

**Forum:** Historical Security Council

**Issue #HS-01:** The Chinese Civil War (January 1946)

**Student Officer:** Santiago Souto

**Position:** Deputy President of the Historical Security Council

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**Note to Delegates:** This Research Report addresses the entirety of the conflict from a modern perspective. It is up to the delegate to discern what information is relevant and stick to the date proposed. However, “Possible Solutions” focuses on the matters occurring in the time period provided by the issue title.

## Introduction

The Chinese Civil War began in August 1927 when Chiang Kai-Shek of the nationalist Republic of China (led by the Kuomintang, the Chinese Nationalist Party) ordered a massive purge of communists in Shanghai and peripheral areas. The Kuomintang had recently been in an alliance with the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) (“First United Front”) in hopes of uniting China, which was splintered into hundreds of warlords, all vying for power after the collapse of the Qing Dynasty. Once the alliance collapsed, a civil war began in which the Republic of China gained the upper hand. The CCP was on the verge of defeat and enacted the Long March, a long retreat north to avoid capture by Kuomintang forces, and eventually reached and settled in Shaanxi.

In 1936, with the Japanese threat looming, both sides, recognising the Empire of Japan as a greater threat, entered a military alliance, known as the “Second United Front”. In 1937, Japanese forces entered China in what was essentially a full scale invasion. The alliance eventually collapsed, however, the United States and the Soviet Union managed to convince both parties to hold the alliance together in order to defeat the Japanese. The CCP, employing guerilla warfare against the Japanese, managed to suffer far fewer casualties, and, through victories, managed to gain the ultimate support of the people. Meanwhile, the Republic of China (ROC) was suffering constant defeat at the arms of the Japanese, as well as massive losses. By the time the war had ended, CCP forces, not weakened as much as those of the Kuomintang, were in a far better position.

As the war resumed, the Chinese Communist Party began to take control of vast areas of territory within China, as well as being ceded Manchuria by the Soviet Union (which had taken it from the Japanese). With Soviet support, the CCP managed to cripple forces of the Republic of China, which fled to Taiwan.

Technically, the Chinese Civil War still continues to this day. No peace treaty was signed, and no armistice ever came into effect - a practical peace has ensued. Both sides continue to lay claim to being the sole rulers of China, although the international community has essentially recognised the People’s Republic of China as the legitimate power in control.

## Definition of Key Terms

### **Kuomintang**

The Nationalist Party of the Republic of China (Taiwan today). It was the sole ruling party of the Republic of China during the Chinese Civil War.

### **People's Liberation Army (PLA)**

Also known as the “Red Army”, the PLA was the communist army led by Mao Zedong.

### **Northern Expedition**

Military campaign launched by the CCP and the Kuomintang in unison, which eventually unified China under the Nanjing government and led to their diplomatic fallout.

### **Manchuria**

Province of Northern China which was seized by the Japanese and was later invaded by the Soviet Union, which in turn later ceded it to the CCP.

### **Qing Dynasty**

Ruling Dynasty of China up to 1911.

### **The Long March**

Large scale retreat carried out by the Chinese Communist Party, which ensured its survival and gained great support for the Party.

### **First United Front**

The first alliance between the CCP and ROC, which eventually collapsed and led to civil war.

### **Second United Front**

An all out Chinese United Front between all relevant parties aimed at combating the Japanese threat.

## Issue Overview

### **Historical Background**

#### *The Warlord Era*

The Qing Dynasty ruled China for over 2 centuries, however, this period was far from prosperous. The Qing refused to make contact with the outside world, and xenophobia became preeminent all over the country. Only one port was open for trade, and eventually western powers decided to take action, culminating in the opium wars, which were both devastating defeats for the Chinese. Furthermore, the boxer rebellion further weakened the dynasty, and its collapse was all but inevitable. In 1912, this collapse took place, and the Republic of China took over. In 1916, local warlords and military cliques

began to revolt and take possession of large swaths of land. Eventually, all of China fell under the control of warlords. These warlords fought many wars against each other, the most significant of which being the Central Plains War, in which over a million troops were involved. Meanwhile, to the east, the threat of Japan loomed ever present. In the South, Chiang Kai-Shek, leader of the Kuomintang Party, sought the unification of China. To do this, he formed an alliance with the Chinese Communist Party, and the two prepared an expedition to unite China.

### *The Northern Expedition*

The Northern Expedition was a military campaign launched by the First United Front with the task of unifying China in the midst of the Warlord era. It began in 1926, however, in 1927 the alliance essentially split after Chiang Kai-shek (leader of the Kuomintang party and hence nationalist China) ordered the massacre of communists in Shanghai. The campaign resumed under the Kuomintang in 1928, and with the help of warlords such as Yan Xishan, Kuomintang forces eventually reached Beiping (today known as Beijing) and assumed control of (most of) China. However, warlords continued to exert significant influence over their territories, which would later prove problematic for the government.

### *Civil War Begins*

With China unified, the Nanjing government (new nationalist government of China) decided to turn its attention to the CCP. On the verge of defeat, the communists launched a massive military retreat known as the Long March which ensured their survival. The march took a heavy toll on communist forces, which suffered heavy casualties, but they managed to gain popular support. This retreat, known as the Long March, ended in 1935 when CCP forces reached Shaanxi.

### *Interlude*

In 1937, both sides agreed on a temporary alliance, known as the Second United Front, in order to combat the Japanese invasion. China was ravaged by the Japanese, and the Chinese never really stood much of a chance. While communist forces favoured guerilla warfare, forces of the Republic of China suffered incredibly heavy casualties against the Japanese invaders by using traditional tactics. By the time the war came to an end, Kuomintang forces were weakened and on the retreat, whilst the communists were stronger than ever with increasing popular support.

### *Civil War Resumes - Communist Victory*

Soviet forces, which had taken control of Manchuria, gradually cede control of these areas to the communist party. Nationalist forces, weakened and demoralised, stood no chance against the onslaught of the CCP, backed by the Soviet Union. CCP victory was inevitable, and the civil war eventually came to an end, with Kuomintang forces retreating to Taiwan, where they remain to this day.

## Latest Events

As of January 1946 (the date of relevance to the issue), the Second World War had just come to an end. The Empire of Japan had fallen, and areas it had occupied had been retaken by Chinese forces. However, the Second United Front fell apart almost instantly after the war ended. Chinese communists and nationalists resumed their civil war. The Soviet Union was in control of (most of) Manchuria, which it had taken in an invasion of Japanese controlled areas in the region. This area was gradually being ceded to communist forces (in accordance with Soviet support). During the war with Japan, communist forces and their guerilla tactics had generally excelled over those of the Republic of China. Consequently, the CCP gained increasingly more popular support, favouring a more efficient use of manpower than their ROC counterparts. Forces of the ROC were devastated and demoralised after the war with Japan, and to many it was a matter of time before a massive communist onslaught took control of the country.

## Major Parties Involved

### Republic of China (ROC)

The Republic of China was founded in 1912 and was solely governed by the Kuomintang, a nationalist party which remains in existence to this day. Forces of the Republic of China would eventually retreat to the island of Formosa (Taiwan) in the face of communist advances.

### Chinese Communist Party (CCP)

The Chinese Communist Party was founded in 1921 and officially reflected the ideas of Marxism-Leninism. It would go on to conquer all of mainland China and proclaim the “People’s Republic of China” in 1949.

## Timeline of Events

Date	Description of Event
July 1st, 1921	Chinese Communist Party (CCP) is founded
January 1st, 1924	First United Front is founded. Nationalists and communists ally against the warlords.
April 12th, 1927	Nationalist forces purge communists in Shanghai, civil war begins.
September 18th, 1931	Japanese forces invade Manchuria
February 28th, 1932	Japan establishes a puppet in Manchuria (Manchukuo)
July 7th, 1937	Marco Polo bridge incident. Second Sino-Japanese War begins. Second United Front is founded. Nationalists and communists ally against the Japanese invaders
September 2nd, 1945	Second Sino-Japanese War ends. Civil War resumes.
October 1st, 1949	People’s Republic of China founded.

Nationalists flee to Taiwan. The Civil War technically still continues as of 2022.

## Relevant UN Treaties and Events

In 1952, the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) approved Resolution 505, which condemned the Soviet Union for supporting forces of the Chinese Communist Party. The question of recognition of a “true” China remained unanswered, with UNGA resolution 1668 mandating that any change in recognition must be agreed upon by two thirds of the General Assembly. In 1971, the United Nations passed resolution 2758, recognising the People’s Republic of China as the legitimate ruler of the country. The Soviet Union had announced a boycott of the United Nations due to its lack of recognition of the People’s Republic of China as the only legitimate government of China before this.

## Past Action

Chinese Nationalist and Communists formed alliances twice in order to serve their mutual interests. It is important to note that these alliances were far from stable. The First United Front was essentially forced upon the Kuomintang by Soviet forces in exchange for their support for the coalition. This front was merely united by common enemies, which lie in the warlords of the north. The second United Front was merely United by a common enemy - the Japanese. No alliance or coalition between the two was ever stable.

## Possible Solutions

Many claim that, had the United States assured its support for the Nationalist Republic of China, the rise of communism in the country would have been averted. However, it can also be foreseen that this support would only make the war more deadly, as the CCP now counted with popular support. Had the Soviet Union not announced support for the CCP, it would not have necessarily excelled in the way it did. Most solutions in regards to the issue ultimately end up resorting to supporting one side; such is the rivalry and opposition of the cold war. The Security Council remained divided, and with the Soviet Union as a permanent member, any solutions favouring the ROC (which was also a member of the Security Council) would be almost impossible to pass. Therefore, a possible solution to put an end to the conflict would be to organise bilateral talks between communist and nationalist forces, in order to plan a power sharing agreement, however, this would prove a difficult task, as compromises in the past have led to nothing but more confrontation between the two parties. Therefore, it is likely that most Member States would try to put an end to the war by supporting a quick and efficient victory in regards to the party they support.

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