that Japan should abandon the promise it had given in 1922 at the Washington Conference to honour Chinese sovereignty. The argument was that Japanese needs made it imperative that Manchuria be occupied: as well as being a source of urgently required raw materials, the region would provide living space for Japan's expanding population:

The territory [Manchuria and Mongolia] is more than three times as large as our own empire, but it is inhabited by only one-third as many people.

The restrictions of the Nine-power Treaty have reduced our special rights and privileges in Manchuria and Mongolia to such an extent that there is no freedom left for us. The very existence of our country is endangered.

Tanaka Memorial: 1927

In Japan her food supply and raw materials decrease in proportion to her population. If we merely hope to develop trade, we shall eventually be defeated by England and America, who possess unsurpassable capitalistic power. In the end we shall get nothing. A more dangerous factor is the fact that the people of China might some day wake up. We must beware lest one day China becomes unified.

The way to gain actual rights in Manchuria and Mongolia is to use this region as a base and, under the pretence of trade and commerce, penetrate the rest of China. Having China's entire resources at our disposal we shall proceed to conquer India, Asia Minor, Central Asia, and even Europe. But to get control of Manchuria and Mongolia is the first step.

Japanese fears

It is important not to dismiss Japan's hostility towards China simply as naked aggression. There was in Japan at this time a real sense of crisis, a profound fear that unless it took immediate steps to acquire living space for its population and resources for its industries it would be unable to sustain itself as a modern state. Those Japanese whose attitude was represented by the Tanaka Memorial were convinced that China's vast land mass gave it an advantage denied to Japan. They felt that time was against them; if Japan did not seize the moment to expand its territory and increase its resources, it would enter into irreversible national decline.

From time to time doubts have been cast on the authenticity of the Tanaka Memorial. There have been suggestions that it was a Chinese forgery drawn up with the obvious intention of embarrassing the Japanese diplomatically. But, forgery or not, the crucial point was that the document was an exact expression of Japan's prevailing attitude towards China. In all essentials Japanese policy from 1927 onwards was conducted in keeping with the programme and spirit of the Memorial. Moreover, the Memorial's analysis of Japan's economic position was undeniably realistic. China was essential to Japan's economy:

- Over 80 per cent of Japan's total overseas investments were in China.
- The greater part of those were in Manchuria.
- China accounted for a quarter of Japan's international trade, with Manchuria as the principal import–export region.

Key question

How did the Japanese army and navy differ in their strategic concerns?

Key terms**Pearl Harbor**

The American naval base in Hawaii, which Japan attacked in 1941 with the aim of destroying the US Pacific fleet and thus preventing the Americans from fighting an effective war.

Depression

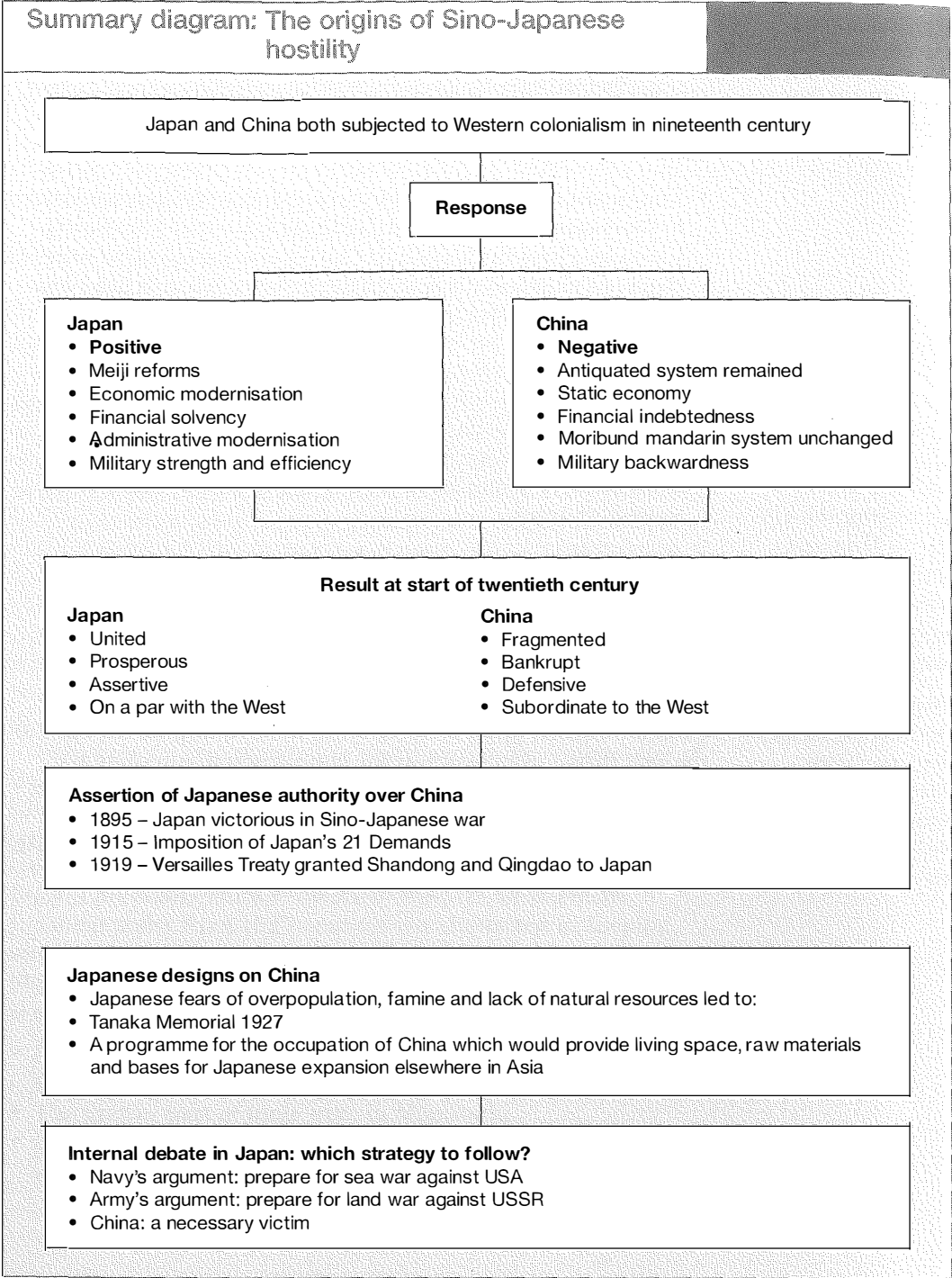
Between 1929 and the late 1930s, there was a serious slump in industrial production and international trade.

Japanese strategy

It should be emphasised that politically Japan was far from being totally united at this time. Factions within the country argued over the correct character and pace of the nation's development. This political divide was matched by disagreements between the two main wings of Japan's armed forces:

- The predominant view of the army was that the greatest danger to the nation came from the USSR, which wanted to exploit China as a base from which to overwhelm Japan. Army analysts claimed that Russia, still smarting from its defeat at Japanese hands in 1905, was intent on regaining the former tsarist territories in the Far East.
- In contrast, the Japanese admiralty held strongly that the greater threat was not the USSR but the USA, whose naval strength in the Pacific was a barrier to legitimate Japanese expansion; therefore, Japan's pressing need was to develop a strategy that encompassed the waging of a successful naval war against America.

As the Japanese attack on **Pearl Harbor** in 1941 was to show, it was the navy's argument that eventually prevailed. However, in the 1920s and 1930s, it was the army's viewpoint that predominated. The generals and their civilian spokesmen deliberately fostered an atmosphere of tension and crisis, claiming that unless Japan immediately protected its Chinese flank it would be open to Soviet incursion. What gave strength to the War Party's argument was the contraction in international trade that accompanied the worldwide **Depression** in the 1930s. Japan could no longer sell its goods abroad. This commercial crisis made it imperative that Japan consolidate its hold over Asia as a means of avoiding economic ruin.



Key question

On what pretext did Japan occupy Manchuria in 1931?

2 | The Japanese Occupation of Manchuria 1931–7

The Shenyang incident

The Japanese were cynical in their dealings with China. They secretly sought to destabilise the Chinese Republic while at the same time openly claiming that China's weakness gave them a right to interfere in order to protect Japan's vital interests. It is true that there was disagreement among the Japanese leaders over this two-faced approach. There were voices calling for restraint, but these tended to be shouted down by the **hawks** in the cabinet. This was evident in the Shenyang incident, the event that provided the pretext for the Japanese invasion of Manchuria in 1931. A group of Japanese officers in the **Guandong army** concocted a plot in which they blew up a stretch of the southern Manchurian railway near Shenyang (Mukden), the Manchurian capital, and then blamed the act on Chinese saboteurs. The officers, who were in league with the War Party in Tokyo, then appealed to the Japanese government to authorise the punishment of the Chinese rebels.

Without waiting for a response, the Guandong army launched a full-scale sweep across Manchuria. Within six months the province was under Japanese military occupation. The Tokyo government, which had been initially reluctant to give unqualified backing to the Guandong army, found itself borne along by war mania in Japan. Dismissing the doubts raised by its more moderate members, the government sanctioned the formal takeover of Manchuria and then defended its actions against the international protests that followed. Chiang Kaishek appealed to the League of Nations for concerted action against the Japanese aggression. The League did pass a number of resolutions condemning the Japanese action but it was powerless to alter the situation. In any case, Japan showed its contempt for international opinion by wholly ignoring the resolutions and then formally withdrawing from the League in 1933.

Manchuguo

In 1932, the Japanese consolidated their occupation of Manchuria by formally changing its name to Manchuguo and declaring it to be an independent Chinese nation, ruled by Pu Yi, the last emperor of the Qing dynasty (see page 12). But in reality it was a puppet state under direct Japanese control. As with the Shenyang incident, the creation of Manchuguo was the result of a local Japanese initiative which the Tokyo government was then pressured into accepting. The expansionist drive in Japan was gaining an unstoppable momentum.

In 1932, on a similar pretext, Japanese troops moved into Shanghai. This time there was resistance. **Cai Tingkai**, the city's garrison commander, led his troops in a counterattack that obliged the Japanese to come to terms. One result was the creation of a combined Sino-Japanese administration to run Shanghai. Yet despite the appearance of co-operation, it was the

Key terms

Hawks

The aggressive pro-war element.

Guandong army

The Japanese army already stationed in Guandong province.

Key dates

Japanese occupation of Manchuria: 1931

Japan withdrew from League of Nations: 1933

Key figure

Cai Tingkai (1892–1968)

Fought against the Japanese as a commander of the Nationalist Revolutionary Army, but was forced into exile in 1934 when he opposed Chiang Kaishek. He later returned to China and joined the Chinese Communists.

Japanese who dominated the joint government. Those Chinese who worked for the occupiers became collaborators, hated by their own people and despised by the Japanese.

The significance of Japan's occupation of Manchuria

Japan's seizure of Manchuria in 1931 proved to be the first stage in a Sino-Japanese conflict that was to last until 1945. It was a struggle that fundamentally changed the course of Chinese history. The internal political conflict within China was to be determined by the way the war was conducted and eventually concluded. The initial reaction of the Chinese parties to the occupation was to unite against Japan as the common enemy. But from the beginning, the unity was more apparent than real. Chiang Kaishek always regarded resistance to Japan as secondary to his aim of destroying the Communists. His basic strategy was to give ground before the Japanese invaders, judging that they would never be able to conquer such a vast country as China. Although there were occasions when he found it expedient to unite with the Reds against the invader, his priority remained the crushing of the Communist enemy within China (see page 55). In any case, whatever the United Front's declared objectives may have been, there was little chance of realising them immediately; Japan was too powerfully entrenched.

The Sino-Japanese question as an international issue

There was no lack of international interest in the Sino-Japanese conflict. Newsreels carried grim pictures of Japanese atrocities in China into cinemas worldwide. Indeed, Western perceptions of the horror of modern warfare were often drawn from the scenes of the Japanese bombing of Chinese civilians as depicted in these films. Yet this did not create any real determination on the part of the international community to become involved in the struggle. The League of Nations continued to criticise Japanese outrages, but its protests were little more than gestures. The Americans similarly condemned Japan for its inhumanity, but although individual volunteers, such as General **Claire Chennault** and his team of 'flying tigers', fought for the Chinese, the USA as a nation was not prepared before 1941 to become directly engaged in the struggle. It preferred at this stage to guard its Pacific interests against Japanese expansion by economic rather than military sanctions.

Europe

Initially, Europe was no more willing than the USA to respond actively. France and Britain individually expressed anger at Japan's treatment of the Chinese, but, apart from taking extra precautions to safeguard their own interests in the region, they made no positive move to resist Japan. It is true that they recognised and paid verbal tributes to Chiang Kaishek as leader

Key question

What impact did the Japanese occupation have on China's internal politics?

Key question

Why was there no organised international resistance to Japan's aggression towards China?

Claire Chennault (1893–1958)

A tough Texan hero figure who built a team of fighter pilots who fought as an independent unit for Chiang Kaishek against the Japanese and the Communists.

of the Chinese people in their resistance to the aggressor, but, right up to the time of Pearl Harbor, Western commercial links with Japan were maintained. In the case of the Western oil companies, their volume of trade with Japan actually increased between 1937 and 1941 as they sought to cash in on Japan's growing military need for fuel.

The reaction of the Axis powers

Japan's humiliation of China earned the approval of the **Axis powers**. As fascist states, they looked on Japan as an oriental version of themselves. Such convergence of feeling became formalised with the creation in 1936 of the **Anti-Comintern Pact**. Germany was naturally cautious in regard to Japanese expansion since it still hankered after its former possessions in the Far East. But on the broader political issues Japan and Germany now had much in common. The result was that Germany was prepared to give Japan a free hand in its dealings with China.

Japan's treatment of occupied China

The reluctance of the international powers to become involved meant that in the initial stages of the Sino-Japanese War, 1937–41, China stood alone. There was thus no restriction on the way Japan behaved. The approach of the Japanese to their occupation of China had two main features. At the same time as they increased their control over the Chinese, their ministers endeavoured to create better relations with China's leaders. This apparent contradiction followed from Japan's readiness, when expedient, to emphasise the racial and historical links that bound the two peoples together. Japan argued that it made perfect sense to look towards a common Sino-Japanese future. The Japanese were anxious to make east Asia an area of oriental resistance to Western domination. In 1936, Hirota Koki, Japan's foreign minister, showed intense irritation at the GMD's attempt to negotiate a special loan from the USA. He complained that Japan was now sufficient for all China's needs.

Yet Koki punctuated his appeal to the common links between the two nations with demands that the Chinese recognise Japan's special rights and privileges in China. Clearly, Japanese notions of co-operation rested on the assumption that Japan would remain very much the dominant partner. This was evident in Japan's creation by 1934 of further collaborationist governments, on the Shanghai model, in Hebei and Inner Mongolia. These were termed 'Autonomous Councils', but, far from being independent Chinese governments, they were, like Manchuguo, simply a front behind which the Japanese maintained their control.

Axis powers

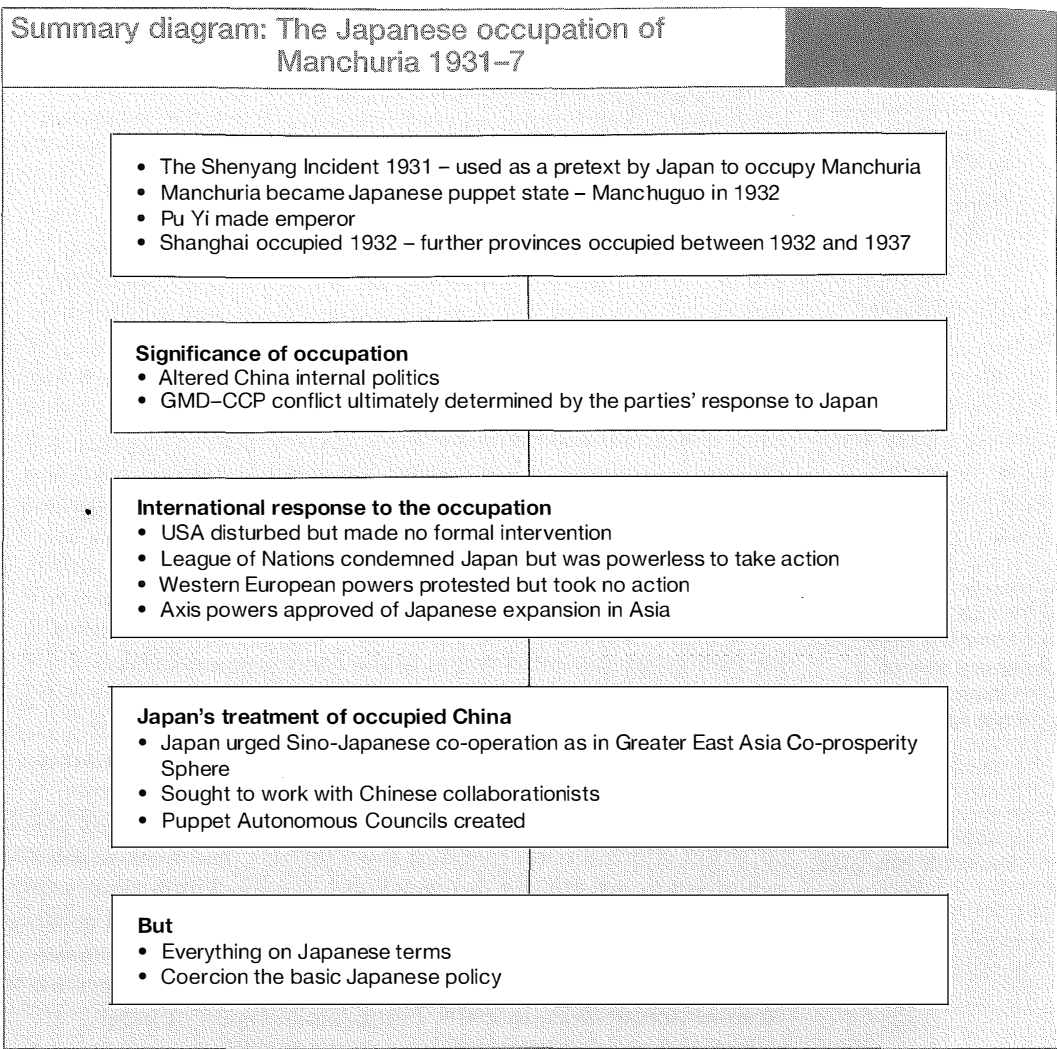
Hitler's Nazi Germany and Mussolini's Fascist Italy.

Anti-Comintern Pact

An agreement in 1936 between Germany, Italy and Japan declaring their joint hostility to the Soviet Union.

Key question

How sincere were the Japanese in urging the Chinese to co-operate with them?



3 | China and Japan at War 1937–41

In 1937, having already established many areas of control during the previous six years, the Japanese began a large-scale occupation of China that was to last until 1945. The Sino-Japanese war divides into two distinct sections: 1937–41 and 1941–5. During the first phase Japan made rapid advances down the eastern seaboard (see the map on page 114) to which the Chinese response was a mixture of unavailing resistance and appeasement. The second phase saw the Chinese struggle become part of the Second World War with the USA as China's main ally.

Key question
Why did the Chinese suffer so severely at the hands of the Japanese?

'Double Seventh'

Start of the Sino-Japanese War, 7 July 1937. There is a Chinese tradition of referring to significant events by the coincidence of day and month.

Marco Polo Bridge

An important crossing point, 10 miles outside Beijing.

Sino-Japanese war started: 1937

Xian Incident: 1936

1937–41

On 7 July 1937 (the **'Double Seventh'**), a relatively minor clash between Chinese and Japanese troops occurred at the **Marco Polo Bridge**. The confrontation had been deliberately planned by the Japanese to create trouble. Using the clash as a pretext, Japan demanded that, in order to prevent further trouble, the GMD government yield even greater authority to the occupying forces in China. On this occasion, Chiang Kaishek refused to make concessions. He declared to the Chinese people that their country was now in a state of total war against Japan. 'If we allow one inch more of our territory to be lost, we shall be guilty of an unpardonable crime against our race.'

This was very much in the spirit of the 1936 Xian Incident agreement (see page 82). It seemed to betoken a new commitment on Chiang's part to lead the United Front in genuine resistance to occupation. But his resolve was to wax and wane; throughout the ensuing eight years of the Sino-Japanese war, Chiang's principal aim remained the defeat of the Communists; victory over Japan was a means to that end.

Nonetheless, there was little doubt that his stand in 1937 was a powerful symbol of China's will to fight. From that date on, until 1945, a bitter Sino-Japanese struggle ensued. Initially, matters went badly for the Chinese. By 1938, Beijing, Shanghai, Ghangzhou and Nanjing had all fallen to Japan, disasters which obliged the GMD government to withdraw their capital west up the Yangzi River to Chongqing (see the map on page 114).

Japanese brutality

The most distressing aspect of the Sino-Japanese war was the savagery with which the Chinese were treated by the occupiers. Early and easy military successes in the war confirmed in the minds of the Japanese the deeply held conviction that they were

The aftermath of a Japanese air raid on Shanghai in 1937. Although the picture appears to have been composed by the photographer, there is little doubt that what became an iconic image represented the reality of the Japanese bombardments of Chinese cities. What is there about the photo that suggests it was posed?



a **superior race**, who were entitled to treat those they defeated with total contempt. One of the commanders of the first Japanese invasion force to arrive in China in 1937, Sakai Ryu, declared: 'The Chinese people are bacteria infesting world civilisation.' Lieutenant Ryukichi of the Imperial Japanese Army remarked to a foreign correspondent, 'you and I have diametrically-different views of the Chinese. You may be dealing with them as human beings, but I regard them as swine. We can do anything to such creatures.'

The rape of Nanjing 1937

It was Japanese contempt for the Chinese that resulted in one of the worst atrocities in twentieth-century warfare: the rape of Nanjing. In December 1937, after spirited resistance and the refusal of its defenders to surrender, the city eventually fell to the Japanese attackers. Responding to the specific instruction of their commander, Asaka Yasuhiko, 'to kill all captives', the Japanese soldiers engaged in a sustained month-long programme of murder and terror. The details tell their own story:

- 300,000 Chinese people were slaughtered during the four-week period.
- The ways of killing included: shooting, bayoneting, beheading, burying alive, soaking in petrol and setting on fire, and suspending on meat hooks.
- 20,000 girls and women were serially raped regardless of their age. Many were so abused that they died from the rape itself or the mutilations that were inflicted afterwards; those who did not were bayoneted to death.
- A Japanese private later confessed, 'We sent out coal trucks to the city streets and villages to seize a lot of women. And then each of them was allocated to 15–20 soldiers for sexual intercourse and abuse.'
- Half of the city was burned to ashes.

The savagery of the Japanese after the fall of Nanjing appalled international opinion. The following is an extract from the evidence at the **war-crimes tribunal** held by the Allies in 1947:

Because the defenders of Nanjing had continued to resist and refused to surrender, the Japanese army, after capturing the city, conducted a systematic campaign of murder to show its revenge, hatred and frustration.

The total number of civilians and prisoners of war who fell victim to this campaign of mass murder was well beyond 300,000. Dead bodies were piled from one street corner to another, and no words, however eloquent, were adequate enough to describe this atrocity of unprecedented scale.

For instance, at 1p.m. on 15 December 1937, 2000 of the city's police force, having been captured by the Japanese army, were marched toward an area outside of the Hanchung Gate where they were systematically machine-gunned. Those who were wounded were subsequently buried alive.

Key question

What did the behaviour of the Japanese in Nanjing reveal about their attitude towards the Chinese?

Rape of Nanjing:
1937

Superior race

An equivalent Japanese notion to the Nazi concept of the master race.

War-crimes tribunal

Held mainly in Tokyo and modelled on the Nuremberg trials in Germany at which the Nazi war criminals were arraigned.

Key date

Key terms

On 14 December, Yao Chia-lung was ordered to watch the performance when Japanese soldiers took turns raping his wife. When his eight-year-old son and three-year-old daughter pleaded for mercy on behalf of their mother, the rapers picked them up with their bayonets and roasted them to death over a campfire. From 13 to 17 December a large number of Japanese troops took turns raping a young maiden in the street outside of the Chunghua Gate; and, when a group of Buddhist monks passed by, they were ordered to rape this girl too. After the monks had refused to comply with this order, the Japanese cut off their penises, an act which caused the monks to bleed to death.

The conduct of the Japanese troops in Nanjing was intended to spread terror among local populations throughout China by illustrating what would happen to them if they resisted. The only recourse for many Chinese in the occupied cities was to flee into the international concession areas in the hope that these would provide a haven. Sometimes they received protection but there were many instances when the Japanese simply ignored protocol and pursued the Chinese into the concessions. In Nanjing, for example, it was recorded:

No women in the city felt safe and a large number of these frightened women took refuge in the specifically designated 'safety zone' operated by the International Commission. But the Japanese paid no heed to international law or justice. At night they climbed the wall that surrounded the 'safety zone' and descended on the women inside.



Gridlock on the streets of Shanghai in August 1937 as Chinese tried to push into the safety of the French concession area to escape from the Japanese shelling of the city. What was the importance of the foreign concession areas in China's main cities during the war against Japan?

Although the behaviour of the troops in Nanjing was not officially sanctioned by Tokyo, the Japanese army in China had soon gained a worldwide notoriety for its savagery towards both its military and civilian captives. In the words of the war-crimes arraignment, 'Wherever the Japanese army went, they burned as well as committed mass murder.' Attempts have been made to explain, if not justify, this as an act of retribution for a massacre of Japanese personnel by Chinese troops at **Tongzhou** in July 1937 following the Marco Polo Bridge incident. But it is significant that the Japanese government was at pains to prevent its own people from learning of the violence that invariably accompanied Japan's military conquests.

A living reminder today of Japan's war crimes is the knots of elderly ladies, dwindling in number year by year, who continue to gather on certain dates in China's main cities to demand compensation for the horrors they suffered 70 years earlier. These are the 'comfort women', the term for those Chinese females who were forced to work in the brothels specially set up for the troops of the Japanese army.

Tongzhou
Capital of the East
Hebei puppet state.

Key term



A souvenir photo taken by a Japanese soldier in Nanjing in December 1937, showing the burying alive of bound Chinese prisoners. Why should the Japanese government have wished to prevent such actions from becoming known in Japan?

CCP's '100
Regiments Offensive':
1940

The '100 Regiments Offensive' 1940

Officially, despite Chiang's basic wish to destroy the CCP, the Nationalists and Communists formed a united front against the Japanese. However, they invariably fought as separate armies and, although they did liaise on occasion, their distrust of each other meant they rarely acted as a combined force. Outweighed by Japanese military strength, which made them reluctant to consider large-scale confrontations with the occupier, the Nationalist–Communist allies engaged mainly in sniping and hit-and-run guerrilla tactics.

A major exception to this was the '100 Regiments Offensive' of 1940. It was undertaken by Mao's Communists to convince the GMD and the Chinese people of the dedication of the CCP to anti-Japanese resistance. It followed a period of relative quiet when the Japanese, having seized a large number of provinces and cities by 1938, slowed their advance and concentrated on consolidating the gains already made. In August 1940, under the overall command of **Peng Dehuai**, the Communist forces, numbering 400,000 troops in over 100 regiments, undertook a series of attacks on Japanese positions in northern and central China. For two months the Communists had considerable success. A number of Japanese garrisons were overrun and over 600 miles of railway line destroyed along with extensive damage to roads, bridges and canals.

Peng Dehuai
(1898–1974)
One of the Red
Army's ablest
commanders and
one of the few
Communists with
the courage to
criticise Mao
openly. Mao
tolerated Peng
because of his
abilities as a soldier.

The Japanese 'three alls'

Infuriated by this attempt to destroy their positions and supply lines, the Japanese reacted with studied ferocity. Under the 'three alls' slogan – 'Kill all, Burn all, Loot all' – their forces launched a terror campaign against the population in the areas which had supported the Communist attacks. Murder, mutilation and rape were the order of the day. Whole villages were systematically destroyed. The tunnels and caves where, on CCP advice, the villagers tried to hide were filled with suffocating smoke or lethal gas. By December 1940, the Japanese counteroffensive had regained the territory lost earlier: 100,000 Communists, a quarter of their force, were killed.

Recriminations followed. Peng Dehuai was dismissed by Mao, not simply for being defeated by the Japanese, but for causing the CCP to lose face and reputation among the Chinese people. What had also angered Mao was that the '100 Regiments Offensive' had revealed to Chiang Kaishek the true size and disposition of the Red Army's forces. It was certainly the case that Chiang exploited the defeat of the Communists to renew the Nationalists' attack on them. In a set of ambushes and surprise raids in January 1941, the NRA inflicted 4000 casualties on the retreating Red Army. It was not difficult to see that Chiang regarded the Communists as a greater enemy than the Japanese. He was making a fiction of the supposed GMD–CCP alliance against the occupier.

Chinese collaboration with the Japanese

As Japan gained ground in China, it endeavoured to consolidate its military hold by enlisting Chinese leaders who were willing to co-operate in the setting up of nominally independent areas. The official Japanese line was that they were creating a new economic order, the East Asia Co-prosperity Sphere, based on the harmonious working together of Japan and China. The Japanese identified Communism as the major enemy. In an effort to weaken the United Front, Tokyo offered to recognise Chiang Kaishek as the national spokesman for China if he would abandon his alliance with the CCP. The alternative, he was told, was a continuation and expansion of the Japanese occupation. Chiang refused. While it is true that Chiang's ultimate objective was the defeat of the Reds, he was never willing to compromise his claim to the leadership of China by throwing in his lot with the Japanese.

←

Key question

Why were some Chinese willing to co-operate with the Japanese occupiers?

The 'New Government of China'

However, there were lesser public figures who were prepared to respond to the Japanese approaches. One such was **Wang Jingwei**, a former GMD colleague of Chiang. Motivated by a mixture of personal ambition and a real conviction that China could not win the war against Japan, Wang agreed in 1940 to become the head of what the Japanese called the 'New Government of China'. From Nanjing, the captured former capital, Wang denounced Chiang Kaishek and his Nationalist government at Chongqing as traitors to the true interests of China and no longer deserving of the support of the people. Wang Jingwei's rival government survived for four years until his death in 1944. It was not a total charade. It was recognised by the Axis powers, and many of the ordinary Chinese who lived within its jurisdiction had reason to be thankful for its ability to obtain more humane treatment for them from the Japanese. But the 'New Government' was never able to match either the GMD at Chongqing or the Reds at Yanan as expressions of Chinese aspirations. Without the backing of the occupying forces, Wang's government, as with the other 'autonomous' regional administrations established by the Japanese, would have been powerless.

Wang Jingwei (1883–1944)

A former left-wing GMD member, whose collaboration with the Japanese led to his being reviled by both the Nationalists and Communists.

Key figure

Wang Jingwei's 'New Government of China': 1940–4

Key date

International tensions and preoccupations, particularly in Europe, meant that Japan's full-scale attack on the Chinese mainland between 1937 and 1941 met no significant foreign opposition. Consequently, Japan was able to overrun large parts of the central and southern coastline of China, and make major incursions inland. By 1940 Japan had sent over three-quarters of a million ground troops to China. This was a huge drain on men and materials. But once Japan had made the commitment, it could not easily detach itself unless it achieved complete victory. Down to 1941 this seemed highly probable, but the end of that year marked the great turning point in the Sino-Japanese struggle.

International tensions

German expansion in the late 1930s caused grave diplomatic concerns for the European powers.

Key term

Summary diagram: China and Japan at war 1937–41

Onset

- The 'Double Seventh' 1937
- The pretext for the extension of the Japanese occupation
- Chinese resistance 1937–45 created the Sino-Japanese war

Japanese brutality: the outstanding feature of the war. Why?

- Tradition of deep Sino-Japanese animosity
- Japanese notion of Chinese racial inferiority
- Contempt for prisoners

The rape of Nanjing 1937

- The most graphic example of deliberate brutality towards civilians

**GMD–CCP officially reformed the United Front;
uneasy alliance but produced some resistance to Japanese**

- The '100 Regiments Offensive' 1940, abortive Communist attack on Japanese
- Fearsome Japanese 'three alls' response

Japanese assisted in their occupation by collaborators

- Wang Jingwei's Japanese-backed 'New Government of China' 1940–4

Key question

What was the significance of the USA's entry into the war in 1941?

4 | China and Japan at War 1941–5

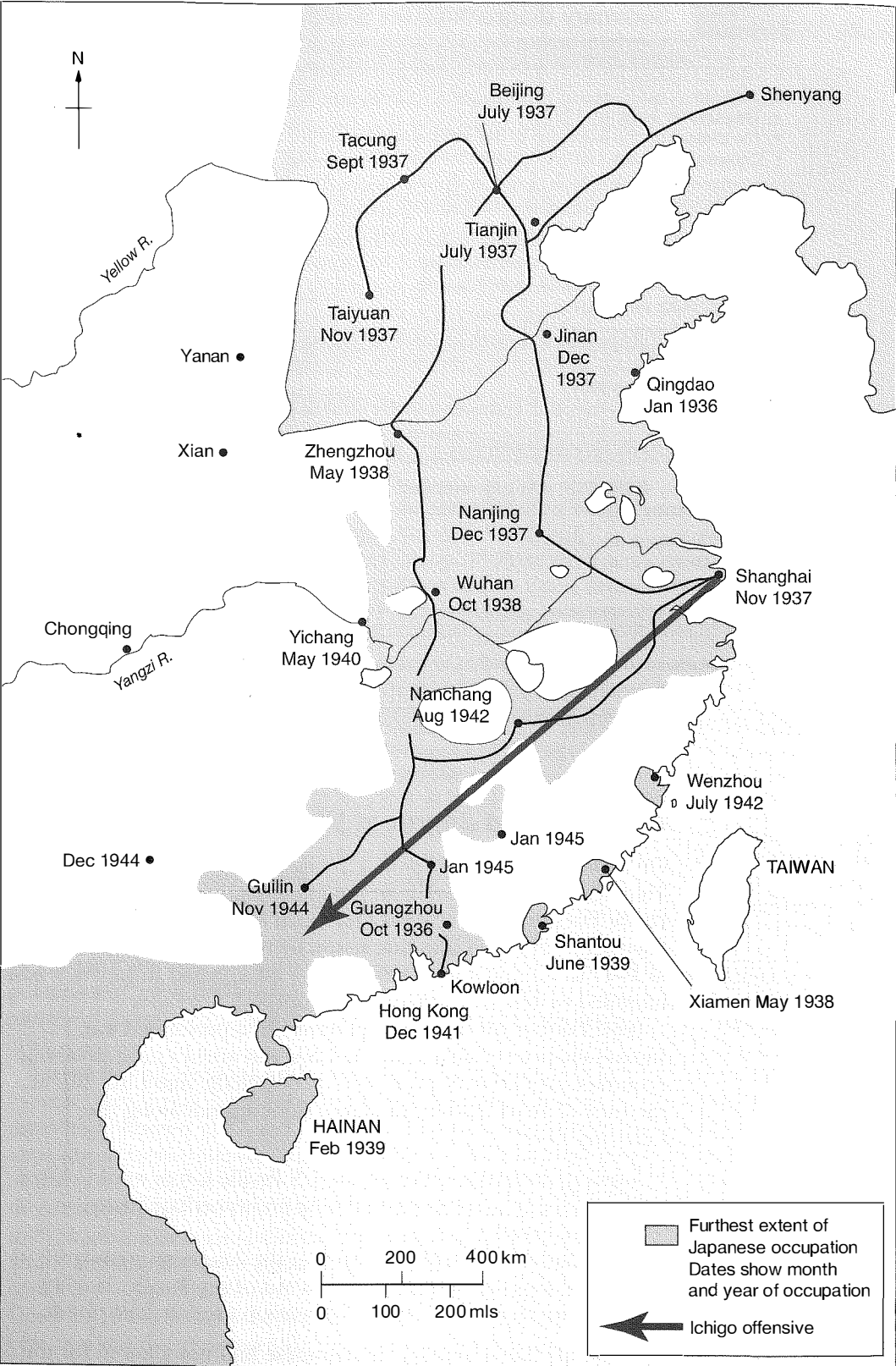
On 7 December 1941 Japanese air forces launched 'Operation Tora Tora' ('Tiger, Tiger'), an unannounced attack upon the US Pacific fleet, moored at Pearl Harbor in Hawaii. Japan claimed to have been provoked into this action by the USA's attempt earlier in 1941 to impose a total embargo on oil supplies to Japan, a ban intended to destroy the Japanese economy.

Pearl Harbor proved a fateful move. In a prolonged war, Japan's chances of defeating the USA, the world's most powerful economic and military state, would continually diminish. But at the time of Pearl Harbor, Japanese thinking ran along the following lines:

- A quick, disabling, strike on the US Pacific forces would oblige the American government to make an immediate peace on Japanese terms.
- Japan had no territorial designs on the American mainland; its essential aim was to drive America out of the Pacific, leaving Japan free to reach its natural extension as an Asiatic power.

The gamble failed because the Japanese had not allowed for the outrage with which America reacted to the attack. President

Pearl Harbor attack brought USA into Sino-Japanese war: 1941



The Sino-Japanese war 1937–45.

Roosevelt's bitter condemnation of this day of 'infamy' expressed the passionate conviction with which the Americans entered what they characterised as a crusade against Japanese barbarism. In declaring war, the USA resolved on the total defeat of Japan.

For 18 months after Pearl Harbor, Japan, driven by the need to increase its oil supplies, took territories as far south as the Philippines and as far west as Burma, but this very expansion meant that it had overstretched itself. Should the war prove a protracted one, the strain on Japanese resources would become unbearable. It is true that Japan fought for four years, 1941–5, with extraordinary fervour. But, even before the atomic bombing of the Japanese mainland in August 1945 brought Japanese resistance to an end (see page 117), it was clear that Japan would not achieve its original objectives.

Key question

How did the attack on Pearl Harbor change the character of the Sino-Japanese war?

China and the USA

The importance for China of Japan's attack on the USA in 1941 was profound. What had been an essentially Sino-Japanese conflict now became a vital theatre of the much larger world war. From that time on:

- China was seen by the Allies as a chief means of defeating Japan. It was supplied with vast resources in an Allied effort to turn it into a base of operations.
- By 1945 the USA had invested over a billion dollars in China.
- America's entry gave a tremendous political, as well as military, boost to Chiang Kaishek as Chinese leader.

Chiang and the Americans

It is said that Chiang declared 8 December 1941 to be the happiest day of his life. It is easy to see why. The Americans, anxious to use China principally as a means of defeating Japan, turned naturally to Chiang. As the leader of China, acknowledged as such even by the CCP under the Xian Incident agreement (see page 83), he was the obvious person with whom to liaise. All Chiang's public pronouncements were intended to convince the Allies that he was not merely to be trusted but that he was indeed the only real hope of a successful unifying of the Chinese war effort against Japan. President Roosevelt came to regard Chiang Kaishek as being as important a world figure in wartime as Churchill or Stalin.

The USA and the Chinese Communists

Arguably, the USA grasped the importance and strength of the Chinese Communists only after it was too late. In their desperation to defeat Japan, the Americans accepted Chiang Kaishek and the GMD as the real force in China and therefore deserving of their full support. Yet it had not been out of the question for the Chinese Communists and the Americans to have reached an accommodation. Their interests in China often coincided, the most obvious example being their joint determination to defeat Japan. Moreover, at that stage their

ideological differences were not an insurmountable hurdle. During the Japanese occupation, the CCP deliberately played down its political aims; it dropped its call for a class war and emphasised that it was engaged in a national struggle against the Japanese aggressor. Mao asked the Americans to understand that his party were 'agrarian reformers' rather than violent revolutionaries. Furthermore, the war in Europe, which had witnessed a four-year military alliance between Communist USSR and capitalist USA, was clear evidence that ideologies need not be a barrier to co-operation.

Chiang Kaishek's strategy after 1941

Despite the influx after 1941 of American money and supplies, Chiang and the GMD remained reluctant to face the Japanese head on. There were few pitched battles between Chinese and Japanese forces. To avoid being overwhelmed by the superior Japanese armies, the Chinese necessarily fought a guerrilla war. This did not prevent the cities and urban areas suffering severely from Japanese air strikes. It was in the GMD-held areas in central and southern China that the Japanese found the easiest targets to bomb. Chongqing, for example, suffered prolonged periods of aerial attack that made it the most heavily bombed city in twentieth-century warfare.

Chiang Kaishek proved a difficult ally after 1941. He frequently quarrelled with the American advisers and demanded that those he disagreed with be replaced. Not wishing to weaken the war effort, the USA tended to do as he asked, despite the charge made by many American observers that Chiang's perverse preoccupation with crushing the Reds was a principal cause of China's poor showing against the Japanese. This was the essential complaint of General **Joseph Stilwell**, the American chief of South-east Asia command and one of Chiang's sharpest critics. Stilwell observed that, compared to the CCP's struggle against Japan, the GMD's resistance was half-hearted and ineffective; invaluable American resources were being wasted on the Nationalists. In 1943, Stilwell jotted down his opinions in an awkward, but expressive, note form:

I judge Guomindang and Communist Party by what I saw:

GMD – corruption, neglect, chaos, economy, taxes, words and deeds. Hoarding, black market, trading with the enemy.

Communist programme – to reduce taxes, rents, interest. Raise production and standard of living. participate in government. Practise what they preach.

Anxious to avoid antagonising Chiang, the State Department replaced Stilwell, but substance was given to his argument by the outcome of the **Ichigo offensive** of 1944, the largest campaign undertaken in China by the Japanese. The brilliantly executed campaign showed what a powerful military force Japan remained. The GMD armies were unable to stem the advance which carried Japanese forces deep into southern China.

Key question

How did Chiang's expectations change after December 1941?

Joseph ('Vinegar Joe') Stilwell (1883–1946)

His dislike of Chiang, whom he dismissed as 'the peanut', led him to exaggerate the role of the Chinese Communists in opposing the Japanese.

Ichigo offensive

A sweeping Japanese movement in 1944 that brushed aside Chiang's forces, knocked out many Allied airfields and opened a Japanese land route to Indo-China.

Ichigo offensive: 1944

Key figure

Key term

Key date

Key question

Why did Chiang's Nationalists decline in popularity during the war?

The unpopularity of the Nationalists

It was not merely that the GMD was inferior in military terms; it was evident that their armies too often lacked the will to fight. Chiang's critics did not find this surprising. The GMD's savage methods of recruitment and ferocious discipline were hardly calculated to inspire loyalty and enthusiasm among the troops. Reasonably competent when things were going well, the Nationalist forces too often broke when put under pressure. Their problems were compounded by their failure to win the wholehearted support of the Chinese people whose protector they supposedly were. Indeed, an outstanding feature of the war was the unpopularity of the GMD armies among the Chinese peasantry. This was a product of the abusive treatment the peasants invariably received at the hands of the Nationalist troops and of the GMD government's harsh conscription, taxation and expropriation policies (see page 146).

Summary diagram: China and Japan at war 1941–5**Pearl Harbor changed the character of the war**

- The USA now an ally of the Chinese
- Chiang elevated to international status

**Chiang and the Americans**

- His strategy after 1941 to wait on a massive American landing
- Chiang not an easy ally
- Americans on the spot were unimpressed by Chiang
- USA not necessarily opposed to the Chinese Communists
- Chiang's Nationalists declined in popularity during the war

Key question

What impact did the sudden ending of the Pacific war have on the internal situation in China?

5 | The Sudden Ending of the War 1945

What eventually saved the GMD forces was not the quality of their resistance but the curtailing of Japan's war effort in China as the Japanese mainland fell under increased Allied attack from 1944 onwards. The climax of the aerial onslaught came with the atomic bombing of Japan by the USA in August 1945. Within a few days of the unleashing of this awesome new power against them, the Japanese surrendered. The abrupt end of the Pacific war dramatically changed the position in China. From 1941 onwards, Chiang had calculated that American support would hand him eventual victory over both Japan and the CCP. He was to be disappointed.

The surrender of Japan in August 1945, directly following the nuclear devastation of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, was in one obvious sense a great Chinese victory. Japan had finally been defeated after 15 years of struggle. But it had not come the way that Chiang had expected. The war had ended too soon. His

Atomic bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki: 1945

Japanese surrender: 1945

belief throughout had been that the fanatical Japanese resistance would eventually lead to two critical developments:

- The landing in China of huge American armies, which would roll up the Japanese in a large land operation.
- In the course of this the Americans would overwhelm not only the Japanese but the Chinese Communists as well. This would leave Chiang both the victor over Japan and the master of China.

But events betrayed him. When the war abruptly ended in August 1945, the location of the Japanese and their Communist resisters meant that it was invariably the Reds to whom the Japanese formally submitted. The events of 1945 had thus destroyed Chiang Kaishek's dream. He did not have the expected American troops at his disposal in China, which prevented him from crushing the Communists as he had planned. A further limitation on Chiang's claim to mastery of China was that Russian armies had now occupied Manchuria, the USSR having declared war on Japan the day after the Nagasaki bombing.

The problem created by the Japanese surrender

The Communists resisted the GMD's claim to the 19 liberated areas, which during the years of anti-Japanese struggle had become Communist-administered zones. They also pressed their right to receive the formal submission of the Japanese forces. Zhu De and Mao Zedong ordered their troops to occupy the former Japanese-held regions and hold the Japanese as prisoners. Chiang's government at Chongqing, however, insisted that the Japanese should surrender only to accredited representatives of the Nationalists. But the problem for the GMD was that they could not enforce this demand; they had no troops in the Communist-dominated areas. Chiang, therefore, instructed the Japanese to continue to maintain order and discipline in their areas until Nationalist forces arrived. The same orders were sent to the 'autonomous regions' which the Japanese had formerly set up (see page 105).

The Nationalists would have been unable to enforce this had the USA not stepped in. Anxious to prevent **Soviet forces** in Manchuria from extending their control southwards, the Americans mounted a huge airlift of GMD forces to the liberated areas. General MacArthur, the Allied commander-in-chief in the Far East, declared that only Chiang Kaishek had the right to receive Japan's surrender in China. The question now was whether the Communists would accept this. Although Mao condemned Chiang and the GMD as 'fascists', he announced that he was willing to make the necessary concession. Mao explained why to his followers: 'Without these concessions, we will not be able to shatter the GMD's plot for civil war, nor take the political initiative, nor gain the sympathy of the rest of the world ... nor gain legal status for our party.'

Mao knew that the recent **Soviet–GMD friendship treaty** meant that he was unlikely to receive support from the USSR

Soviet forces

Stalin's armies had begun occupying Manchuria three days after the Hiroshima bombing in August 1945.

Soviet–GMD friendship treaty

Chiang agreed in 1945 to allow Soviet forces into Manchuria in return for the USSR's recognition of his party as the only legitimate authority in China.

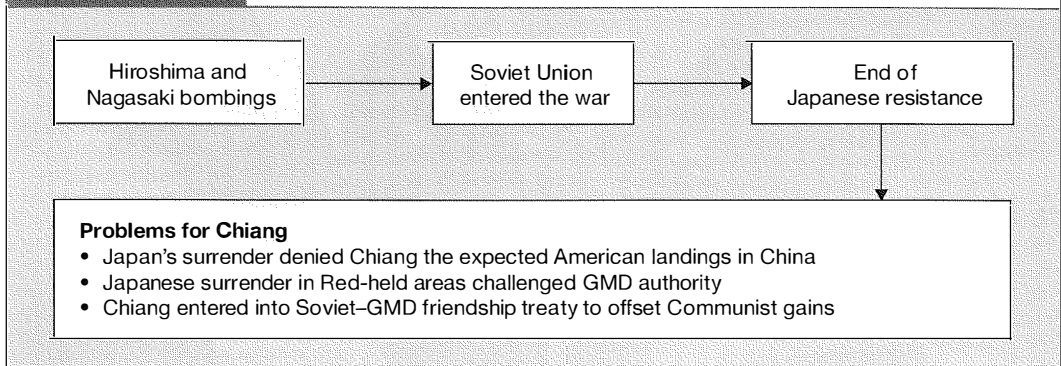
Soviet–GMD
friendship treaty:
1945

Key terms

Key date

should he openly challenge Chiang's American-backed claims over the surrender issue. Despite Mao Zedong's caution at this stage, it would soon become clear that the net result of the Sino-Japanese war had been to leave the Communists in a position of strength in China from which, within five years, they were able to take control of the whole of China. The Japanese war had served as the great catalyst in Chinese politics.

Summary diagram: The sudden ending of the war 1945



Key question
Why did the end of the Japanese war lead to a renewal of GMD–CCP hostilities?

6 | The Aftermath of the Japanese War: Preparations for Civil War

Even before the defeat of Japan, the Americans hoped that the two rival parties in China could be brought together into some form of power sharing. Patrick Hurley, the American ambassador, sponsored a number of meetings between the CCP and the GMD. Intermittent talks between the two parties were held in 1944–5. Mao declared himself willing to consider a compromise. However, in March 1945, Chiang suddenly broke off negotiations, announcing that he had no intention of sharing power with the Communists. Hurley continued to back Chiang, but many of the US advisers and embassy officials were uneasy. In their reports to Washington they repeated the arguments advanced earlier by General Stilwell and his successor, General Wedemeyer, that Mao and his Communists represented a real social and political force in China that could not be ignored; a GMD–CCP coalition was therefore both logical and desirable.

Largely through American auspices, further talks were held in Chongqing in August 1945, following the Japanese surrender. Mao Zedong and Chiang Kaishek met face to face for the first time in 20 years. They even drank toasts to each other. But this was for show; there was no mutual respect, nor could there be in the light of their long animosity. Although they declared themselves willing to accept a truce, the truth was they were preparing for civil war with each other. Apart from the acceptance of the truce, no other agreement was reached. Laying the blame for this largely on Chiang's obstinacy, Hurley's mission returned to the United States. President Truman, however, still believed



Mao (second left), Hurley (fourth left) and Zhou Enlai (far right) at Yanan in 1945 shortly before flying to meet Chiang Kaishek for talks. Mao's smile in this posed picture belies the trepidation he felt about flying to Chongqing. It was his first flight and he feared the plane might be shot down, which is why he insisted that Hurley accompany him. Why, despite his anxieties, was Mao willing to enter into talks with the GMD?

that a compromise could be achieved. He sent the USA's most distinguished soldier and diplomat, General **George Marshall**, to try to broker a lasting agreement.

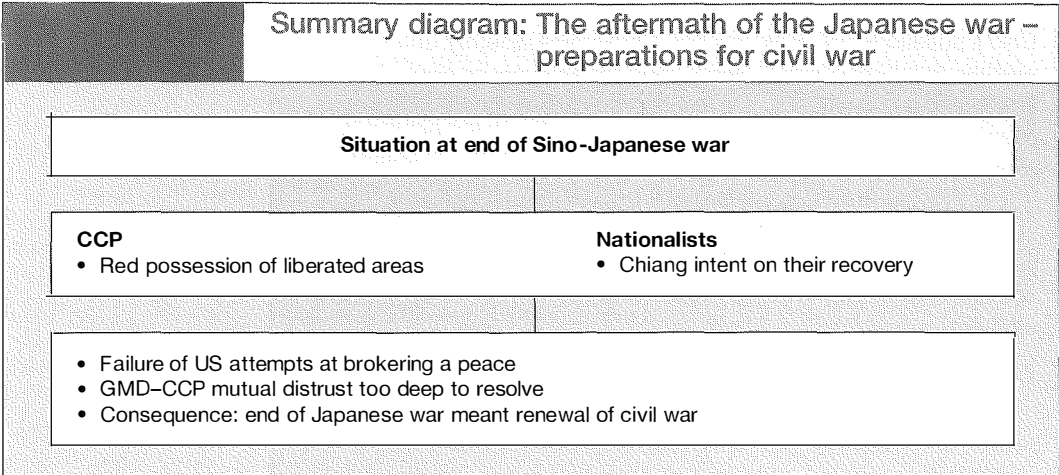
Marshall spent some months attempting to resurrect the GMD–CCP talks but by March 1946 he had to admit that a compromise settlement was impossible. There were two complementary fears that prevented agreement between Chiang and Mao:

- The GMD's concern that the Communists, while willing publicly to recognise Chiang Kaishek as the legitimate leader of China, were not willing to co-operate in practice and were planning to overthrow him.
- The Communists' profound doubt, based on past experience, that the Nationalist regime would honour its promise to allow them to retain the liberated areas that they now held. It was their fear over this that led the Communists to walk out of the talks.

George Marshall (1880–1959)

US Army chief of staff during Second World War and Roosevelt's chief military adviser. He gave his name to the Marshall Plan, the USA's post-war international economic recovery programme.

Put simply, neither side trusted the other. Even as they talked they were seizing territory and preparing for the conflict they knew was coming. It was exasperation with the CCP and GMD's unyielding distrust of each other that finally led the Marshall mission to give up all thought of successful mediation. By the time the mission finally left in January 1947 the civil war had long been under way.



6

The Chinese Civil War 1946–9

POINTS TO CONSIDER

The civil war began with the Nationalists' attempt to seize Manchuria, the region where the CCP were at their strongest. Chiang was hoping for a swift victory, but despite having overwhelming resources on his side he was unable to break the Communists, who, having survived, then seized the initiative. Pushing out from their northern bases, the forces of the Communist People's Liberation Army built up a momentum which led to their eventual domination of central and southern China. By October 1949, Mao Zedong was in a position to claim total victory and to declare the birth of a new Communist nation, the People's Republic of China (PRC). Accepting defeat, Chiang Kaishek transferred his remaining forces to the island of Taiwan where he began the construction of a separate Nationalist state. This chapter examines the character of the war and examines why Mao and the Communists were the eventual military and political winners. The main themes are:

- The civil war 1946–9
- Reasons for the Communist victory in 1949: Nationalist weaknesses
- Reasons for the Communist victory in 1949: CCP strengths

Key dates

1946	June	Start of the civil war
1946–7		Struggle for Manchuria
1947		'Strong point offensive'
1948	September 12	Liaoshen campaign
	October 15	Fall of Jinzhou
	October 26	Fall of Changchun
	November 2	Fall of Shenyang
1948–9		Huaihai campaign
1948–9		Pingjin campaign
1949	January 10	Fall of Xuzhou to the PLA
	January 15	Fall of Tianjin to the PLA
	January 16	Fall of Beijing to the PLA
	April	Fall of Nanjing to the PLA
		PLA crossed Yangzi
	May	Fall of Shanghai to the PLA
	October 1	Mao declared the creation of the Chinese People's Republic
	December	Chiang Kaishek fled to Taiwan

Key question

What advantages did the Nationalists hold at the beginning of the civil war?

Key date

Start of the civil war:
June 1946

Key terms

Lend-lease

Provision of goods and supplies at no charge or at very low rates of interest.

NRA

The National Revolutionary Army of the Guomindang.

PLA

The People's Liberation Army, formerly the CCP's Red Army.

1 | The Civil War 1946–9

The Chinese civil war dates from June 1946, when the always rickety GMD–CCP truce finally broke down and Chiang began a major campaign to recover Manchuria, many parts of which were controlled by the Communists. At the beginning all the advantages seemed to lie with Chiang Kaishek and the Nationalists. A particular advantage was the support of the USA. Even after it had withdrawn its diplomatic mission from China, the USA continued formally to back the GMD. It was a policy that went against the advice of many of its experts on the spot. One reason for this apparent disregard of political realities was that by 1946 the USA had already committed huge resources to shoring up the GMD:

- Under a **lend-lease** scheme it had issued millions of dollars worth of military equipment to the Nationalists.
- The USA had provided transport to carry over half a million GMD troops to the zones surrendered by the Japanese, an operation described by General Wedemeyer as 'the greatest air and sea transportation in history'.
- 55,000 US marines had been sent to the northern ports as 'military advisers' to the GMD.

The USA judged that, having outlaid so much, it was impossible for it to make a major shift in its Far-Eastern policy. The result was that it continued to finance and support Chiang and the Nationalists, regardless of the fact that the GMD had long since forfeited the support of the majority of the Chinese people.

The Nationalists under Chiang Kaishek entered the civil war with greatly superior troop numbers and greater *matériel* and resources than the Communists. The five million troops of the **NRA** outnumbered those of the **PLA** by over four to one. On that score alone, Chiang should have won the war, but it was largely his mistakes and the poor showing of the GMD militarily, politically and economically that gave eventual victory to his opponents: the Nationalists threw away their initial advantages.

Key question

What form did the Chinese civil war take?

The character of the war

The civil war was often a complicated affair in its details. This was because the struggle between Nationalists and Communists frequently became confused with local feuds and rivalries. For most peasants, their loyalties were to their locality and they viewed the NRA and PLA armies as being no different from the marauding gangs who had customarily made their lives a misery. It is true that in some areas Mao won a major propaganda coup by encouraging his troops to conduct themselves as friends of the peasants (see page 90), but this policy was not applied universally; where the PLA met stubborn resistance from villages they could be as ruthless as the Nationalists in suppressing it. In a number of regions, groups of villages, which had banded together in resistance to the Japanese, maintained their local militia after 1945, ready to fight any intruders, be they the NRA or the PLA.

If it increased their security, these local associations were prepared to negotiate co-operative deals with the bandit gangs, remnants of the warlord armies, who still prowled the countryside.

Main phases of the civil war

However, allowing for local complications, the main outline of the civil war is relatively easy to understand. It had three essential phases:

- The Nationalist armies' attempt to take the initiative by crushing the main Communist bases in Manchuria and north-eastern China in 1946–7.
- The Communists' successful resistance to these attacks.
- The Communists taking the offensive from 1947 onwards by moving south to take the previously Nationalist-held areas of central and southern China.

Chiang's main error from which all his later military problems stemmed was his decision to send the GMD's major forces into Manchuria before he had secured the supply lines necessary to keep his armies fully equipped. This was against the advice of many of his military advisers who were concerned that unless the supply lines were established, the Nationalist forces would be very vulnerable in a region of China where the Communists were at their strongest.

There were five major campaigns which determined the outcome of the Chinese civil war:

- a) The struggle for Manchuria 1946–7.
- b) The 'strong point offensive' 1947.
- c) The Liaoshen campaign, September–November 1948.
- d) The Huaihai campaign, November 1948–January 1949.
- e) The Pingjin campaign, November 1948–January 1949.

a) The struggle for Manchuria 1946–7

Chiang had two main reasons for wanting to take Manchuria:

- Its regaining by his Nationalist forces would deal an early knockout blow to the Communists, which would bring a rapid and successful end to the war.
- Its recovery would return the most industrially advanced region of China to Nationalist control.

Yet, although the NRA moved some 200,000 troops into Manchuria in the first year of the war and applied fierce pressure, the Communists not only survived the attacks; they turned their bases, such as **Harbin**, into strongholds. Mao inspired resistance by declaring: 'If we hold Manchuria, our victory will be guaranteed.' Events proved him right. Chiang's forces were sucked into the province and then found themselves under counterattack. The besiegers became the besieged.

Harbin

The CCP turned this city into its chief base in Manchuria; it became the organisational model for the other cities and towns that the Communists came to occupy during the war.

Key question

Why was Chiang Kaishek so determined to seize Manchuria?

Struggle for Manchuria: 1946–7

Key term

Key date

The Nationalists made things worse for themselves by the way they tried to run the parts of the province they held. The officials whom Chiang imposed as administrators took little account of the ways of the local people and rode roughshod over them. Such disregard meant the NRA had few supporters among the people, who tended to side increasingly with the Communists.

Widespread resistance from the peasants to the GMD's attempt to enforce control was exploited by the Communists who presented themselves as defenders of the people.

Communist resistance

Despite the pressure the Communists were put under, their determined defence of the vital areas of Manchuria meant that the initiative had passed to them. They lessened the threat that came from the Nationalists' superior airpower by largely destroying the airstrips on which the NRA depended. Similar sabotage of the region's railway lines seriously disrupted the NRA's movement of troops and supplies. A striking aspect of the sabotage was how much of it was done by the local population. By the middle of 1947 over 10,000 miles of railway line in Manchuria had been ripped up, along with widespread destruction of telegraph and telephone lines.

All this revealed how shrunken the GMD's popular support had become. It was a crippling weakness for which the greater physical resources that Chiang Kaishek possessed could not compensate. Chiang's supposed advantages were more than balanced by the higher morale and superior strategy of the Communists. Able to live off the land and confident of the support of the rural people among whom they moved, the CCP armies simply bypassed the main GMD strongholds, avoiding set battles whenever possible unless troop dispositions were in their favour. The PLA made up for its initial lack of armoury by capturing large stocks of weapons, many of these originally supplied to the NRA by the Americans.

Key question
What style of warfare did Mao employ?

Mao's strategy

Mao's strategy was expressed in a set of mantras that all his troops knew by heart: 'When the enemy advances, we retreat. When the enemy escapes, we harass. When they retreat, we pursue. When they tire, we attack.' In a celebrated speech to the PLA in 1947 Mao defined the key elements of his strategy. Among these were:

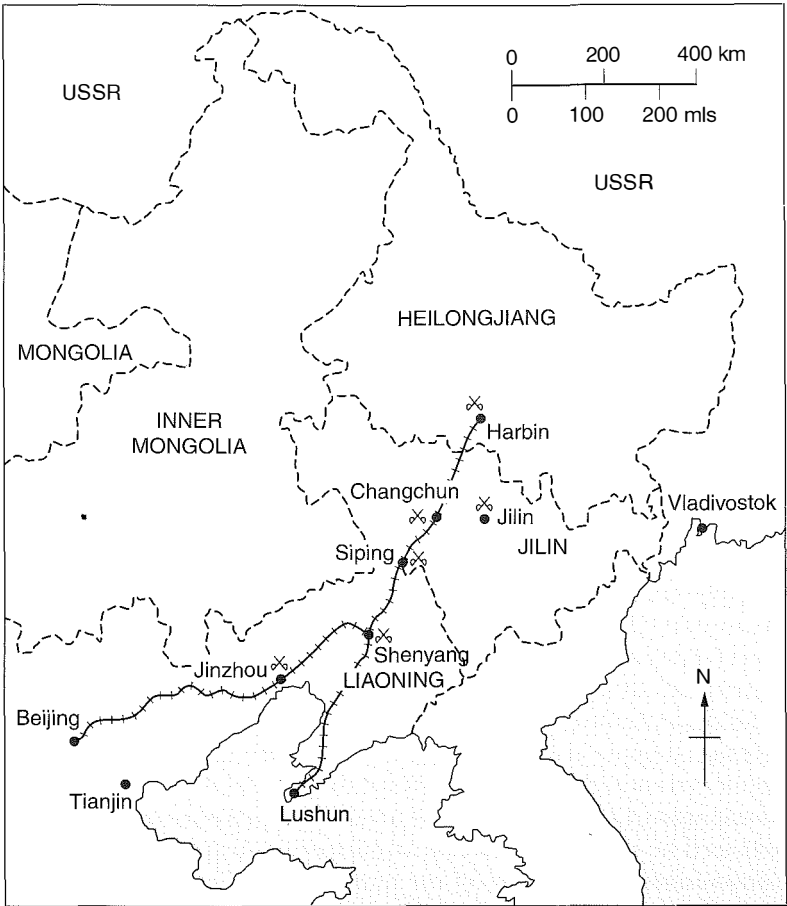
First strike isolated enemies; later strike concentrated enemies.

In every battle concentrate absolutely superior forces: double, quadruple and sometimes even five or six times those of the enemy. Try for complete annihilation.

Fight only where there is assurance of victory.

Destroy the enemy while in movement.

Wrest all weakly defended cities from the enemy.



Manchuria showing the main PLA-NRA engagements and key railways.

Replenish ourselves by the capture of all enemy arms and most of his personnel. Sources of the men and *matériel* for our army are mainly from the front.

Utilise intervals between campaigns in resting, regrouping and training troops, but don't let intervals be too long or allow the enemy a breathing spell.

The importance of the PLA's retaining Manchuria

Manchuria would continue to be disputed between the CCP and GMD until 1948, but Chiang's failure to recover the region in the first stage of the fighting proved crucial to the whole war. Chiang had made the recovery of Manchuria his principal objective. Not having achieved this, he was thrown on to the defensive. He lacked the popular following in the countryside to sustain his campaigns. His armies were weakened by desertion and betrayed by his top-level army commanders, many of whom became **moles** for the Communists. By holding on to Manchuria, the Communists were able to turn the region into a consolidated base from which to launch their own attacks.

Key question
Why did the Communist retention of Manchuria prove so vital?

Moles
Secret sympathisers and informants.

Key term

Moreover, Chiang's failure to take Manchuria raised doubts about his ability to hold the rest of China. Before the Nationalists' vulnerability became exposed Mao might well have settled, as he was urged to do by Stalin, for what, in effect, would have been a partitioned China. The Nationalists' apparent strength had led Mao to estimate that the best he could realistically hope for was the survival and consolidation of the existing Communist bases. But the clearer it became that the Nationalists were unable to turn their greater resources into military domination, the larger Mao's ambitions grew until he began to consider winning the whole of China.

Key question

What led Chiang to launch the 'strong point offensive'?

Key term

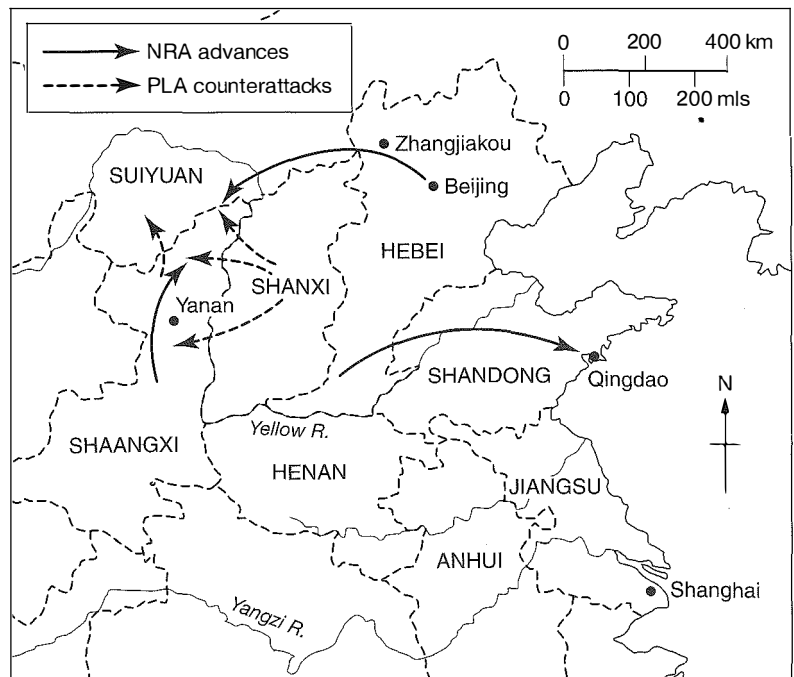
Liaoning province
Manchuria was made up of three provinces: Heilongjiang, Jilin and Liaoning.

b) The 'strong point offensive' 1947

Hindsight now shows that the failure of the Nationalists to take Manchuria would lead to their eventual defeat in 1949. However, at the time, Chiang still believed that the war was winnable. Although pushed out of many areas in Manchuria, his NRA forces were still in possession of Shenyang, the capital of **Liaoning province**. They also held a number of key lines of communication which gave them control of northern China below Manchuria. In addition, in March 1947, Chiang appeared to have gained a great symbolic victory when his forces captured Yanan, the base which Mao had had built into a Communist soviet during the previous decade (see pages 84–9).

The NRA's taking of Yanan

The capture of Yanan certainly raised Nationalist morale temporarily, but it proved to be a hollow victory. An informant in the NRA high command, one of the many moles who weakened



Chiang's 'strong point offensive' and PLA counterattacks.

the Nationalist war effort, had passed on the details of the impending attack to the PLA. In order to give time for the Communist inhabitants to evacuate themselves and their vital equipment from the base, Peng Dehuai's forces mounted a delaying action which held up the NRA units which were approaching the city from the south. When the Nationalist forces finally arrived in Yanan, it was a ghost city. Mao's willingness to abandon positions which were not worth defending was part of his strategy of leaving the NRA only empty successes. He told his commanders: 'We should not try to stop them. Chiang thinks when he has seized the devils' lair [Yanan], he will win. In fact, he will lose everything. We will give Chiang Yanan. He will give us China.'

The GMD's apparent victory at Yanan was the beginning of what Chiang termed the 'strong point offensive'. Believing that the taking of Yanan had given his armies control of the provinces of Hebei and Shanxi, Chiang spread his forces to attack Communist pockets in the Shandong and Shaanxi provinces. It was another mistake. As in Manchuria, Chiang had overstretched the NRA lines. This left him unable to apply concentrated attacks on the enemy's vulnerable positions. Encouraged by Chiang's failure to deploy his troops effectively, the PLA unleashed a series of counterattacks against the NRA whose offensive then faltered and broke down in disarray. The outcome was that by late 1947 the GMD had lost north-eastern China. From that point on, in the remaining two years of the war, its forces were never again to win a major victory. The momentum was now very much with the Communists.

The result of the 'strong point offensive'

The importance of the PLA's defeat of the NRA's offensive was that it changed Mao Zedong's military thinking. At the war's beginning in 1946, Mao had thought that since that his armies could not match the Nationalists' in numbers and resources, his only option was **mobile defence**. However, Chiang's disastrous 'strong point offensive' now convinced Mao that the PLA was capable of waging direct frontal war and gaining outright victory over the Nationalists. Overcoming the qualms of some of his commanders, who wanted a longer transition period between mobile defence and attack, Mao urged that the PLA now begin adopting an offensive strategy aimed at the GMD's 'total destruction'.

c) The Liaoshen campaign, September–November 1948

Mao chose as the main targets of his new attacking strategy Changchun and Shenyang, the last remaining Nationalist bases in Manchuria. If he could take these cities it would bring the whole of Manchuria under complete Communist control and, thereby, strike a crippling blow against GMD military strength and morale. The **Liaoshen** campaign was thus the climax to the long-running struggle over Manchuria with which the war had begun.

Mobile defence
Guerrilla warfare, avoiding set battles.

Liaoshen
A compound word made from the first syllables of Liaoning, the Manchurian province where the major fighting took place, and Shenyang, the provincial capital and the key prize.

Key question
How did the failure of the Nationalist offensive influence Mao's approach to the civil war overall?

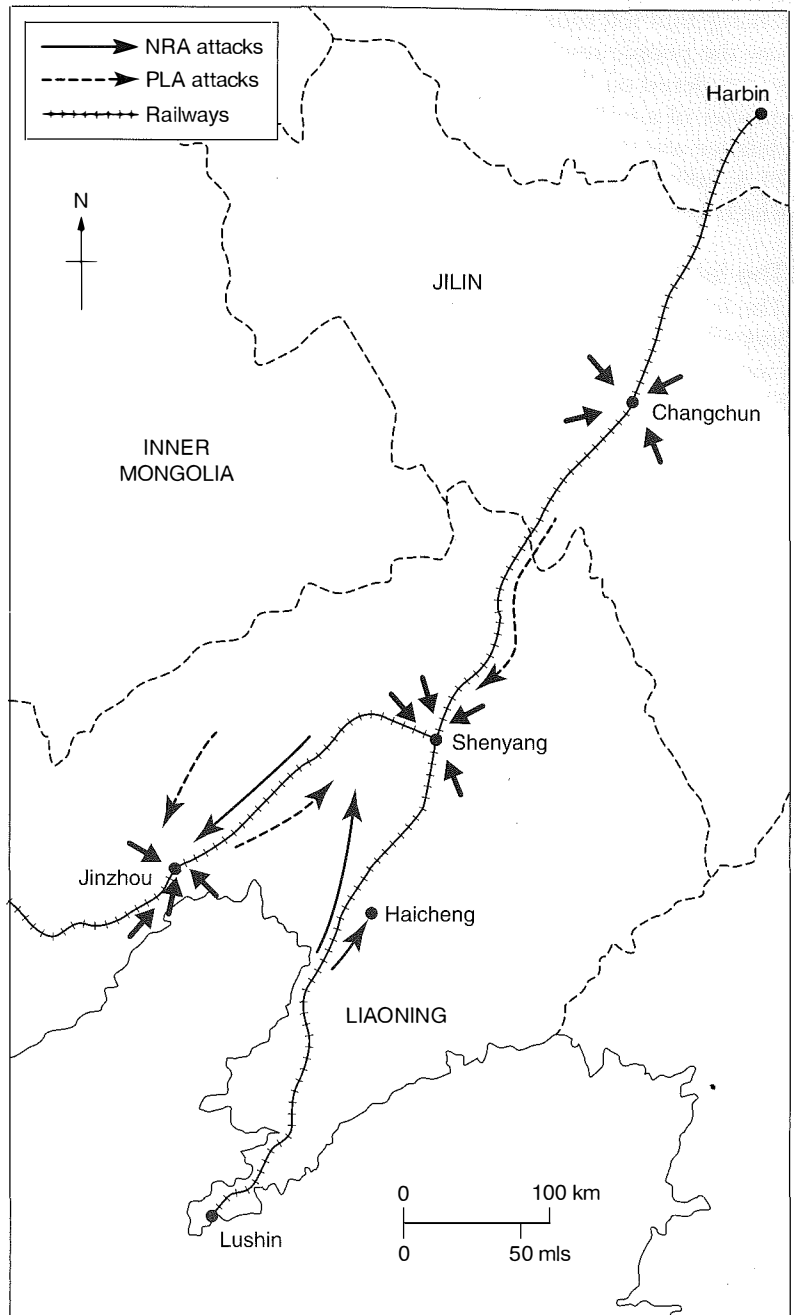
Key question
What was the significance of the Liaoshen campaign?

Start of the Liaoshen campaign:
12 September 1948

Key terms

Key date

The Liaoshen campaign.



Key dates

- Fall of Jinzhou:
15 October 1948
- Fall of Changchun:
26 October 1948
- Fall of Shenyang:
2 November 1948

As a prelude to the attacks on the two cities, the PLA felt it necessary to gain control of Jinzhou, a vital Nationalist-held junction on the railway linking Beijing to Changchun and Shenyang. Knowing how important Jinzhou was, Chiang sent nearly a quarter of a million NRA troops to defend it. They fought courageously but, subjected to a constant rain of PLA shells, they were eventually overwhelmed after savage hand-to-hand fighting.

Changchun fell soon afterwards. After a two-month siege which saw the people resorting to cannibalism, Changchun finally surrendered on 26 October. The number of dead had reached a quarter of a million. An all too-familiar feature of the Nationalist defence was the number of NRA officers who deserted to the PLA, taking with them the details of the city's weakest points which were then subjected to fierce PLA shelling.

The fall of Shenyang

The fall of Changchun and the breaking of the Nationalist rail link with Beijing left Shenyang isolated. A number of his commanders begged Chiang to cut his losses by withdrawing from Shenyang and regrouping his forces in a more defensible position. Chiang ignored their pleas and resolved to defend the city. He tried to send in relief forces but these were outflanked and then cut off by rapidly moving PLA units. By the end of October, the Nationalists were surrounded on all the approaches to the city. Again, a large number of desertions undermined the Nationalist resistance. Panic spread within the city as food supplies ran out. The defenders' spirit largely evaporated and there was only token resistance before Shenyang surrendered on 2 November 1948.

The results of the Liaoshen campaign

Chiang correctly described the Liaoshen campaign as a 'catastrophe'. In a three-month period the NRA had:

- suffered three major defeats
- lost 400,000 troops through casualties and desertions
- irretrievably lost Manchuria
- conceded north-east China to the Communists.

The Liaoshen campaign had confirmed the strategic shift that had taken place: the NRA was in retreat, the PLA was on the offensive. Chiang's initial reaction was to consider whether he might save something from the wreckage. He approached both the USA and the USSR to ask them whether they would consider acting as moderators in renewed GMD–CCP negotiations. Both countries were reluctant to respond. In any case, Mao was no longer interested in compromises. He judged that he could now get his way through military means.

d) The Huaihai campaign, November 1948–January 1949

Having lost northern China and having been rebuffed over his proposal for a negotiated settlement, Chiang had no alternative but to fight to save the rest of Nationalist China from the Communists. Acting on a saying that went back to imperial days that 'Manchuria is a limb of the nation, the central provinces are the heart', he decided to position his forces in such a way as to prevent the PLA from taking the central provinces between the Yellow and Yangzi Rivers. He chose to stand and fight at Xuzhou, a key junction on the Longhai railway that linked the central provinces to the GMD capital, Nanjing, and the great port of Shanghai.

Key question
Why was the outcome of the Liaoshen campaign so significant?

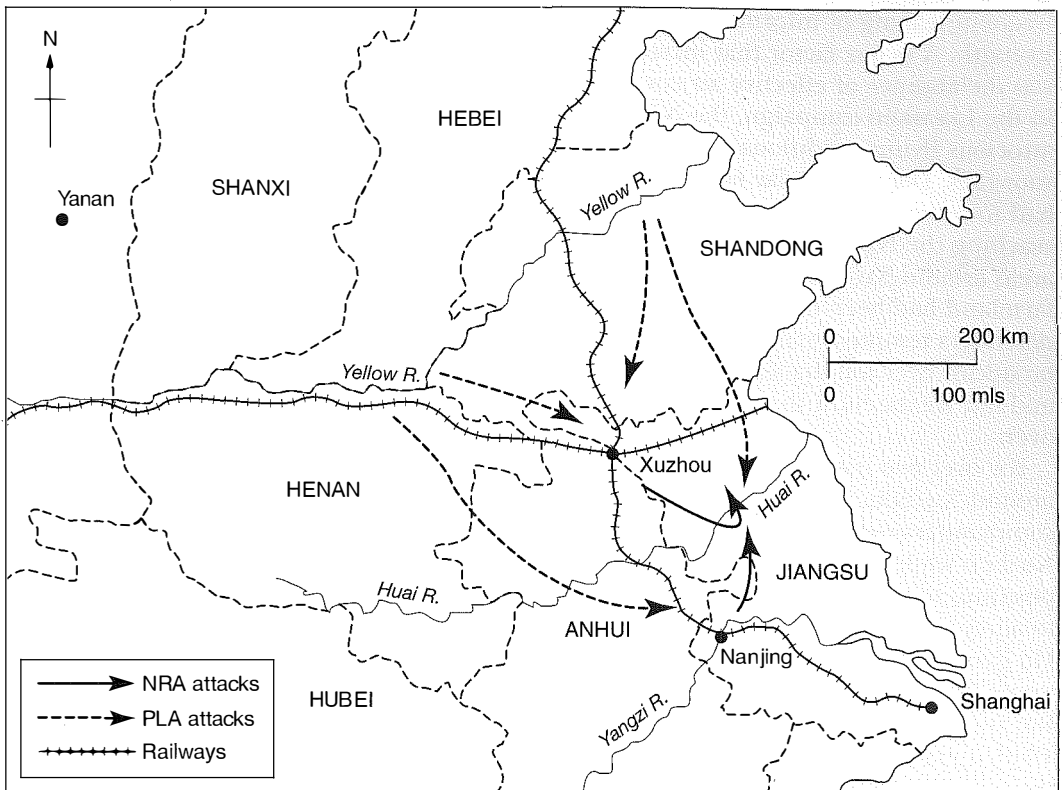
Huaihai
A compound word, from the Huai River and the second syllable of the Longhai railway. It was between the river and the railway that the main struggles took place.

Key question
What was at stake in the Huaihai campaign?

Huaihai campaign:
1948–9

Key term

Key date



The Huaihai campaign.

Key question

Why were the NRA defeated at Xuzhou?

The struggle for Xuzhou

PLA strength

Chiang thought he had time on his side; he believed that the Communists' exertions in the Liaoshen campaign would make it impossible for them to fight another campaign in the immediate future. Mao proved him wrong. Judging that the war was at a pivotal stage and wishing to strike before the Nationalists fully regrouped, Mao brushed aside the reservations of his commanders, who feared the risk was too great, and ordered the PLA not to wait for reinforcements but to use whatever resources were available in men and weaponry to attack Xuzhou. Interestingly, many of the troops on whom the Communists now relied were NRA deserters and prisoners. Mao had declared 'No prisoner will be let go. Most of them will be filled into our troops. The human resources for our troops to defeat Chiang mainly come from prisoners.' Events justified Mao's faith in these newcomers; there were few examples of the ex-NRA officers and men being other than fully committed to the PLA in the fighting that followed.

NRA weakness

In contrast, the Nationalist armies continued to be weakened by internal problems. Poor liaison between commanders and the

frequent leaking of information by moles undermined NRA strength. A major factor that increased the Nationalists' problems was the absence of effective air cover. Deprived of the planes lost in the Liaoshen campaign, the NRA also had to contend with atrocious flying conditions created by the persistent winter snowfalls. Denied regular food supplies, the Xuzhou defenders had to survive on the thinnest of rations. To prevent supplies reaching the Nationalists, the PLA had made a wasteland of large areas around Xuzhou; whole villages and thousands of acres of farmland had been destroyed. The suffering this created for the defenders tempted many of them to respond to the PLA's offer, broadcast over loudhailers during the lulls in the fighting, of food and fair treatment if they left their hopeless position and came over.

For over two months, attacks and counterattacks were fought around Xuzhou. By late December, Chiang's desperate commanders were pleading to be allowed to withdraw from Xuzhou while there was still time to move their troops to safer positions to the south. Chiang, however, could not bring himself to accept that the whole Huaihai campaign was to be abandoned. He gave orders that the Nationalist forces were to hold their ground to give time for NRA reinforcements to reach Xuzhou. But the PLA did not allow such time. In the first week of January 1949, a massive PLA tank, artillery and infantry assault smashed the remaining resistance; on 10 January Xuzhou surrendered.

Results of the Huaihai campaign

The Huaihai campaign was another disaster for the Nationalists, another triumph for the Communists:

- In total, the Nationalists had lost over 200,000 men.
- The NRA élite units had been broken.
- Vast quantities of equipment, mainly high-quality American weapons, had fallen into Communist hands.
- Victory at Xuzhou meant that the Communists now dominated the northern and central provinces, China's 'heart'.
- Southern China now lay open to the Communists.
- The USA, which had already provided the GMD with \$3 billion worth of supplies, was disinclined to give the Nationalists further aid.

The bitterness, recrimination and despair within the NRA and the GMD over the Huaihai failure were soon intensified by the third sweeping PLA triumph in the winter of 1948–9, victory in the Pingjin campaign.

e) The Pingjin campaign, November 1948–January 1949

The success of the Huaihai campaign opened the opportunity for the PLA to go south and challenge the GMD's authority in the rest of Nationalist China. Mao, however, preferred to delay this until he had taken Beijing. Although the city was of no great strategic importance at this stage, its symbolic value as the

Fall of Xuzhou to the PLA: 10 January 1949

Pingjin campaign: 1948–9

Key dates

Key question

What had been won and lost in the campaign?

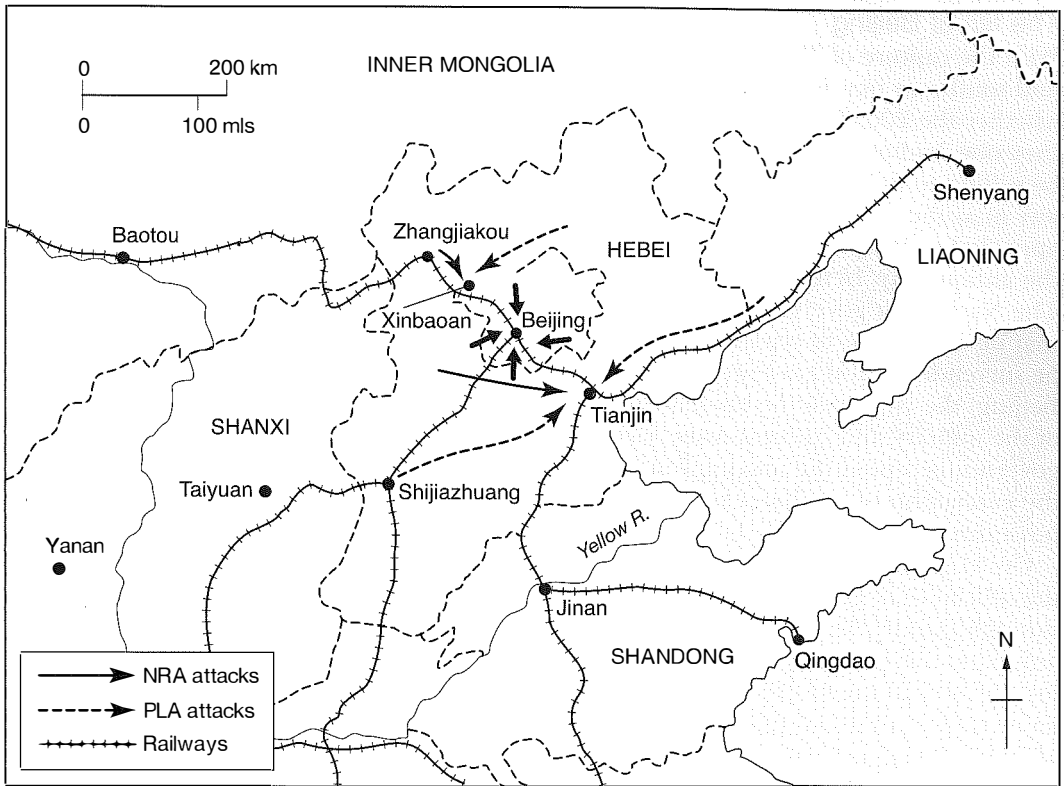
Pingjin

A compound word formed from the last syllables of Peiping, the Nationalist name for Peking, and Tianjin, the main port on the gulf of the Yellow River and linked to the capital by the Grand Canal.

Key term

Key question

In what sense did the Pingjin campaign mark the end for the Nationalists?



The Pingjin campaign.

historic capital of China made it a prize he dearly wanted. So, even before the Huaihai campaign had been successfully completed, the PLA undertook the capture of Beijing.

The PLA victories at Xinbaoan, Zhangjiakou and Tianjin The prelude to the taking of Beijing was the PLA's ambushing and scattering of the NRA as it tried to move reinforcements to the capital, the major engagements taking place at Xinbaoan and Zhangjiakou, towns on the railway north of Beijing. The fighting at Xinbaoan was a particularly bloody affair, culminating in PLA troops going from house to house, killing all those who refused to surrender. The PLA then turned its attention south-east to Tianjin where the majority of the Nationalist forces had gathered to prepare for a relief march to Beijing. Rather than wait for such a march to begin and then ambushing the NRA *en route*, Mao decided on a major assault to crush the Nationalists in Tianjin itself. The attack began on 14 January and by the dawn of the following day the city had surrendered, although not before the defenders had put up a courageous but finally hopeless resistance.

The fall of Beijing

With the capture of Tianjin, the road to Beijing from both north and south was now open to the PLA. The only questions were whether the 200,000 Nationalist troops in the city, knowing that they now had no realistic chance of preventing its capture, would be willing to fight, and, if so, whether the PLA would smash their way in as they had at Tianjin. It is worth noting that Zhou Enlai appealed to Mao to avoid destroying the cultural splendours of the antique city. In the event, the destruction issue did not arise. The Nationalist governor of Beijing informed the PLA leaders that he was willing to parley. At the talks, he was told that unless he surrendered and gave orders for the NRA troops to vacate Beijing, the city would be bombarded into submission, regardless of the military and cultural costs. Faced with this stark choice, the governor accepted the uncompromising terms and on 16 January the evacuation of his forces began. Beijing was now a Communist possession.

On 31 January, a huge triumphal procession was held to mark the official CCP takeover. Thousands of PLA troops marched through the city. Mao made his entry in an open jeep, looking around at the great city that he had inherited and would remain master of until his death in 1976. An American observer of the scene said that the parade, which took an hour to pass, consisted of: 'tanks, armoured cars, truckloads of soldiers, trucks mounted with machine guns, trucks towing heavy artillery, innumerable ambulances, jeeps, and other smaller vehicles'. He recorded that what astounded him most was his realisation that it was 'primarily a display of *American* military equipment, virtually all of it captured or obtained from Guomindang sources'.

The significance of the three major campaigns 1948–9

The surrender of Beijing by the Nationalists was the climax of an extraordinary sequence of events:

- In barely four months the PLA had won three great campaign victories.
- The Nationalists had lost control of northern and central China.
- The Communists were on the verge of establishing their dominance over the whole of China.
- Ultimate Communist victory was now only a matter of time.
- In Nanjing, on 21 January, Chiang Kaishek formally handed over authority to Li Zongren, his vice-president.

Yet, although Chiang had formally stepped aside it was a gesture only. In practice he continued as the chief authority in the GMD. This was evident from his resignation statement which made it clear that Li Zongren was acting on Chiang's behalf, rather than by his own authority. Chiang retained the title **Generalissimo** and continued to direct the GMD's military commanders as their leader.

Key question

Why did the Nationalists not fight to save Beijing?

Fall of Beijing to the PLA: 16 January 1949

Key date

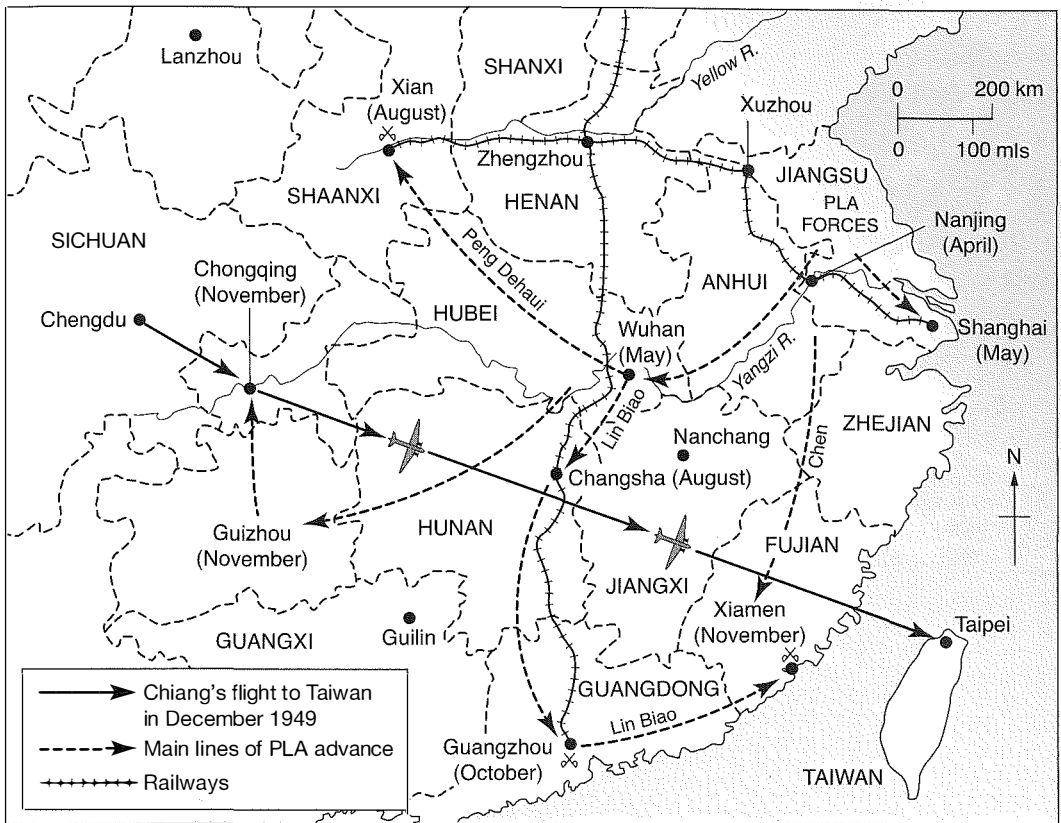
Key question

How had the three campaigns altered the balance between the Nationalists and Communists?

Generalissimo

The supreme commander.

Key term



The fall of southern China to the PLA in 1949. The dates refer to the months the Communist takeover occurred.

Key question

In what sense may the final year of the war be regarded as a mopping-up exercise?

The end of the civil war

After the surrender of Beijing to the Communists in January 1949, the final year of the war was a mopping-up exercise for the CCP. It was often a bitter affair and grim atrocities occurred on both sides, but nothing could long delay the seemingly inexorable Communist progress. The crossing of the Yangzi River by the PLA in April 1949 was another great symbolic moment. The river, regarded in Chinese tradition as a great lifeforce that gave geographical definition to China, was now a Communist possession. Nanjing, Shanghai and Guangzhou had all fallen by the time the Chinese People's Republic was formally declared by Mao Zedong at the entrance to the Forbidden City in Beijing on 1 October 1949.

In December, Chiang Kai-shek left the mainland for the last time and flew to join the remnants of his forces on the island of Taiwan. There he established a Nationalist stronghold which continued to claim to be the legitimate government of the whole of China. Since the war had no formal close, its end cannot be precisely dated, but the flight of Chiang Kai-shek from the mainland in December 1949 is as logical a date as any.

Key dates

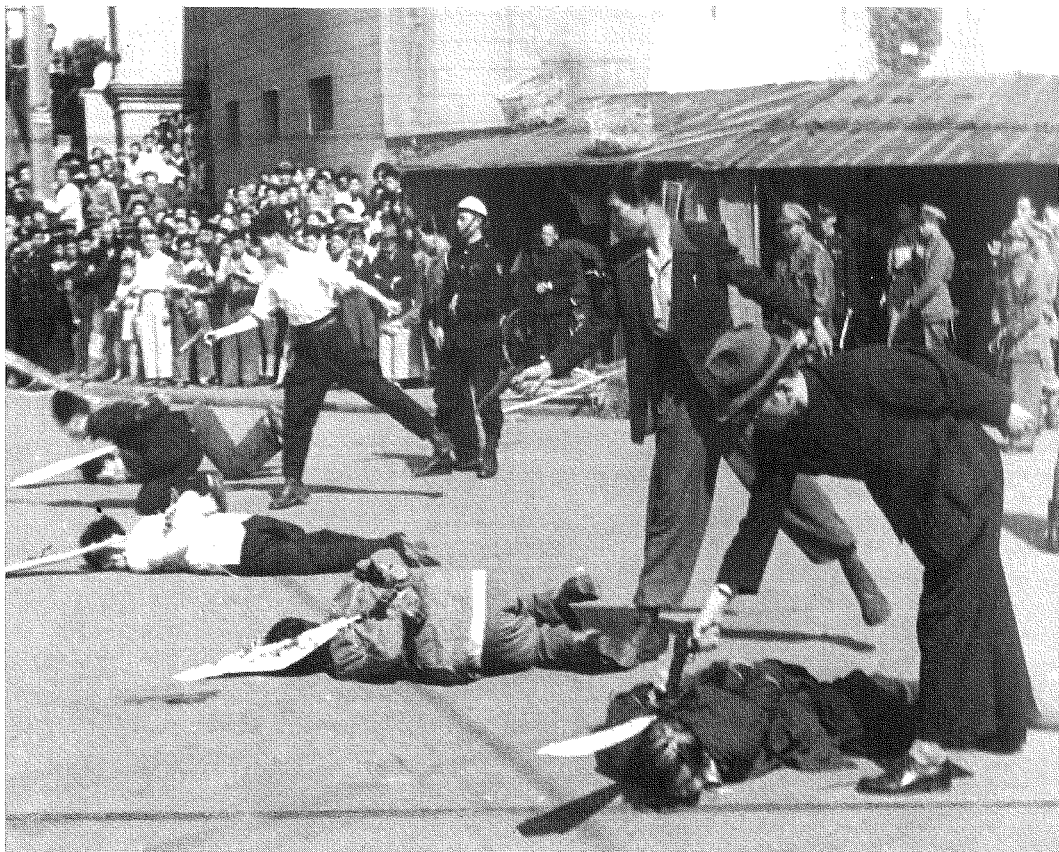
PLA crossed the Yangzi: April 1949

Fall of Nanjing to the PLA: April 1949

Fall of Shanghai to the PLA: May 1949

Mao declared creation of the Chinese People's Republic:
1 October 1949

Chiang Kai-shek fled to Taiwan: December 1949



Shanghai witnessed a reign of terror before it fell. It was a common sight for suspected Communist sympathisers to be executed in the street by being shot in the back of the head. Before they left the city, the GMD government and party officials transferred millions of dollars worth of gold and silver bullion to Taiwan. Why did the impending Nationalist defeat lead to such scenes?

The civil war's death toll

In terms of lives lost the civil war was one of the costliest struggles of the twentieth century:

- The Nationalists lost approximately three million men.
- The Communists lost one million men.
- When civilian deaths from famine and disruption are included, the total number of deaths was over six million.

Summary diagram: The civil war 1946–9

Main phases of the civil war

- Nationalists attempted to take Communist bases in Manchuria 1946–7
- Communists' successful resistance to these attacks 1946–7
- Communists took the offensive from 1947 onwards by moving south to take the previously Nationalist-held areas of central and southern China.

The key campaigns**The struggle for Manchuria 1946–7**

- Chiang's attempt to retake Manchuria

Result

- Successful Communist defence of its bases laid basis for PLA control of northern China

The 'strong point offensive' 1947

- Chiang's attempt to retake northern provinces

Result

- Despite taking Yanan, NRA's loss of Hebei, Shanxi, Shandong and Shaanxi provinces left Communists in control of north-eastern provinces
- Mao moved from mobile defence to offensive strategy

Liaoshen campaign, September–November 1948

- The climax to the long-running struggle over Manchuria

Results

- NRA irretrievably lost Manchuria
- NRA conceded north-east China to the Communists
- Strategic shift – the NRA now in retreat, the PLA took the offensive

Huaihai campaign, November 1948–January 1949

- Struggle for central China

Results

- GMD's loss of central provinces
- Southern China now open to the PLA

Pingjin campaign, November 1948–January 1949

- The struggle for Beijing

Results

- PLA's taking of Beijing broke Nationalist morale

The end of the civil war

- Final year of war a mopping-up exercise for PLA
- Mao declared People's Republic of China, October 1949
- Chiang's flight to Taiwan marked effective end of the war

2 | Reasons for the Communist Victory in 1949: Nationalist Failings

After some seemingly impressive successes in the first year of the war, including the taking of Yanan, the Nationalists were unable to achieve a single major victory between 1947 and 1949. Faced by growing desertions, and betrayed by moles among the higher ranks of the officers, who passed information to the Communists, Chiang could never wholly rely on his supposed supporters, a problem that rarely troubled Mao Zedong. Unable to create and sustain a genuinely popular following, Chiang increasingly resorted to coercion as the war went on. Property was seized, money expropriated and enlistment enforced. Protesters were arrested in large numbers and summary executions became commonplace. In August 1948, Shanghai witnessed particularly bloody scenes, including street-corner beheadings and shootings by government troops. Such atrocities alienated the Nationalists' diminishing band of supporters and dismayed their foreign sympathisers, most significantly the Americans. Splits occurred in the GMD ranks; rival factions opposed to Chiang, such as the **Guomindang Revolutionary Alliance** and the **Democratic League**, came into being. Against this background it became progressively more difficult for Chiang's Nationalists to sustain their war effort.

Key question

Why were the Nationalists unable to win the civil war?

Guomindang Revolutionary Alliance and the Democratic League

Separate organisations, but both made up of breakaway Nationalists who despaired of Chiang's leadership and the GMD's policies. They wanted a compromise settlement with the CCP.

Key term

Chiang's strategic errors

Military historians now emphasise that Chiang's basic military failing was lack of patience at a critical early juncture. His eagerness to establish a grip on northern China, the area where the Nationalists were at their least influential, betrayed him. Had he first chosen, as advised to by colleagues, to consolidate the Nationalists' position in central and southern China, which was traditionally their strong ground, he would have been much better placed to attack later in the north. In a reversal of the 'trading-space-to-buy-time strategy' he had followed against the Japanese, he rushed his armies into Manchuria in the hope of a quick victory over the Communists. In doing so he sacrificed the advantage that his greater resources initially gave him.

Chiang's lack of strategic judgement was further evident in his decision in 1947 to pursue the ironically misnamed 'strong point offensive'; intended to secure the north-eastern provinces for the GMD, it succeeded only in overstretching his armies at a time when they should have been regrouping and consolidating (see page 129).

Key question

What were Chiang Kaishek's major mistakes?

'The struggle for the hearts of the people'

Mao was no saint and the PLA were not chivalrous knights, but the Communists proved adept at winning what Mao called 'the struggle for the hearts of the people'. Against Chiang's corruption, factionalism, detachment from China's fundamental needs and dependence on American aid, Mao could offer involvement in the genuine aspirations of the nation and

Key question

How did Mao aim to win the struggle for the hearts of the people?

sympathy with the masses of the Chinese peasantry. By a striking irony the CCP were better positioned to fulfil the ‘Three Principles of the People’ (see page 42) than the Nationalists.

In their ‘liberated areas’, the Communists had created political structures which, although rudimentary, provided for the first time effective administration in the countryside. The local population had been encouraged through their peasant associations and co-operatives to participate in the organisation of their own affairs. We know that this was not paradise on earth and that the Communists employed brutal methods against uncooperative regions. Contrary to the CCP’s propaganda claim that it had the support of the liberated Chinese peasants, it is notable that there were few genuine and sustained popular risings in support of the Communists. Fear was a far more potent factor in bringing recruits to the Communist cause than committed enthusiasm.

Historians have pointed out that, while there were idealists who willingly backed the Communists, the popularity of the CCP among the peasants is largely explained by the licence the party gave them to seize the property of their hated landlords. The CCP’s land policy was as much expedient as it was idealistic. In areas where it paid to be moderate in order to win the support of the local gentry, the CCP was quite prepared to guarantee landowners’ rights. In areas where there was no such gain to be made, the peasants were encouraged to appropriate the land and publicly degrade its former owners. One grim result was the murder of one million landlords between 1945 and 1949. Chiang’s tragedy was that he could not turn all this to his advantage since his own regime was equally repressive.

The Nationalists’ political and economic failings

Wars are, of course, ultimately decided on the battlefield. But political and economic factors are also profoundly important. After 1945 the GMD’s major political weakness was that they had had 10 years of government in which to prove they had the right to govern. That decade had been distinguished by administrative inefficiency and self-seeking. The achievements of the time were small and unremarkable in the eyes of contemporaries. The Communists were able to portray themselves as essentially different; their initial willingness to co-operate with the GMD, despite the latter’s murderous attitude towards them, suggested a high degree of selflessness.

Inflation

However, what finally undermined the Nationalist government was not war or politics but economics. The military and political success of the Communists under Mao Zedong obviously played a vital part in preparing the way for their takeover in 1949, but it is arguable that the single most powerful reason for the failure of the GMD government was **inflation**. In 1941, the chronic but relatively mild rise in prices which China had experienced

Inflation

A fall in the purchasing power of money, most sharply felt by ordinary Chinese when they found that the items they bought became increasingly expensive.

throughout the Republican period began to climb uncontrollably (see Table 6.1).

Table 6.1: Inflation in China 1937–48

Year	Total nominal value of notes in circulation (in millions of Chinese dollars)	Price index (100 in 1937)
1937	2,060	100
1938	2,740	176
1939	4,770	323
1940	8,440	724
1941	15,810	1,980
1942	35,100	6,620
1943	75,400	22,800
1944	189,500	75,500
1945	1,031,900	249,100
1946	3,726,100	627,000
1947	33,188,500	10,340,000
1948	374,762,200	287,700,000

Price index
The cost of a selected set of basic goods at a given date against which the cost at any other time is then calculated. The first measurement is always set as a standard of 100.

Key term

The soaring inflation had been caused initially by the Japanese occupation after 1937 of China’s most prosperous and productive provinces. After 1945, the costs of maintaining an army of five million troops accounted for nearly 80 per cent of the government’s expenditure. To meet its revenue needs, the government imposed severe taxes on individuals and companies, and nationalised China’s private banks and finance houses. It also borrowed heavily from abroad and greatly increased the issue of paper currency. But these measures had harmful effects:

- A drastic fall in the value of money occurred, a trend that was intensified by the huge military expenditure occasioned by the war.
- The government was in the impossible position of attempting to pay its increasing domestic and foreign debts with money that was becoming worthless.
- The rate of inflation reached astronomical heights after 1945. By 1949 China’s monetary system had collapsed.
- Even had it had the will to do so, the government was prevented by financial bankruptcy from addressing the great social problems facing China.

Financial failure demoralised the people and discredited the GMD government economically and politically. Even had the Nationalists not been defeated in the civil war it is difficult to see how they could have survived the economic collapse over which they presided.

Chiang Kaishek’s explanation for Nationalists’ failure

A constant difficulty for the Nationalists was the personal rivalry among Chiang’s generals, most of whom put their own interests before those of the NRA. Adding to this problem was the willingness of key officers to betray the cause by becoming informants and disclosing to the PLA details of Nationalist troop positions and movements. Chiang also inadvertently made things

Key question
What factors did Chiang regard as being responsible for his defeat?

Profile: Chiang Kaishek 1883–1975

- 1883 – Born to a middle-class family in Zhejiang province
- 1906 – Entered military academy
- 1908 – Joined Sun Yatsen's Alliance League
- 1912–18 – Began developing contacts with Shanghai's underworld leaders
- 1918 – Joined Sun Yatsen at Guangzhou
- 1924 – Spent time in Moscow
- Became Commandant of Whampoa Military Academy
- 1925 – Won power struggle to become GMD leader
- 1926–8 – Led United Front on Northern Expedition against the warlords
- 1927 – Launched White Terror against the CCP
- Married Meiling Soong, daughter of T.V. Soong, China's richest man
- 1929 – Baptised into Christian faith
- 1928–34 – Head of Nanjing government
- 1931–4 – Organised encirclement campaigns against Communists
- 1934 – Inaugurated New Life Movement
- 1936 – Kidnapped at Xian and obliged to reform United Front
- 1937 – Declared the beginning of a national struggle against the Japanese
- 1938 – Renewed his military campaign against the CCP
- 1941–5 – Gained international recognition for his leadership of China's resistance to Japan
- 1945–9 – Defeated by Communists in civil war
- 1948 – Elected as President of Republic of China
- 1949 – Fled to Taiwan
- 1949–75 – Created the GMD-dominated Chinese Republic in Taiwan
- 1975 – Died

In one obvious sense, Chiang Kaishek's record before 1949 was a failure. Having had the Communists on the run and having been the dominant force in China for over a decade, he had then lost the civil war and been forced from the Chinese mainland. Yet it is possible to draw a different picture by emphasising his considerable successes. Prior to his defeat by the Communists in 1949, Chiang had triumphed over the Japanese, becoming in the process the internationally recognised spokesman of his nation. In the face of huge problems he had begun the process of modernising China and freeing it from foreign domination. His supporters then, and some writers since, have gone further by arguing that but for the destructive opposition of the Communists he would have reached his ultimate goal of creating a united people wedded to the progressive 'Three Principles of the People' inherited from Sun Yatsen.

Against such glowing tributes and projections are the views of his contemporary opponents and later critics who characterised him as essentially a ruthless warlord, who, having taken power through violent means, proceeded to run a government that was corrupt and inefficient, in league with gangsters, and able to sustain itself only by becoming reliant on foreign capital. Chiang's constant willingness to compromise his principles meant that the conditions of the Chinese people deteriorated rather than improved. He had failed to meet any of the high expectations with which he and his party had come to power.

worse by appointing commanders according to their personal loyalty to him rather than their military skills. As the war approached its end Chiang reflected on where things had gone wrong for him, his army and party. He offered five frank explanations:

- *'Our commanders fight muddle-headed battles and lack tactical skill.'* The commanders did not study the PLA's troop dispositions and disregarded local conditions. Their planning was careless and they issued orders thoughtlessly.
- *'The soldiers' combat skills are so poor that they cannot fight.'* The ordinary soldiers were badly led by their officers. Poorly trained and lacking the necessary knowledge of how to use their weapons, they were not taught the basics of reconnoitring and maintaining lines of communication in the field.
- *'The spirit of most commanders is broken.'* Nationalist morale was crippling low. The high-level officers began as complacent and ended as defeatist.
- *'The GMD's work is done carelessly and perfunctorily.'* The party needed organisation, discipline and effective propaganda, and 'lacked unity at critical times'.
- *'Soviet interference and American irresolution.'* The USSR and the USA, for their different reasons, had dabbled in the civil war to the GMD's disadvantage.

The limited base of the GMD's support

There was a fundamental flaw in the composition of the GMD that undermined its claim to be a party of the people. Relying for the bulk of its funding on the bankers and commercial interests of urban China, the GMD became a party that represented not the masses, but a small social and political élite who had little interest in the impoverished peasants of the countryside or the poor workers of the cities. The result of this dependence on the moneyed section of society was that the GMD government entered into shady deals with a clique that had little concern for the people at large (see page 67). This tainted Chiang's party and government, which became associated in the public mind with underhand dealing and **nepotism**.

Key question

How did the character of the GMD's support weaken its claim to be a national party?

Nepotism

'Jobs for the boys', giving position and special favours to cronies and family members.

Such corruption made a mockery of Chiang's assertion, as expressed in the New Life Movement he had founded, that the GMD was a moral force in Chinese society (see page 66). *China's Destiny*, a book which Chiang published in 1943 in which he appealed to all Chinese to abandon selfish thoughts and work for the good of the nation, was presented to the people as an inspirational text for all to follow. But it was impossible for most people to reconcile the book's lofty injunctions with the reality of how the GMD actually behaved in government.

Key question

Why was Chiang unable to gain the support of the Chinese regions?

The GMD's failure to win the localities

It can now be appreciated that one of Chiang's major political mistakes was his failure to gain the support of the localities. All Chinese leaders since imperial days had had difficulty in maintaining their authority in the regions; China was so large and communications were so slow. The customary way of solving the problem was to do a deal with those who held power in the regions. Unofficial agreements were made that the central government would not interfere with the local power structure,

Nationalist prisoners of war in 1949, including a number of women. Throughout the civil war, both sides recruited female soldiers, as much for propaganda as for military reasons. The NRA had special 'Dare to Die' units, whose title was meant as an inspiring call to self-sacrifice in Chiang's China.



provided the local leaders recognised the ultimate authority of the Chinese government. The rules were seldom written down but the understanding provided a workable system.

Chiang Kaishek made the mistake of disregarding this convention. After 1945, when attempting to re-establish his authority in the provinces the Japanese had occupied, he gave too little thought to the **local power structures**. He simply tried to impose GMD rule by dismissing the officials already there and replacing them with Nationalist appointees, who were invariably ignorant of the prevailing political and social conditions. It was a short-sighted policy that alienated the local communities from the GMD. Faced with grudging co-operation at best or outright opposition at worst, Chiang's only response was to use coercion to enforce obedience. It was not a way to win 'the hearts and minds of the people'.

The NRA's conscription and training methods

A policy that proved especially damaging to the Nationalists in terms of loss of respect and popularity was their practice of enforced conscription. Increasingly desperate for manpower as the war continued, but unable to raise enough volunteers to replenish its armies, Chiang's government authorised the rounding up of peasants by vicious armed recruitment squads. Once enlisted, the troops were treated with contempt by their officers. The president of the Chinese Red Cross was appalled by the barbarity suffered by the Nationalist conscripts. In a formal report in 1947 he recorded the miseries to which the troops were subjected:

In one reception centre, I met a group of draftees from Guangdong. 'How many draftees are there in your group?' 'There were 700 of us at the beginning of the journey. Now only 17 have remained.' 'Are you telling me that all but 17 have successfully escaped on the road?' 'No, sir', they replied. 'Where could they run away to on a road? The areas we passed through were nothing but wilderness where one could not find food or water. We had no food with us when we started the journey, and we had to survive on whatever we could find on the road. When we could not find anything, we, of course, starved. In some areas water was so contaminated that we suffered from diarrhoea the moment we drank it. Since no medicine was available, people died in droves.'

In many of the reception centres that I had visited, the draftees were tied to one another to forestall any possible escape. They had no freedom of movement whatsoever. They would be immediately whipped if, in the judgement of their officers, they had misbehaved. The food they ate was not only crude to the greatest extreme but also inadequate in quantity. Its only function was to prevent them from starving to death. Under cruel treatment like this, many of them died before they could even be sent to the front.

In Yunnan province, I saw a group of army recruiters gambling with large stakes. Being occupied with what they were doing at the moment, they paid little attention to the draftees who, being sick

Key question

Why was the NRA so brutal in its treatment of its own troops?

Local power structures

The officials, professional businessmen, lawyers and financiers, who had stayed on to administer the regions during the Japanese occupation and who expected to continue after the GMD's return to power after 1945.

and lying beside them, were on the verge of death. One draftee pleaded hopefully: 'Give me some water, please; I am so thirsty that I am about to die.' Instead of showing any sympathy, these army recruiters scolded him in angry voice: 'Get out of here! Why do you always want to make trouble?'

Cruelties like this appeared time and again during my inspection tour. The lack of sympathy on the part of army recruiters was almost universal.

Roped peasants are marched away barefoot after being rounded up by an NRA conscription squad. What effect were such scenes likely to have on the attitude towards the GMD among ordinary Chinese?



Summary diagram: Reasons for the Communist victory in 1949 – Nationalist failings

Military

- Chiang's flawed strategy in attempting to seize northern China before his forces were ready
- Overextension of supply lines damaged NRA effectiveness
- Inability to hold the countryside
- Ineffective generalship
- Rivalry among the commanders
- Lack of loyalty among NRA commanders at the highest level
- Constant desertions
- Betrayal from within by pro-Communist moles and informants
- Low morale caused by the brutal way NRA troops were treated
- Misuse of US aid, much of which fell into Communist hands

Political

- Restricted power base of the GMD
- The GMD's financial dependence on the banking interests
- Chiang never in total control of the GMD
- The failure to fulfil the 'Three Principles of the People'
- Corruption in government
- Savage conscription methods alienated the people
- Overwhelmed by hyperinflation
- Failed to win over the localities
- Resorted to coercion to maintain control

3 | Reasons for the Communist Victory in 1949: CCP Strengths

Mao described the CCP's victory as having come in three main stages:

- The CCP's success in holding on to Manchuria.
- The defeat of the GMD's 'strong point offensive' in 1947–8.
- The PLA's counteroffensives in 1948–9.

There is no denying the accuracy of Mao's judgement, but, as he so often stressed to his followers, the critical victories were not simply military affairs. The Communists' overthrow of the GMD in 1949 was also a triumph in terms of politics, propaganda and public relations. Later accounts written by his supporters described Mao as having followed a carefully planned path to victory. They suggested that Mao, disregarding the half-hearted support of the Soviet Union and the meddling of the USA, had confidently followed his own judgement. By enlightened policies in the countryside he had formed an unbreakable bond with the Chinese people and led them in a great social revolution against Chiang and the GMD.

This narrative became the official CCP version of what had happened. However, what modern historians, including Chinese writers, suggest is that the critical factor in Mao's success was not his long-term planning but his opportunism. When the civil war was renewed in 1946, Mao's most optimistic hope was that the CCP would be able to retain the bases it had acquired by the end of the Japanese struggle. He did not foresee that within three years his Communist forces would have taken the whole of China. It was the Nationalists who made that possible by throwing away their initial superiority.

Mao's dominance of the CCP and PLA

What is difficult to dispute in the Communist legend is that, without Mao Zedong's power and ability as a leader, the CCP would not have won the war. His self-belief and conviction of his own correctness inspired the PLA's commanders and men. Mao possessed the strength of will that wins political and military struggles. It had expressed itself in the ruthlessness with which he had suppressed opposition within his own party in the rectification programme of the early 1940s (see page 92). Indeed, it was his absolute domination of the party that enabled him to have the final word in the organising of the PLA's campaigns during the civil war. It was that control that allowed him to overcome the doubts of many of his commanders and change from a defensive to an offensive strategy at a critical stage of the civil war.

Mao's leadership

In the list of military factors accounting for the CCP's ultimate victory, Mao's leadership ranks as one of the most significant. It was under him that the PLA, which had been a rural guerrilla

Key question

Why were the Communists ultimately successful in the civil war?

A PLA soldier listens tearfully to the description of the sufferings endured by the peasants before the Communists liberated them. Mao instructed the PLA to identify with ordinary Chinese in order to ease the CCP's takeover of the countryside. What miseries were the peasants likely to have described to the soldier?



The other face of the CCP's land policy. A landlord, pinioned and kneeling on sharp stones, is interrogated by a people's court before being executed with a shot in the back of the head. How do these two images show the two-pronged approach of the CCP to land settlement?

force in 1945, had, by 1948, become a modern army capable of conducting a modern war. The most impressive illustration of this was Mao's decision to undertake the three gigantic campaigns fought between 1948 and 1949. Overcoming the reservations of those of his commanders who doubted that warfare could be sustained on such a scale, Mao drove his armies on to a set of victories that assured the ultimate triumph of the Communists in the civil war.

Mao's overcoming of the Soviet Union

There is a sense in which Mao's victory in the civil war also marked a victory over the Soviet Union. Since the 1920s, Stalin had refused to believe that the Chinese Communists could achieve a genuine revolution. He held that they were too few in number to be significant and that the best thing for them was to merge with the Nationalists. The low estimation in which Moscow held Mao and the CCP was revealed in August 1945 when the Soviet Union formally signed a treaty of friendship with Chiang Kaishek's Nationalist government. The treaty declared that its terms ended 'all outstanding grievances' between China and the USSR. The British newspaper the *Observer* commented on the significance of the Soviet Union's abandoning of the Chinese Communists: 'The cynic may be inclined to regard Russia's part in the conclusion of the treaty with China as a sacrifice of the Yanan regime for the sake of greater prestige and influence in Chungking and hence over all China.'

Subsequent events confirmed the accuracy of the *Observer's* assessment. It can now be appreciated that the friendship treaty complemented the Soviet Union's declaration of war on Japan in August 1945 in the last days of the conflict in China. The USSR was manoeuvring itself into a position from which it could seize Chinese territory. Soviet armies occupied Manchuria between August 1945 and May 1946 and did not withdraw until they had stripped the region of its economic resources.

Stalin's continued recognition of Chiang Kaishek

The upshot of this was that, when the Japanese grip on China was broken and the GMD–CCP civil war was resumed, the Soviet Union remained a largely impotent onlooker. It made occasional gestures of goodwill towards Mao Zedong, and the Kremlin continued to send its representatives to CCP gatherings, but, even when the Red Army began to drive the Nationalists from their bases, Stalin could not bring himself to change tack. As late as 1949 the year in which the Reds forced the GMD off the Chinese mainland, the USSR persisted in recognising Chiang Kaishek as China's leader. Stalin believed throughout this period that the USA would not tolerate a Communist victory in China. Anxious not to provoke further American intervention in the Far East, he urged Mao to come to terms with the Nationalists, even if this meant accepting a China divided between the Reds in the north and the GMD in the south. Mao later recorded:

Key question

Why was the Soviet Union so reluctant to support the CCP during the civil war?

South and North dynasties

A reference to the partition of China during the civil wars of the fifth and sixth centuries AD.

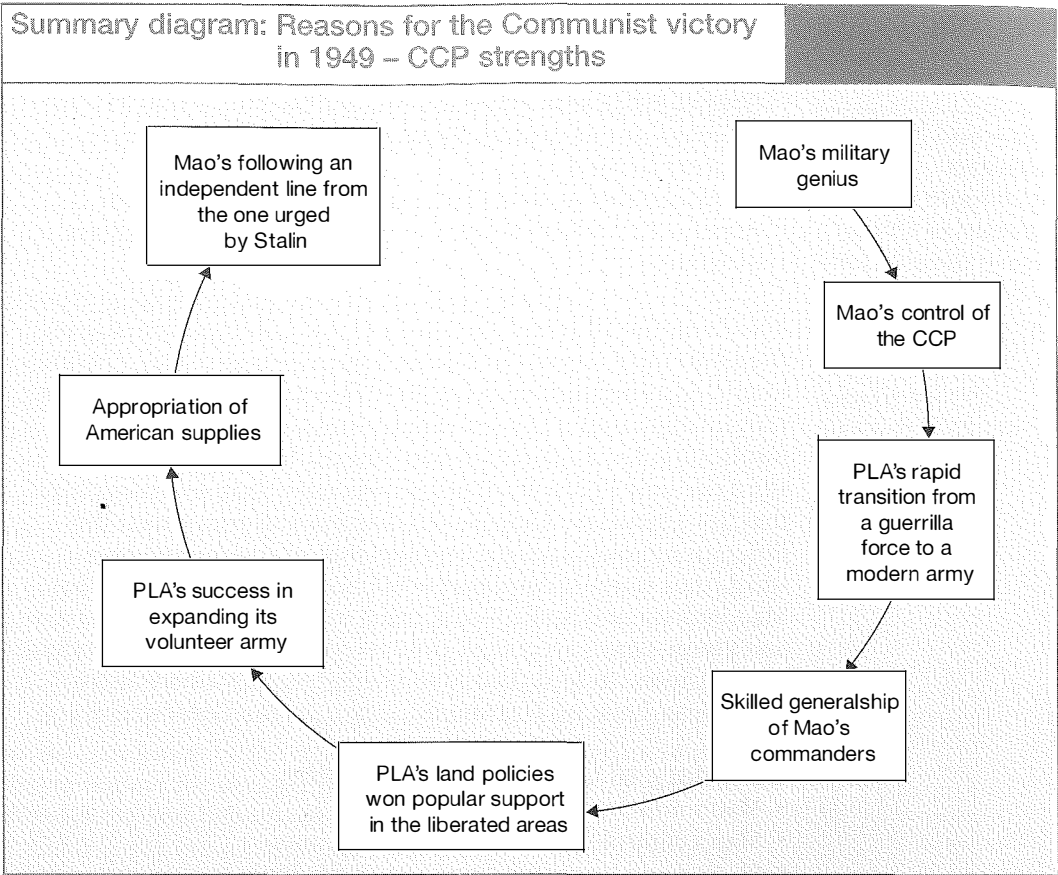
Even in 1949 when we were about to cross the Yangzi River, *someone* [Stalin] still wanted to prevent us. According to him we should under no circumstances cross the Yangzi. If we did so America would send troops to China and become directly involved in China's civil war and the **South and North dynasties** would reappear in China.

I did not listen to what [Stalin] said. We crossed the Yangzi, America did not send troops and there were no South and North dynasties.

That both the USA and the Soviet Union continued to support the GMD until almost the last moment vindicated Mao Zedong's long-held belief that salvation for China was possible only from within China itself. The unfolding of events he read as a justification for the independent Marxist line that he had taken since the mid-1920s. By 1949, he was more than ever convinced that, for China, the Chinese way was the only way. Given the different national, cultural and ideological standpoints from which they started, there had never been a real likelihood that Mao Zedong and Stalin would come to share a common purpose and vision. Mao's success in 1949 owed nothing to Stalin and the Soviet Union. Indeed, had Mao heeded Stalin's advice there would have been no Communist victory in the Chinese civil war.

Summary of Communist strengths

- Mao's military genius.
- Mao's control of the CCP.
- PLA's rapid transition from a guerrilla force to a modern army.
- Skilled generalship of Mao's commanders.
- PLA's land policies won popular support in the liberated areas.
- PLA's success in expanding its volunteer army.
- Appropriation of American supplies.
- Mao's following an independent line from the one urged by Stalin.



Glossary of Names

Chinese names in their *Pinyin* and Wade-Giles forms

<i>Pinyin</i>	Wade-Giles	<i>Pinyin</i>	Wade-Giles
Anhui	Anhwei	Nanjing	Nanking
Beijing	Peking	Peng Dehuai	Peng Teh-huai
Bo Yibo	Po Yipo	Peng Zhen	Peng Chen
Chen Boda	Chen Po-ta	Qin Shi Huang	Shi Huang-ti
Chen Duxui	Chen Tu-hsiu	Qinghai	Tsinghai
Chiang Kaishek	Jiang Jieshi	Quemoy	Jinmen
Chongqing	Chungking	Rao Rashi	Jao Shu-shi
Daxing	Tsa-hsing	Shaanxi	Shensi
Deng Xiaoping	Teng Hsiao-ping	Shandong	Shantung
Duan Qirui	Tuan Chi-jui	Shantou	Swatow
Fang Lizhi	Fang Li-chih	Shanxi	Shansi
Feng Xuxiang	Feng Yu-hsiang	Sichuan	Szechwan
Fujian	Fukien	Sun Yatsen	Sun Yat-sen
Fuzhou	Foochow	Taiwan	Formosa
Gansu	Kansu	Wang Dengxing	Wang Tung-hsing
Gao Gang	Kao Kang	Wang Hongwen	Wang Hung-wen
Guangdong	Kwangtung	Wang Jingwei	Wang Ching-wei
Guangxi	Kwangsi	Wang Jinxi	Wang Ching-hsi
Guangxu	Kuang Hsu	Wuhan	Wuchang
Guangzhou	Canton	Xiamen	Amoy
Guizhou	Kweichow	Xian	Sian
Guomingdang	Kuomingtang	Xie Fuzhi	Hsieh Fu-chih
Hangzhou	Hangchow	Xinhua	Hsinhua
Hebei	Hopei	Xinjiang	Sinkiang
Hefei	Hofei	Xizang	Hsi-tsang
Heilongjiang	Heilunkiang	Xu Shiyong	Hsu Shih-yu
Henan	Honan	Yanan	Yenan
Hua Guofeng	Hua Kuopfung	Yangzi	Yangtze
Hubei	Hupei	Yan Jioqi	Yan Chao-chi
Hu Yaobang	Hu Yao-pang	Yan Xishan	Yen Hsi-shan
Jiang Jieshi	Chiang Kai-shek	Yao Wenxuan	Yao Wen-yuan
Jiang Jinguo	Chiang Ching-kuo	Ye Jianying	Yeh Chien-ying
Jiang Qing	Chiang Ching	Zhang Chunqiao	Chang Chun-chiao
Jiangxi	Kiansi	Zhao Ziyang	Chao Tzu-yang
Lin Biao	Lin Piao	Zhou Enlai	Chou En-lai
Liu Shaoqi	Liu Shao-chi	Zhu De	Chuh The
Mao Yuanxin	Mao Yuan-hsin	Zhuhai	Chuhai
Mao Zedong	Mao Tse-tung	Zunyi	Tsunyi

Glossary

9 December Movement The title was meant to convey the continuity between this 1935 protest and the movements of 4 May 1919 and 30 May 1925.

'100 Days' The period of reform, starting in 1898, intended by the Manchus to divert opposition and dispel criticism.

Anti-Comintern Pact An agreement in 1936 between Germany, Italy and Japan declaring their joint hostility to the Soviet Union.

Autocracy The rule of a single authority, in China the emperor.

Autonomy Self-government.

Axis powers Hitler's Nazi Germany and Mussolini's Fascist Italy.

Barbarossa The codename for the German invasion of the Soviet Union beginning in June 1941.

Beiping Meaning 'northern peace' to distinguish it from Beijing which had meant 'northern capital'.

Blue Shirts 'The Society for the Practice of the Three Principles of the People', a force largely recruited from young officers at the Nationalist Military Academy in Nanjing whose main task was hunting down suspected Communists.

Bolshevik The Russian Communist Party.

Bourgeois stage In Marxist theory, the period of history when the middle class, having overcome the previous feudal system, dominate society until the working-class revolution occurs.

Bourgeoisie Marxist term for the exploiting middle class.

Boxers Anti-Western secret societies, whose name derived from the martial arts they practised.

CCP The Chinese Communist Party.

Chinese nationalism Strongly committed belief in the need for China to re-establish its independence and sovereignty.

Chinese soviet Originally meaning a council in Russian, the word soviet came to be applied to Communist organisations and bases which Mao set up.

Comintern Communist International, a body set up in Moscow in 1919 to organise international revolution by requiring foreign Communists to follow the Russian path.

Concessions International settlements which were, in effect, European mini-states in China.

Confucius The Latin name of the Chinese scholar (551–479 BC), whose philosophy of acceptance influenced China for thousands of years and continues to shape Chinese thinking today.

Consortium A group of financiers drawn from France, Britain, Germany, Russia, Japan and the USA.

Constitutional monarchy A form of government in which the ruler does not have absolute authority and is required to act in co-operation with elected representatives.

Coolies Used disparagingly to denote the contempt many in the West felt towards the Chinese as perceived inferiors.

Coups Successful military risings.

Crown colony An overseas territory directly governed by Britain.

Cult status A position that entitles the holder to a special veneration among the people.

Democratic centralism The notion that in a truly revolutionary party the members owed absolute loyalty and obedience to the leaders.

Depression Between 1929 and the late 1930s, there was a serious slump in industrial production and international trade.

Dialectical imperative The dynamic force that shapes the historical development of the class war.

Dialectical process The successive series of class conflicts, which, Marxists believed, would culminate in the victory of the working class over capitalism.

Divine right of kings The notion that a monarch has a god-given and, therefore, unchallengeable authority to govern.

Dollar diplomacy America's insistence on free trade and fair exchange in international commercial and financial dealings.

'Double Seventh' Start of Sino-Japanese War, 7 July 1937. There is a Chinese tradition of referring to significant events by the coincidence of day and month.

'Double Tenth' The mutiny at Wuhan on 10 October 1911 which began the revolution.

Dowager Empress The widow of the previous emperor, who kept her royal title as empress.

Expatriate Chinese living abroad, most numerous in Singapore, Malaya and Indonesia.

Fascist Referring strictly only to Mussolini's Fascist movement in Italy, the word came to be applied to all the nationalistic, authoritarian right-wing regimes of the period.

Forbidden City The extensive but exclusive area in Beijing where the

emperor lived and ruled and to which access was denied to all but selected guests.

Foreign devils An expression used by many Chinese to denote their hatred of the Westerners who dominated China.

Foreign interventionists A large number of countries, including Britain, France and Japan, sent forces to Russia to fight against the Bolsheviks during the Russian civil war of 1918–20.

Generalissimo The supreme commander.

German military advisers In building up the GMD's armed forces after 1928, Chiang relied heavily on German military experts to train his army and navy.

Gestapo The notorious Nazi secret police.

Gettysburg address A speech, in honour of the war dead, delivered by President Lincoln in 1863 during the American civil war (1861–5) in which he defined the purpose of the struggle to be the establishment of 'government of the people, by the people, for the people'.

Great helmsman A reference to Mao's supposed wisdom and ability in guiding the ship of state.

Greater East Asian Co-prosperity Sphere Theoretically, co-operation between Japan and China, but in reality Japanese domination of China.

Green Gang Said to be the controlling force in Shanghai, this racketeering organisation, which dealt mainly in prostitution and drug running, was notorious for bribing police and government officials to co-operate in its illegal operations.

Guandong army The Japanese army already stationed in Guandong province.

Guerrilla tactics A hit-and-run style of fighting relying on speed, surprise, knowledge of the terrain and co-operation from the local people.

Guomindang The Chinese Nationalist Party (shortened to GMD or Nationalists), formed in 1912.

Guomindang Revolutionary Alliance and the Democratic League Separate organisations, but both made up of breakaway Nationalists who despaired of Chiang's leadership and the GMD's policies. They wanted a compromise settlement with the CCP.

Harbin The CCP turned this city into its chief base in Manchuria; it became the organisational model for the other cities and towns that the Communists came to occupy during the war.

Hawks The aggressive pro-war element.

Hierarchic Describes the system in which people are ranked in value according to the authority they hold.

Huaihai A compound word, from the Huai River and the second syllable of the Longhai railway. It was between the river and the railway that the main struggles took place.

Ichigo offensive A sweeping Japanese movement in 1944 that brushed aside Chiang's forces, knocked out many Allied airfields and opened a Japanese land route to Indo-China.

Impeachment Formal censure of Yuan Shikai by the Republican parliament.

Imperial The rule of the various dynasties and emperors over China.

Imperialist phase of capitalism According to Marxist theory, the stage of history when the capitalist nations progressed from exploiting their own domestic markets to seizing and exploiting overseas territories.

Indigenous Home-grown, locally developed.

Individualism Emphasis on people as individuals rather than as members of society.

Inflation A fall in the purchasing power of money, most sharply felt by ordinary Chinese when they found that the items they bought became increasingly expensive.

Intellectual class Although himself possessed of a very powerful intellect, Mao had an abiding distrust of intellectuals, by whom he meant those who merely talked and theorised rather than acting.

International Communist revolution The declared purpose of the Comintern since its founding in 1919.

International tensions German expansion in the late 1930s caused grave diplomatic concerns for the European powers.

Ipso facto By that very fact.

Japanese exclusiveness Deliberate detachment from contact with other nations.

Japanese expansionism Stalin's concern was that imperialist Japan would exploit the Soviet Union's problems on its European borders to encroach on Russian territory in the Far East.

Japanese incursion The occupation of Manchuria.

Kowtow The requirement that, when first entering the emperor's presence, the visitor showed respect by prostrating himself face down and tapping his head nine times on the floor.

Kremlin Although, strictly speaking, the Moscow palace which housed the Soviet government, the word is often used to refer to the government itself.

League of Nations Set up in 1919 as the main body for settling international disputes.

Left GMD The pro-Moscow Marxist sympathisers within the Guomindang.

Lend-lease Provision of goods and supplies at no charge or at very low rates of interest.

Liaoning province Manchuria was made up of three provinces: Heilongjiang, Jilin and Liaoning.

Liaoshen A compound word made from the first syllables of Liaoning, the Manchurian province where the major fighting took place, and Shenyang, the provincial capital and the key prize.

Liberated The Communist term for the areas they brought under their military and political control.

Liberation Daily The CCP's chief newspaper.

Literary and intellectual renaissance In the 1920s, there was a huge increase among Chinese writers and artists of works dealing with China's national identity and character.

Local power structures The officials, professional businessmen, lawyers and financiers, who had stayed on to administer the regions during the Japanese occupation and who expected to continue after the GMD's return to power after 1945.

Loess A soil that has sufficient consistency to enable it to be dug into and shaped without its collapsing.

Manchu Also known as the Qing, the last imperial dynasty (1644–1911).

Mandarins An élite class of scholars.

Mandate of heaven The force of history that justifies the holding of power by those in authority.

Marco Polo Bridge An important crossing point, 10 miles outside Beijing.

Marxism–Leninism The body of Marxist ideas as interpreted and applied by Lenin.

Meiji period The reign of Japanese Emperor Meiji (1869–1914).

Middle peasants Those who made a small profit from their farming.

Militarism The idea that a nation best expresses its true character through martial strength.

Mobile defence Guerrilla warfare, avoiding set battles.

Moles Secret sympathisers and informants.

Moneyed bourgeois elements Industrialists, businessmen and bankers.

Nanjing One of the GMD's major strongholds in central China.

National Revolutionary Army (NRA) The GMD's military wing.

Nationalisation The takeover by the state of companies and enterprises that had previously been privately owned.

Nazi–Soviet pact A 10-year non-aggression agreement between Germany and the USSR, signed in August 1939.

Nepotism 'Jobs for the boys', giving position and special favours to cronies and family members.

NRA The National Revolutionary Army of the Guomindang.

October Revolution The seizure of power in Russia by the Bolsheviks in the name of the workers in October 1917.

Open door The US policy aimed at preventing European powers imposing unfair commercial agreements on China.

Opium A narcotic drug that had become highly popular and sellable in China, largely as result of British suppliers forcing it on the Chinese in the nineteenth century.

Parliamentary party One willing to work within the Republican constitution.

Pearl Harbor The American naval base in Hawaii, which Japan attacked in 1941 with the aim of destroying the US Pacific fleet and thus preventing the Americans from fighting an effective war.

Peasant associations Self-protection organisations formed by local communities in the rural areas.

People's welfare Sometimes loosely translated as 'socialism'.

Persona non grata An officially unacceptable person, an outlaw.

Pillboxes Small, rounded turrets made of thick concrete and containing narrow apertures through which machine guns, operated by one or two men, could traverse a full 360°.

Pingjin A compound word formed from the last syllables of Peiping, the Nationalist name for Peking, and Tianjin, the main port on the gulf of the Yellow River and linked to the capital by the Grand Canal.

PLA The People's Liberation Army, formerly the CCP's Red Army.

Poor peasants Those living at mere subsistence level.

Post facto After the event.

Price index The cost of a selected set of basic goods at a given date against which the cost at any other time is then calculated. The first measurement is always set as a standard of 100.

Progressive elements Those members of the court who wanted China to modernise.

Proletariat The industrial working class, destined, in Marxist analysis, to be the final victor in the dialectical process.

Qingdao A major port in Shandong province, also the birthplace of Confucius.

Queue The traditional pigtail worn by men in the Manchu era.

Quid pro quo Something for something, a balanced exchange.

Quietism The acceptance of fate.

Radicals Those Chinese who believed that sweeping political and social changes were necessary if China was to be truly modernised.

Reactionaries Those members of the court who opposed the modernisation of China.

Red Army The powerful military force developed by the Bolsheviks which had enabled them to win the Russian civil war (1918–20).

Red Cross An international relief organisation which deliberately refrains from taking sides in wars and disputes and works solely to lessen suffering.

Reds A term adopted by Mao's Communists to describe themselves, red being the colour of revolutionary fervour.

Regent An individual who rules until the monarch is old enough or sufficiently capable of taking power himself.

Representative principle The right of people to elect a government and to hold it to account.

Republic A form of government in which there is no monarch and power is exercised by elected representatives.

Revisionist Reactionary, anti-party thinking.

Revolutionary correctness The idea that Chinese Communism (Maoism) was a body of political, social and economic truth which all CCP members had to accept and live by.

Rightist A derogatory term that lacked specific meaning but was used to attack CCP members thought to be anti-revolutionary.

Right-wing governments Nazi Germany, Fascist Italy and Falangist Spain.

Russo-Japanese war of 1904–5 The victory of the Japanese over the Russians was an inspiration to Asian peoples seeking to match or challenge the Western world.

'Scramble for Africa' Between 1870 and 1914 there was fierce competition among the European imperialist powers to establish colonies in Africa.

Second Revolution An unsuccessful attempt in 1913 by the GMD to remove Yuan Shikai.

Secret society An organisation which restricts its membership, conceals its activities from the public and often acts outside the law.

Security An agreement in 1913 that if China defaulted on its loan repayments its tax revenue would be forfeit.

Self-determination The principle that nations were entitled to shape and plan their own development free from outside interference and direction.

Show trial Public hearings in which the accused is paraded as an enemy of the people.

Sino-centric Inward looking, preoccupied with China. The prefix 'Sino' means Chinese.

South and North dynasties A reference to the partition of China during the civil wars of the fifth and sixth centuries AD.

Sovereign state An independent, self-governing nation.

Soviet forces Stalin's armies had begun occupying Manchuria three days after the Hiroshima bombing in August 1945.

Soviet–GMD friendship treaty Chiang agreed in 1945 to allow Soviet forces into Manchuria in return for the USSR's recognition of his party as the only legitimate authority in China.

Soviet system A rigidly structured political organisation which excluded all non-Communists.

Stalinist line In the Soviet Union in the 1930s, Stalin was completing a ferocious policy of collectivisation, which involved stripping the peasants of their property and removing those who resisted.

Superior race An equivalent Japanese notion to the Nazi concept of the master race.

Supply lines The vital links between an army and its ammunition, equipment and food sources.

Sweatshops Crowded, unhealthy premises, at high risk of fire, where unscrupulous bosses exploited cheap labour.

Tariff Levies raised on imports.

Territorial contiguity Geographical proximity.

Third Reich Hitler's Nazi regime, 1933–45.

Tokyo Japan's capital city and centre of government.

Tongzhou Capital of the East Hebei puppet state.

Totalitarianism A system in which the state has complete power over the people.

Trading space to buy time Giving ground to the Japanese which would both overstretch their resources and allow the Chinese the opportunity to build up their own strength.

Trans-Siberian railway Stretched 3750 miles from Moscow to Vladivostok, connecting Russia's European and Asian territories.

Triads Violent Chinese secret societies.

Twenty-eight Bolsheviks A particular set of Communists who had been trained in Moscow and came back to China with instructions to make the CCP conform to Soviet and Comintern concepts of revolution.

Usury Charging exorbitant interest on money loans.

Vassal state A nation effectively under the control of another state.

Versailles Conference The meeting of the victor nations at Versailles in France in 1919 to draw up the peace treaty and reshape the map of Europe.

War-crimes tribunal Held mainly in Tokyo and modelled on the Nuremberg

trials in Germany at which the Nazi war criminals were arraigned.

Warlords Powerful local generals who exploited the weakness of the central government to set themselves up as rulers in their own areas.

Western imperialism The spread in the nineteenth century of economic and political control by European powers over parts of Asia and Africa.

White A common term for Chiang's Nationalists, in contrast to the Reds, the Communists.

YMCA Young Men's Christian Association, a welfare organisation that Western missionaries had brought to China.

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