

HCC



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Director's Letter

Dear Delegates,

I would like to sincerely welcome you to perhaps the most engaging and advanced committee that BCMUN has to offer, the Historical Crisis Committee. My name is Matthew Wong and I am both thrilled and honoured to be serving as your director. Alongside me, I am joined by Alex Liu, your Chair, as well as Sissi Zhao, your Assistant Director.

This year, we will have the privilege to manage the Second Sino-Japanese War from the Second United Front's perspective, and I eagerly await to see how you will tackle this crisis in the committee room. We will be using Crisis Rules of Procedure for this committee so I encourage you to familiarize yourself with the flow of debate before the conference. A guide to this can be found on the BCMUN website.

Through my past experiences with Model United Nations, I've learned one lesson that particularly resonates with me. The spirit of this non-spectator sport is the fun you have in your committee sessions. From impassioned speeches about the impending Japanese invasion, to chaotic directives deciding the fate of China; I truly hope that the memories, experiences, and friendships you make here will follow you throughout the rest of your Model United Nations career.

Delegates, it is my sincere desire to see all of you thrive over the coming two days at the Fairmont. I challenge you to be bold, unafraid, and daring; and to take something valuable away from this conference. If you require assistance, please do not hesitate to contact me at hcc@bcmun.org. A brief reminder that given this is a Crisis Committee, position papers will be mandatory and should be sent to the email above.

Sincerely,

Matthew Wong

Director of HCC | BCMUN 2023

Committee Description

For this iteration of the Historical Crisis Committee, you will be representing various members of the Second United Front. First established in 1924 primarily to stave off the threat of warlords, the Front did this by consolidating power and territory under a central government to promote Chinese unity.¹ The First United Front was a coalition between the Nationalist Party (Kuomintang [KMT]) and the Communist Party of China (CPC).² Despite sharing a common goal, the alliance was shaky, and largely held together by the reputation of Sun Yat-Sen.³ After his death, the alliance began to weaken, as the KMT leader Chiang Kai-shek ordered the expulsion of many communists from positions of power in the United Front.⁴ In 1926, the United Front launched the Northern Expedition; a military excursion which led to the reduction of influence from warlords across China and the consolidation of power for the KMT.⁵ The alliance was eventually dissolved in 1927 as conflicts between the two sides eventually led to the breakdown of cooperation.⁶ Chiang ordered purges of CPC members throughout Shanghai, which eventually spread to other major cities such as Guangzhou and Changsha, which both served as important centres for trade and economic activity.⁷ This effectively ended the partnership of the United Front and led directly into the first half of the Chinese Civil War. However, with the returning tensions and encroachments on Chinese territory in Manchuria, the two sides were forced to reconcile.⁸ Negotiations for reestablishing the United Front stalled, however, as tensions between the two sides during the Chinese Civil War obstructed the Nationalists from managing the Japanese incursions.⁹ Eventually, Chiang Kai-shek was kidnapped by two of his military generals in an event known as the Xi'an incident, where the two generals demanded the end of hostilities between the KMT and CPC.¹⁰ The Nationalists; in order to guarantee Chiang's release, agreed to a temporary truce, and thus, the Second United Front was formed in 1937, leading to an uneasy alliance of communists, warlords, and nationalists. The committee's objective will be to prevent a Japanese takeover of Chinese territory, as well as for differing parties and individuals within the committee to consolidate and establish power to further their respective ideologies and interests.

¹ Britannica, T. Editors of Encyclopaedia. "United Front." Encyclopedia Britannica, September 18, 2018. <https://www.britannica.com/topic/United-Front-Chinese-history-1937-1945>.

² Ibid.

³ Ibid.

⁴ "Chiang Kai-shek Purges Communists ." St. James Encyclopedia of Labor History Worldwide: Major Events in Labor History and Their Impact. . Encyclopedia.com. (May 25, 2023). <https://www.encyclopedia.com/history/encyclopedias-almanacs-transcripts-and-maps/chiang-kai-shek-purges-communists>

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Wilbur, C. Martin. Essay. In *The Nationalist Revolution in China, 1923-8*, 114–17. Cambridge Cambridgeshire: Cambridge University Press, 1984.

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Britannica, T. Editors of Encyclopaedia. "Xi'an Incident." Encyclopedia Britannica, December 5, 2022. <https://www.britannica.com/event/Xian-Incident>.

Topic Overview

In 1931, near the city of Mukden, a small explosion detonated next to a railway line owned by Japan's South Manchuria Railway.¹¹ Very little damage was sustained, and as a matter of fact, a train could pass over it with little difficulty.¹² Despite the seemingly minor nature of the event, the Japanese accused the Chinese Nationalists of the attacks, claiming that they were motivated by hatred for the Japanese over the 1915 Occupation of Manchuria.¹³ The Republic of China adamantly denied responsibility for the attacks and attempted a diplomatic resolution to the conflict.¹⁴ Despite this, the Japanese declared war and annexed Manchuria 100 days after the event.¹⁵ This would later be known as the Mukden incident and was the Japanese pretext for an invasion and annexation of Manchuria, as well as the establishment of the puppet state of Manchukuo. Three years later, Japan proclaimed all of China to be a preserve.¹⁶ In doing so, Japan asserted its claim over territory currently controlled by the Nationalist government.¹⁷ With tensions rapidly escalating between the Japanese military and the Chinese government, the stability of the region was under threat as the Japanese continued to hint toward another invasion of sovereign Chinese territory. In 1937, the political climate of China had dramatically shifted. Chinese political and military groups largely rallied under Chiang Kai-shek and the Nationalist government in an attempt to oppose Japanese expansionism.¹⁸ During the six years between 1931 and 1937, there were sporadic clashes between Chinese and Japanese troops at several locations, pressuring China into signing so-called “unequal treaties”.¹⁹ Some examples include the demilitarization of Shanghai and Hebei, and the Chin–Doihara Agreement, which enabled the Japanese to take control of Jehol, and force the KMT’s troops to withdraw from Chahar, respectively.²⁰ The imminent threat of another Japanese invasion continued to exist, and the populace of China became more resentful and critical of the appeasement strategies implemented by Chiang and the Nationalist government.²¹ With the ceasing of hostilities between the KMT and CPC and the unification of their armies, the capacity for China to finally resist Japanese aggression had become a reality. The stakes in Northeastern China have never been greater, with the future of the country on the line.

¹¹ Duus, Peter. Essay. In *The Cambridge History of Japan*, 294. Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1991.

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Ferrell, Robert H. “The Mukden Incident: September 18-19, 1931.” *The Journal of Modern History* 27, no. 1 (1955): 66–72. <https://doi.org/10.1086/237763>.

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ Fenby, Jonathan. Essay. In *Chiang Kai Shek China’s Generalissimo and the Nation He Lost*, 202. New York, NY: Carroll & Graf, 2015.

²¹ Ibid.

Timeline

1839-1860 — The First and Second Opium Wars weakened modern China's predecessor, the monarchal Qing Dynasty. Foreign powers successfully gain commercial and territorial privileges as China enters the Century of Humiliation.²²

1868 — The Meiji Restoration concludes Japan's Tokugawa Shogunate. Under Emperor Meiji's rule, Japan begins rapid Westernization, flourishing economically, politically, and socially.²³

July 25, 1894–April 17, 1895 — The First Sino-Japanese War concludes with the Qing Dynasty's defeat. Japan gains hegemony in East Asia after Qing China loses its tributary states of Korea and Taiwan in the Treaty of Shimonoseki.²⁴

1894-95 – Sun Yat-sen founds the Revive China Society in Honolulu, where he received his education at a British missionary school and the American Oahu College over a decade ago. Sun Yat-sen plans an uprising in Guangzhou (Canton) but is exiled after the scheme fails.²⁵

October 10, 1911–February 12, 1912 — Sparked by a culmination of China's humiliating losses to the Japanese, the Xinhai Revolution transforms China into a provisional republic with former Qing General Yuan Shikai as president.²⁶

August 1912 — The Revive China Society merges with several other political parties in Beijing to form the Kuomintang (KMT).²⁷

January 18, 1915 — Yuan Shikai is forced to accept Japan's Twenty-one Demand. China is forbidden to give coastal and island land concessions to nations other than Japan, and Japanese advisors are introduced in the Chinese government, economy, and military.²⁸

²² Pletcher, K. "Opium Wars." *Encyclopedia Britannica*, April 28, 2023. Accessed July 4, 2023, <https://www.britannica.com/topic/Opium-Wars>.

²³ Columbia University. "The Meiji Restoration and Modernization." *Columbia.edu*, 2009. Accessed June 20, 2023, http://afe.easia.columbia.edu/special/japan_1750_meiji.htm.

²⁴ Lawrence Mello. "1st Sino-Japanese War." *Libguides.fau.edu*. Accessed June 20, 2023, <http://libguides.fau.edu/wars-conflicts/sino-japanese-war1>.

²⁵ Wang, Y. Chu. "Sun Yat-sen." *Encyclopædia Britannica*, September 6, 2023. <https://www.britannica.com/biography/Sun-Yat-sen>.

²⁶ Britannica, T. Editors of Encyclopaedia. "Chinese Revolution." *Encyclopedia Britannica*, October 3, 2023. <https://www.britannica.com/event/Chinese-Revolution-1911-1912>.

²⁷ "Kuomintang News Network." *Kmt.org.tw*. Accessed June 20, 2023, <http://www1.kmt.org.tw/english/page.aspx?type=para&mnum=105>.

²⁸ Britannica, T. Editors of Encyclopaedia. "Twenty-one Demands." *Encyclopedia Britannica*, January 11, 2023. <https://www.britannica.com/event/Twenty-one-Demands>.

June 6, 1916 — Yuan Shikai's death marks the beginning of China's decentralized warlord period.²⁹

May 4, 1919 — Student-led protests in China arise upon negotiations to transfer jurisdiction of German-occupied territories in Shandong, China to Japan at the Paris Peace Conference.³⁰ This became known as the May Fourth Movement.

July 1, 1921 — Marxist ideas spread to China and the Communist Party of China (CPC) is formed with aid from Soviet agents.³¹

1924 — The first United Front is formed after CPC and KMT ally to consolidate power from decentralized warlords into the hands of the central government.³²

July 9, 1926 – 29 December 1928 — The Northern Expedition, a military campaign undertaken by Generalissimo Chiang Kai-shek, unifies China under a nationalist government in Nanjing and nominally ends China's warlord period.³³

April 12, 1927 — KMT launches an attack on the CPC with the aid of local Shanghai militias and urban gangsters. The First United Front comes to an end and China instigates a nationwide purge of CPC forces. Soviet support for the KMT halts.³⁴

August 1, 1927 — KMT's former head of security, Zhu De, leads an estimated 20,000–30,000 communist soldiers to march in the Nanchang Uprising. The CPC leaders establish a revolutionary committee in Nanchang but are shortly forced to retreat towards Guangzhou upon the arrival of KMT reinforcements.³⁵

September 18, 1931 — Japanese troops use the Mukden bombing incident as an excuse to invade Manchuria. The United States and the League of Nations condemn Japanese conduct but are unwilling to act further.³⁶

²⁹ Ch'en, J.. "Yuan Shikai." *Encyclopedia Britannica*, September 12, 2023.

<https://www.britannica.com/biography/Yuan-Shikai>.

³⁰ Britannica, T. Editors of Encyclopaedia. "May Fourth Movement." *Encyclopedia Britannica*, February 14, 2019. <https://www.britannica.com/event/May-Fourth-Movement>.

³¹ Steve Harp. "Timeframe: Japan and China (1850-1950)." Accessed July 4, 2023, <https://faculty.washington.edu/stevehar/timeframe.html>.

³² Slyke, Lyman P. van. "The United Front in China." *Journal of Contemporary History* 5, no. 3 (1970): 119–35. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/259678>.

³³ "Northern Expedition." *Oxford Reference*. ; Accessed 13 Sep. 2023.

<https://www.oxfordreference.com/view/10.1093/oi/authority.20110803100239364>.

³⁴ Cucchisi, Jennifer Lynn. *The causes and effects of the Chinese Civil War, 1927-1949*. South Orange, NJ: Seton Hall University, 2002.

³⁵ M. Bush, Sara. 2011. Review of *COMMEMORATING the NANCHANG UPRISING: HOW the CHINESE COMMUNIST PARTY LEGITIMIZED ITS USE of FORCE, 1933-1953*. University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

³⁶ Yuan, Tao. "The Manchurian Incident, The League Of Nations, And The Road To The Pacific War", 2013. <https://scholar.acadiau.ca/islandora/object/theses:988>.

April 1934 — Mr. Eiji Amau, understood to be the spokesman for the Japanese Foreign Office,³⁷ declared that China was a Japanese preserve and not entitled to making decisions without Japan's consent.³⁸

1935 — The Japanese demands all Chinese armed forces "that might prove unfriendly to Japan" to withdraw from Hebei and Chahar (now Inner Mongolia).³⁹

1934-1935 — The Nationalist army encircles the Communist headquarters at Jiangsu. The CPC embarks on the Long March, relocating bases from southeastern to northeastern China, in a province known as Shaanxi. Mao Zedong emerges as the party leader for his leadership during the Long March. Only 8,000 of the original 86,000 communists survive.⁴⁰

December 12, 1936 — Senior Officer Zhang Xueliang arrests Chiang Kai-shek in Xi'an, demanding he focuses efforts on fending off the foreign Japanese instead of the CPC. Chiang is released after successful negotiations for limited cooperation between the KMT and CPC against the Japanese.⁴¹

Historical Analysis

The Qing and the Xinhai Revolution

China, as a country, had been on a slow decline for decades. The cracks in the system began to show in 1839 with the First Opium War, which highlighted the incompetence of Qing dynastic rule.⁴² China's weakness was once again put on display during the First Sino-Japanese War, where the Qing dynasty failed to repel Japanese incursions, eventually leading to the surrender of Korea and Taiwan.⁴³ The resulting failures of the Qing, which stemmed from their lack of military modernization and consolidation of power, eventually led to misgivings about their ability to defend Chinese autonomy and sovereignty. As time progressed, and Western powers, as well as Japan, increasingly exploited and partitioned China, dissidents began rising up, which led directly to the 1911 revolution.⁴⁴ With the overthrowing of the Qing, many were hopeful for social, economic, and political change within China. However, these aspirations were quickly crushed by incompetence within the

³⁷ Hyde, Charles Cheney. "Legal Aspects of the Japanese Pronouncement in Relation to China." *American Journal of International Law* 28, no. 3 (July 1934): 431-43, <https://doi.org/10.2307/2190372>.

³⁸ Britannica, T. Editors of Encyclopaedia. "Second Sino-Japanese War." *Encyclopedia Britannica*, August 8, 2023. <https://www.britannica.com/event/Second-Sino-Japanese-War>.

³⁹ Ibid..

⁴⁰ Britannica, T. Editors of Encyclopaedia. "Long March." *Encyclopedia Britannica*, October 5, 2023. <https://www.britannica.com/event/Long-March>.

⁴¹ "Xi'an Incident," *Oxfordreference.com*, Oxford University Press, accessed June 20, 2023, <http://www.oxfordreference.com/display/10.1093/oi/authority.20110803125214733;jsessionid=6DE1FE76677FE943311D357461185F9A>.

⁴² Teng, Ssu-yü, and John K. Fairbank. *Research guide for China's response to the West*, 1954. <https://doi.org/10.4159/harvard.9780674592995>.

⁴³ Kim, Sun-gi. *The two Koreas and the Great Powers*. Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 2007.

⁴⁴ Teng, Ssu-yü, and John K. Fairbank, *Research guide for China's response to West*, 1954

newly established Republic of China (ROC).⁴⁵ Due to their weak position militarily, the Nationalists negotiated with Yuan Shikai—a powerful imperial minister—who they eventually agreed to make the president of a centralized China.⁴⁶ Yuan eventually expelled Sun and the KMT from China and subsequently established the Beiyang government.⁴⁷ The Beiyang government was the internationally recognized government of China until 1928 when the First United Front ended its reign.⁴⁸ Even after the attempts of reform under the ROC government, China still lacked cohesion in terms of governance, economy, as well as identity. These problems can largely be attributed to the competing visions for China's political future, which ranged from nationalism to communism at the time.⁴⁹ Following Yuan Shikai's death, unity was fractured as warlords scrambled to take power over the Beijing government.⁵⁰ Thus, much of China's economic and political weakness stemmed from an inability to establish a stable government to regulate its internal affairs. China lacked a sense of unity in its government, which strained the ability of bureaucrats to make meaningful changes and effectively govern.⁵¹ The conflicting views on how China should be politically governed sparked the Chinese Civil War, which further deteriorated China's ability to cohesively respond to the Japanese threat.⁵² The Chinese Civil War essentially ended cooperation between the Communists and Nationalists, as well as Sun Yat-sen's dreams of a centralized Chinese government under the KMT, and with it, any hopes of a decisive resistance to the Japanese in the years preceding the Second Sino-Japanese War.⁵³

The Chinese Civil War and the Warlord Era

With the start of the Chinese Civil War in 1927, internal conflicts within China had bubbled to a plateau. Largely sparked by the deterioration of cooperation during the Northern Expedition, the beginning of hostilities was started by the KMT.⁵⁴ However, it is important to once again examine the political and economic factors that lead to this. The Northern Expedition was a military campaign conducted by the KMT against the Beiyang government and other warlords and eventually saw the Nationalists successfully ousting the Beiyang government and allying many warlords under the ROC flag.⁵⁵ One of the critical explanations for why China was so fractured in the first place can be found in the political dynamics of the Warlord Era.⁵⁶ From 1916-1928, China was heavily divided into different *Cliques* which

⁴⁵ Spence, Jonathan D. *The search for Modern China*. New York etc.: W. W. Norton & Company, 2013.

⁴⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁷ Wakabayashi, Bob Tadashi. *The Nanking Atrocity, 1937-1938. complicating the picture*. Oxford: Berghahn Books Ltd, 2017.

⁴⁸ Teng, Ssu-yü, and John K. Fairbank, *Research guide for China's response to West*, 1954

⁴⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁰ Waldron, Arthur. "The Warlord: Twentieth-Century Chinese Understandings of Violence, Militarism, and Imperialism." *The American Historical Review*, 1991. <https://doi.org/10.1086/ahr/96.4.1073>.

⁵¹ Britannica, T. Editors of Encyclopaedia. "Chinese Revolution." *Encyclopedia Britannica*, March 31, 2023. <https://www.britannica.com/event/Chinese-Revolution-1911-1912>.

⁵² Ibid.

⁵³ Zarrow, Peter. *China in war and revolution, 1895-1949*. London: Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group, 2006.

⁵⁴ Cucchisi. *The causes and effects of the Chinese Civil War, 1927-1949*.

⁵⁵ Ibid.

⁵⁶ Ibid.

acted largely autonomously.⁵⁷ The First United Front was initially formed to combat this, as both the Communists and the Nationalists envisioned China as a unified state; albeit with vastly contradicting political and economic philosophies.⁵⁸ Sun Yat-sen had in fact, previously organized and negotiated with the USSR (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics) the admittance of Communists into the Kuomintang (although only as individuals rather than an organized bloc).⁵⁹ This cooperation helped to mitigate the influence of the powerful warlords and culminated in the success of the Northern Expedition.⁶⁰ However, this cooperation quickly deteriorated. An instigating event for the destruction of their coalition was the Shanghai Massacre, otherwise known as the April 12th Incident.⁶¹ The Shanghai Massacre was a systematic purge of CPC members orchestrated by Chiang Kai-shek and other members of the conservative faction of the KMT.⁶² This led to a split within the KMT, as a left and right-wing faction began to develop.⁶³ This split would further account for difficulties in successfully governing, for the Kuomintang.⁶⁴ Additionally, the start of the Chinese Civil War further complicated the KMT's attempts at establishing a centralized and legitimate government.⁶⁵ Ultimately, despite the Warlord Era officially ending in 1928, many regional warlords continued to maintain significant political and military influence in their respective territories, which stifled the KMT's ability to centralize governing systems and create unity.⁶⁶

The Meiji Restoration

Upon analyzing the factors that led to the rise of Japanese militarism, and thus, the eventual expansionist policies which would later culminate in the Second Sino-Japanese War, it is observed that this ideology from Japan centred around military conquest is largely due to a combination of social and political factors. One of the principal causes would be the Meiji restoration and its corresponding constitution, of which, the effects were further perpetuated by Western colonialism and a rapid need to modernize.⁶⁷ Additionally, a sense of cultural superiority as a result of shifting social structures played a role in solidifying public distrust of civil government authority, which allowed the military to dominate domestic and international politics.⁶⁸ The impacts of the Meiji restoration on the trajectory of Japanese society cannot be understated, and the propensity towards militarism can largely be attributed to the structure of the constitution. In the drafting of the Meiji Constitution, a Prussian-centred model of civilian governance was adopted, which was a sort of constitutional monarchy with democratically elected representatives who served on the

⁵⁷ Ibid.

⁵⁸ Ibid.

⁵⁹ Taylor, Jay. *The generalissimo: Chiang Kai-shek and the struggle for Modern China*. Cambridge, MA: Belknap, 2011.

⁶⁰ Ibid.

⁶¹ Ryan, Tom. *China rising: The revolutionary experience*. Collingwood, Vic: History Teachers' Association of Victoria, 2016.

⁶² Ibid.

⁶³ Chang, Kuo-t'ao. *The rise of the Chinese Communist Party, 1928-1938*. U Pr of Kansas, 1972.

⁶⁴ Ibid.

⁶⁵ Ibid.

⁶⁶ Ibid.

⁶⁷ Hendrix, Henry J. "The Roots of Japanese Militarism." Dissertation, Naval Postgraduate School, 1994.

⁶⁸ Ibid.

Imperial Diet. However, the critical shortcoming of this model was the devaluing of civilian control over the military.⁶⁹ This allowed the military to act unilaterally against the wishes of the civilian government, and essentially permitted factionalism in Japanese international policy, leading to often contradicting assertions from the government as opposed to the actions of the military.⁷⁰ What's more, a growing sense of fear over Western imperialism stemming from the ending of Japanese isolationism by commodore Matthew Perry contributed to a social attitude that centred around opposing Western expansionism. Japan had historically been closed off from foreign trade and influence since the Sengoku Jidai.⁷¹ The sudden ending of their restrictionist policies under foreign threat largely inspired wide-scale social changes, which may explain the attitude everyday Japanese citizens had towards Westernism.⁷² The most notable of these changes would be the restoration of the emperor, which brought about a social hierarchy centred around him. With a growing movement preoccupied by beliefs of their social and divine superiority, much of Japanese society turned towards this as a way to reconcile Japan's role in the world relative to Western powers.⁷³ This social hierarchy in turn perpetuated Japanese beliefs of being a nation destined to politically and socially dominate Asia.⁷⁴

Rising Tensions

With Japan, a country eager to expand, and China, a country weakened by civil war and infighting, it is easy to see how their domestic affairs would lead them to conflict. The interrelated internal affairs of both China and Japan, as well as their competing and intrinsically incompatible political goals, are largely what led to the hostilities between their nations.⁷⁵ Perhaps the most offensive of incidents was the secret ultimatum known as the Twenty-One Demands. In this document, Japan demanded concessions of territory including Chinese ports, as well as the appointment of Japanese advisors who could control and manipulate Chinese fiscal policy.⁷⁶ The Chinese government, fearing rebuke, accepted the ultimatum. When it was publicly revealed, widespread anti-Japanese sentiment spread throughout China, which in part, contributed to further factionalism within Chinese politics.⁷⁷ The Mukden incident marked the further deterioration of Sino-Japanese relations, as well as sparked further public outcry against Japan's expansionism. With the increasingly overt assaults on Chinese sovereignty, Japanese aggression had become an undeniable threat to both the KMT and the CPC.⁷⁸ The establishment of Manchukuo as a puppet state further

⁶⁹ Martin, Bernd. Japan and Germany in the modern world. Providence: Bwerhahn Books, 2006.

⁷⁰ Britannica, T. Editors of Encyclopaedia. "The Rise of the Militarist." Encyclopedia Britannica, Apr 27, 2023. <https://www.britannica.com/place/Japan/The-rise-of-the-militarists>.

⁷¹ Benson, John, and Takao Matsumura. Japan, 1868-1945: From isolation to occupation. Longman, an imprint of Pearson education, 2001.

⁷² Ibid.

⁷³ Ibid.

⁷⁴ "Japan from the Edo Period to Meiji Restoration: Isolationism in the Edo Period." Saylor Academy. Accessed June 26, 2023. <https://learn.saylor.org/mod/book/view.php?id=54894&chapterid=40529>.

⁷⁵ Ibid.

⁷⁶ Link, Arthur Stanley. Wilson. Princeton, NJ: Princeton U.P., 1965.

⁷⁷ Ibid.

⁷⁸ Ibid.

highlighted China's weakness. With the occasional military engagements between the two sides, the path toward war seems largely inevitable. Given Japan's position as a rapidly modernizing and expanding empire in an attempt to assert its own identity and China's as a fractured and declining superpower, it is clear why events transpired the way they did.

Case Study

The Mukden Incident and the Invasion of Manchuria

The Mukden Incident is an important historical event to examine, as it gives more insight into the Japanese motivations for expanding into China, as well as explains why the Chinese response was so passive.⁷⁹ Perhaps the most fascinating detail of the Mukden incident is that it was almost certainly not ordered by the Japanese civilian government.⁸⁰ On September 18th, 1931, Japanese military members orchestrated a bombing near a railroad, which was eventually used as the pretext for the full invasion of Manchuria.⁸¹ Within 3 months, the Japanese military had already controlled nearly all of the territory in Northeastern China.⁸² Although there was some slight resistance from regional warlords, the KMT government largely had a policy of non-confrontation against the Japanese.⁸³ This was largely unsuccessful, as the strategy of continuous appeasement saw China conceding more and more territory and land without respite.⁸⁴ With the establishment of Manchukuo; a Japanese puppet state, a new pressing concern for the Japanese government was the breakdown of trust between them and the international community.⁸⁵ The League of Nations had declared the invasion to be unlawful, which in turn, prompted the Japanese delegation to withdraw from it.⁸⁶ Furthermore, Japan was largely seen as untrustworthy after it violated its international treaties in invading China.⁸⁷ With the Stimson Doctrine, the United States had expressed its support for China and its right to its sovereign territory.⁸⁸ The international isolation of Japan is of particular concern to China, as it was able to leverage its position to petition for further support from foreign powers.⁸⁹ When examining the motivations behind the Mukden incident, we see that much of the Japanese desire to expand was caused, and in fact perpetuated, by the omnipresent threat of Western expansionism.⁹⁰ The expansion into

⁷⁹ James B. Crowley; A Reconsideration of the Marco Polo Bridge Incident. *Journal of Asian Studies* 1 May 1963; 22 (3): 277–291. doi: <https://doi.org/10.2307/2050187>.

⁸⁰ Ibid.

⁸¹ Ibid.

⁸² Ibid.

⁸³ Ibid.

⁸⁴ Ibid.

⁸⁵ Ibid.

⁸⁶ Ibid.

⁸⁷ Ibid.

⁸⁸ U.S. Department of State. Accessed July 4, 2023.

<https://history.state.gov/milestones/1921-1936/mukden-incident>

⁸⁹ The Japanese invasion of Manchuria: The history of the occupation of northeastern China that presaged World War II. Charles River Editors, 2017.

⁹⁰ Ibid.

Manchuria in particular was motivated primarily out of a necessity to secure natural resources for the Japanese military and mainland.⁹¹ With the threat of Western sanctions cutting off their supply to critical resources such as oil, the Japanese military believed that they were, effectively, strategically cornered.⁹² By expanding, however, they decreased their international reputation and standing which further perpetuated the necessity to secure a steady supply of natural resources through conquest.⁹³ Despite first impressions of the Japanese military, they are, in actuality, in a very strategically weak and vulnerable situation.⁹⁴ Their access to resources and raw materials was contingent on their military expansion and colonization of Asia, which proved to be a critical weakness for them.⁹⁵ The Mukden Incident was not a random attack from a power-hungry empire to expand, rather, a deeply controversial military campaign which was justified by threats of being partitioned up by the West.⁹⁶ Japan's primary goal was to avoid being weakened and divided in much the same way China was throughout the 19th and 20th centuries.⁹⁷ China must find a way to decisively resist Japan's expansion while balancing maintaining its internal governance and economy.

⁹¹ Ibid.

⁹² Ibid.

⁹³ Ibid.

⁹⁴ "Japan's Quest for Power and World War II in Asia: Asia for Educators: Columbia University." Japan's Quest for Power and World War II in Asia | Asia for Educators | Columbia University. Accessed July 4, 2023. http://afe.easia.columbia.edu/special/japan_1900_power.htm.

⁹⁵ Ibid.

⁹⁶ Ibid.

⁹⁷ Ibid.

Bloc Positions



*History Map of China 1937*⁹⁸

Central Government (Kuomintang)

The Central Government of the Kuomintang, based in Nanjing, is the “legitimate” government of China.⁹⁹ Founded in 1911 after the Xinhai Revolution under Sun Yat-sen, the Central Government is the strongest force in China.¹⁰⁰ Chiang Kai-Shek, the leader of the Central Government, appears to have a strong ability in leadership; however, his Government is divided and weak. With the recent kidnapping of Chiang Kai-Shek forcing the KMT to negotiate with the communists, hostilities have ceased between the two sides as they begin organizing a second United Front against the Japanese.¹⁰¹ ¹⁰² However, given the fragile balance of power within the coalition, as well as the competing goals and interests, the

⁹⁸National Library of Australia, “Saikin No Tōa Keisei Zukai / Ōsaka Mainichi Shinbunsha Hensan,” catalogue.nla.gov.au, 1937, <https://catalogue.nla.gov.au/catalog/6858435>.

⁹⁹ “Milestones: 1899–1913 - Office of the Historian.” Accessed September 15, 2023. <https://history.state.gov/milestones/1899-1913/chinese-rev>.

¹⁰⁰ Roy, Denny. Taiwan: A Political History. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2003.

¹⁰¹ Ibid.

¹⁰² Britannica, T. Editors of Encyclopaedia. “Xi’an Incident.” Encyclopedia Britannica, December 5, 2022. <https://www.britannica.com/event/Xian-Incident>.

stability of the alliance is questionable.¹⁰³ The Nationalists currently officially and directly govern parts of Southeastern China, whereas numerous surrounding regions are controlled by semi-autonomous warlords or warlord coalitions.¹⁰⁴ Within this bloc, there may be disagreements about whether the threat of the Japanese or the Communists is a more pressing matter; however, with that said, the potential for a Japanese invasion of Chinese territory may complicate future matters regarding the Nationalists' goal of eventually unifying China.¹⁰⁵ The vehement incompatibility of political ideologies cannot be ignored and may affect how cooperation progresses between the two sides as the crisis evolves.¹⁰⁶ Yet despite the general displeasure KMT members may experience having to work with the CPC, there is a sense of urgency and necessity to set aside conflicts to address the greater threat.

Communist Party of China

The Communist Party of China (CPC) was formed in response to the inaction of the Beiyang Government in addressing the Treaty of Versailles, and the subsequent May Fourth Movement. Among the rank and file of the party, there has been discussion on dissolving the government and recognizing the KMT as the official leadership of China to promote unity between the two major blocs; however, many within the party are hesitant to trust the Nationalists given their historical track record of persecuting Communists.¹⁰⁷ The Chinese Communist bloc simultaneously recognizes the threat the Japanese pose; especially given their proximity to the conflict, while acknowledging the potential opportunities the war may present in weakening the Nationalists' control over China.¹⁰⁸ The disorder and decentralization that often come with war may present the Communists with a rare opportunity to expand their influence and promote their ideology.¹⁰⁹ The critical issue for the CPC is balancing managing the threat of the Japanese with expanding their influence over China.¹¹⁰ To achieve this end, careful negotiation and cooperation with the Nationalists, as well as the cautious expansion of influence and territory are necessary.¹¹¹

¹⁰³ Ibid.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid.

¹⁰⁵ Groot, Gerry. *Managing transitions: The Chinese Communist Party, United Front work, corporatism and hegemony*. Routledge, 2013.

¹⁰⁶ James B. Crowley; *A Reconsideration of the Marco Polo Bridge Incident*, 1963.

¹⁰⁷ Groot, Gerry. *Managing transitions: The Chinese Communist Party, United Front work, corporatism and hegemony*. Routledge, 2013.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid.

¹¹⁰ Garver, John W. "The Origins of the Second United Front: The Comintern and the Chinese Communist Party." *The China Quarterly* 113 (1988): 29–59. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0305741000026394>.

¹¹¹ Ibid.

Ma Clique

Heavily integrated with the KMT, the Ma Clique shares many of the Nationalists' political aspirations for China.¹¹² The Ma Clique enjoys the privileges of being official members of the KMT while still maintaining semi-autonomous control over their regional territories.¹¹³ They also control much of Midwestern China and have helped to mitigate Communist influence in the region.¹¹⁴ Despite being relatively close to Japanese-held territory, much of the land the Ma Clique controls is perceived by the Japanese to be less strategically important, and so they have a net of relative safety compared to other regions.¹¹⁵ Perhaps the most distinguishing factor between the Ma Clique and other Chinese Cliques is the cultural, ethnic, and religious affiliations of its leaders.¹¹⁶ The Ma Clique was ruled exclusively by Chinese Hui Warlords, who were ethnically, as well as often religiously and culturally distinct from Han Chinese peoples; they often followed Islamic practices and traditions.¹¹⁷ Their close ties with the KMT have brought them into conflict with the CPC, especially given their proximity to each other. Additionally, they exist in a strategically vital area to mitigate Communist influence, which may become a central factor in how this bloc approaches the conflict.¹¹⁸ The unique cultural and ethnic identity of the Ma Clique leaves it open to potential conflict with the other ethnic groups of China. Maintaining their right to cultural and religious independence should be an essential priority for this bloc.

Shanxi Clique

The Shanxi Clique was previously heavily involved with the KMT, however, their recent defeat in the recent Central Plains War has strained relations.¹¹⁹ Despite holding large swaths of land, the Shanxi Clique's proximity to the Japanese puts them in a particularly vulnerable position.¹²⁰ Having already suffered Japanese attacks as recently as 1936, the Shanxi Clique is ever cognizant of the threat the Japanese pose.¹²¹ The leadership within the Shanxi Clique has nominally supported the Central government, however, there still exists a conflict and tension between them and high-ranking members such as Yan Xishan.¹²² In fact, months before the

¹¹² Bulag, Uradyn E. *The Mongols at China's edge: History and the Politics of National Unity*. Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2011.

¹¹³ Ibid.

¹¹⁴ Ibid.

¹¹⁵ Ibid.

¹¹⁶ Ibid.

¹¹⁷ Ibid.

¹¹⁸ Lipman, Jonathan Neaman. *Familiar strangers: A history of Muslims in Northwest China*. Seattle: Univ. of Washington Press, 2003.

¹¹⁹ *Modern china: An encyclopedia of history, culture, and Nationalism*. New York: Garland Pub., 1999.

¹²⁰ Ibid.

¹²¹ Gillin, Donald G. *Warlord Yen Hsi-Shan in shansi province 1911-1949*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton Univ. Press, 1967.

¹²² Ibid.

Xi'an incident, Yan Xishan had already formed an informal alliance against the Japanese with the Communists.¹²³ The Shanxi Clique must delicately balance its alliances and partnerships while rebuffing Japanese attacks on their controlled territory.

Yunnan Clique

The Yunnan Clique, led by warlord Long Yun, governed the province of Yunnan in southwestern China.¹²⁴ Long Yun adopted a cautious and diplomatically neutral stance in the conflict with Japan. Geographically situated near Japanese-controlled territories in Southeast Asia, Long Yun exercised prudence in openly opposing Japan.¹²⁵ While expressing sympathy towards the Chinese resistance, their support was primarily nominal, extending to financial aid and limited resources provided to the Nationalist government.¹²⁶ The Yunnan Clique was perhaps one of the most effectively governed parts of China, with a strong economy propped up by trade, a ready and modernized military, and a flourishing sense of democracy, the Yunnan Clique was known as a *fortress of democracy*.¹²⁷ Given their strong autonomy and independence, Long Yun had been an outspoken critic of the KMT. However, under the Second United Front, the Yunnan Clique had agreed to help combat the Japanese threat under the Nationalist government.¹²⁸ The Yunnan Clique should be particularly concerned with maintaining their autonomy and independence from other governments, as well as repelling Japanese hostilities within the region.¹²⁹

Sichuan Clique

The Sichuan Clique exists in an unusual middle ground, having both supported the KMT and the CPC.¹³⁰ Additionally, given its central location to the conflict, the Sichuan Clique must carefully harvest the benefits of their geography while repelling Japanese encroachments.¹³¹ The leader, Liu Wenhui had expressed half-hearted support for the KMT, however, as time has progressed, relations with Chiang have soured, and the Sichuan Clique seems to be increasingly aligning with the Communists.¹³² The Sichuan Clique continued to walk a balance of alliances while attempting to boost infrastructure and development in their remote province.¹³³ It is the primary goal of the Sichuan Clique to maintain neutrality and focus primarily on their own economic and military development given their distance from the primary conflict.¹³⁴

¹²³ Ibid.

¹²⁴ Chan, Anthony B. *Arming the Chinese: The Western Armaments Trade in Warlord China, 1920-1928*. 2nd ed. Vancouver: UBC Press, 2010.

¹²⁵ Yunnan Government. 龙, 云--云南省政府门户网--, December 30, 2011.

https://web.archive.org/web/20130913102443/http://yn.gov.cn/yn_yngk/yn_ldmr/201112/t20111230_2707.html.

¹²⁶ Ibid.

¹²⁷ Lin, Hsiao-Ting. *Modern China's ethnic frontiers: A journey to the West*. Routledge, 2013.

¹²⁸ Ibid.

¹²⁹ Ibid.

¹³⁰ Liu, Yusheng. "Revisiting the Sichuan Army: Legend under the Power." eScholarship, University of California, March 12, 2019. <https://escholarship.org/uc/item/5p25r26j#author>.

¹³¹ Ibid.

¹³² Ibid.

¹³³ Ibid.

¹³⁴ Ibid.

New Guangxi Clique, Guangdong Clique

The New Guangxi Clique, one of the most powerful Cliques in the nation, has a complicated relationship with the Central Government. The Guangxi Clique partnered with the Guangdong Clique following the Central Plains War and turned against Chiang Kai-Shek.¹³⁵ The Guangxi Clique holds a strong anti-Japanese sentiment as one of the original anti-Japanese forces. Following the Mukden Incident, Guangxi changed its stance from a rival government to becoming a Model Province with a progressive administration.¹³⁶ This meant that it harboured both communist and collaboration forces while being aligned with the Nationalist Government.

The Guangdong Clique's situation is unique: it holds no actual territory but controls militaries and wields influence. The Guangdong Clique is a more radical faction. Originally led by Chen Jitang, the clique participated in the Central Plains War, leading to the annexation of Guangdong by the Central Government in the Lianguang Incident.¹³⁷ Despite not owning territory, Chen Jitang holds the role of a Five-Star General, which allows him to command troops of the Central Military, and allow Guangdong to hold some power.¹³⁸ The main factor that differentiates the Guangdong Clique from the Guangxi Clique is their attitude toward the Communist Party of China, Chen and the Guangdong Clique hold a more passive stance toward the Communist Party, often collaborating with their forces and allowing the Workers and Peasants Red Army to pass through his territory unopposed during the Long March.¹³⁹

The New Guangxi Clique and Guangdong Clique both have expressed disagreements over the KMT's governance, as well as expressed wishes to preserve their autonomy, with these conflicts eventually bubbling into war.¹⁴⁰ However, given the threat of the Japanese, the Cliques have reorganized to primarily focus on mitigating the foreign threat. The New Guangxi Clique and Guangdong Clique both have considerable military and economic power given their strong organization and bureaucracy.¹⁴¹ It is their primary goal that the Japanese

¹³⁵ “奋斗百年路 启航新征程.” Accessed September 30, 2023.

<https://www.mca.gov.cn/zt/n352/n356/n360/c86045/content.html>.

¹³⁶ Worthing, Peter. “A Tale of Two Fronts: China's War of the Central Plains, 1930.” *War in History* 25, no. 4 (2018): 511–33. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/26538750>.

¹³⁷ Ibid..

¹³⁸ Ibid.

¹³⁹ Lin, A. (2002). Building and funding a warlord regime: The experience of Chen ... - core. Building and Funding a Warlord Regime: The Experience of Chen Jitang in Guangdong, 1929-1936. <https://core.ac.uk/download/pdf/37886104.pdf>

¹⁴⁰ Lary, Diana. *Region and nation: The Kwangsi Clique in Chinese politics, 1925-1937*. London: Cambridge University Press, 2009.

¹⁴¹ Ibid.

invasion be defeated. Additionally, the two factions would resist the Nationalist's attempts to centralize their governments.¹⁴²

Past Involvement

The conflict between Japan and China spans many centuries, starting from The First Sino-Japanese War from 1894 to 1895, which was a clash between the Qing Dynasty and the Japanese Empire that dealt a severe blow to the Chinese and left an indelible mark on their history.¹⁴³ China, once perceived as the dominant power in the region, now found itself confronted by an assertive, rapidly modernizing, and westernizing Japan.¹⁴⁴ Through Emperor Meiji's sweeping reforms, Japan had shed its former image as an inferior regional power and emerged as a genuine threat to the Qing Dynasty.¹⁴⁵ The origins of this conflict can be traced back to the competition for influence over the Korean Peninsula. Control over the Korean Peninsula represented a pivotal strategic and economic incentive for both Japan and China. Thus, when both sides attempted to reinforce their existing forces in Korea,¹⁴⁶ war became an inescapable reality.

Though the war lasted a mere eight months, it exacted a heavy toll on the Qing Dynasty, resulting in the decimation of its naval power and hundreds of thousands of casualties.¹⁴⁷ This, in turn, directly contributed to the ultimate collapse of the once-mighty Qing Dynasty as a whole. In contrast, Japan suffered only a few thousand casualties throughout the entire war.¹⁴⁸ The primary factors behind the Qing's devastating defeat can be attributed to their failure to modernize, rampant corruption, and gross incompetence among high-ranking officials.¹⁴⁹ The Qing dynasty's inadequacies were already laid bare during the First Opium War in the early half of the 19th Century. This conflict exposed the deficiencies of Qing rule and emphasized the urgent necessity for military modernization.¹⁵⁰ However, the dynasty failed to implement the necessary reforms, leaving China susceptible to external threats.¹⁵¹ Thus the Qing dynasty once again faced a major threat head-on without learning from their mistakes and failed to modernize throughout the First Sino-Japanese War. Lagging immensely behind Japan in terms of military technology and tactics, China found itself ill-equipped to defend against external aggressors once more.¹⁵² Furthermore, the dynasty's inability to centralize control across the realm hampered their capacity to mobilize a cohesive

¹⁴² Ibid.

¹⁴³ Britannica, T. Editors of Encyclopaedia. "Meiji Restoration." Encyclopedia Britannica, August 18, 2023. <https://www.britannica.com/event/Meiji-Restoration>.

¹⁴⁴ Ibid.

¹⁴⁵ 甲午战争. 2nd ed. Vol. 36. 大连大学学报, 2015.

¹⁴⁶ Britannica, T. Editors of Encyclopaedia. "First Sino-Japanese War." Encyclopedia Britannica, September 1, 2023. <https://www.britannica.com/event/First-Sino-Japanese-War-1894-1895>.

¹⁴⁷ Ibid.

¹⁴⁸ Ibid.

¹⁴⁹ Ibid.

¹⁵⁰ Ibid.

¹⁵¹ Ibid.

¹⁵² Ibid.

response to Japanese advancements, resulting in a tremendous fumble.¹⁵³ Despite initially possessing a numerical advantage in naval power, the Chinese Beiyang fleet paled in comparison to the formidable Imperial Japanese Navy.¹⁵⁴ Outdated battleships and equipment burdened the Chinese navy, as Empress Dowager Cixi diverted valuable funds meant for ship upgrades to rebuild the Summer Palace.¹⁵⁵ Consequently, the Qing navy proved to be an inadequate force compared to their intensively modernized adversaries.¹⁵⁶ Coupled with the element of surprise, the Imperial Navy not only decimated the Chinese navy but also effectively severed the transportation of crucial resources and troops to the Korean front line.¹⁵⁷ Within less than a year, despite their tactical advantages, China suffered defeat in every battle, fumbling spectacularly.¹⁵⁸ Their inexperienced and often inadequately trained forces fled the battlefield in disarray, abandoning essential supplies and resorting to pillaging local citizens for necessities, (a problem that persists to this day) causing them to become deeply unpopular among their own people.¹⁵⁹ Meanwhile, Chinese generals and leaders were more preoccupied with preserving their authority than with collaborating to combat the foreign adversary, leading to greater regional autonomy under the rule of Warlords.¹⁶⁰ Chinese corruption and inefficiency played a direct role in their defeat. Ultimately, the conflict between Japan and China has witnessed a tumultuous and enduring history. The repercussions of China's defeat reverberated far and wide. The Treaty of Shimonoseki exposed China's vulnerability and acted as a catalyst for subsequent events.¹⁶¹ The Qing Dynasty's failure to adapt, rampant corruption, and internal divisions laid the groundwork for their devastating defeat, ultimately paving the way for Japan's ascendance and China's struggle to counter its expansionist ambitions.

Discussion Questions

1. What are your cliques' ultimate objectives for China's social and political structure?
2. What are your cliques' priorities?
3. How can the different blocs each address the Japanese invasion?
4. How can the KMT and CPC overcome ideological differences to cooperate in repelling the Japanese?
5. What role do the minority blocs play in the creation of a unified Chinese government?

¹⁵³ Paine, Sarah. "The Sino-Japanese War of 1894-1895." The Sino-Japanese War of 1894-1895 (SRC News No. 10), March 2002. <https://ijkh.khistory.org/upload/pdf/17-1-1.pdf>

¹⁵⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵⁵ Szczepanski, Kallie. "The First Sino-Japanese War of 1894 to 1895." ThoughtCo, October 17, 2019. <https://www.thoughtco.com/first-sino-japanese-war-1894-95-195784>.

¹⁵⁶ Ibid.

¹⁵⁷ Greve, Andrew Q, and Jack S Levy. *Power Transitions, Status Dissatisfaction, and War: The Sino-Japanese War of 1894–1895*, 2017.

¹⁵⁸ Ibid.

¹⁵⁹ Ibid.

¹⁶⁰ Ibid.

¹⁶¹ Ibid.

6. What factors of China's modern developments might hinder the Chinese army's ability to operate efficiently? What measures can the different cliques take to mitigate them?
7. How should the government maintain internal stability to garner support for the foreign threat?

Additional Resources

Mukden Incident:

https://www.journals.uchicago.edu/doi/pdf/10.1086/237763?casa_token=8Bovb_-oSgAAA-AA:jfsV4vyaA_N1wIgvImBcku2L9wIy8Er_x_EDmkJ7mgK9pSdjrhoK3qoxF2yBk38ejJmba7ySwSc

Post-War Analysis of the Chinese Army:

https://www.jstor.org/stable/pdf/312957.pdf?refreqid=excelsior%3A501dc7686f86a9a1593aac099edb484d&ab_segments=&origin=&initiator=&acceptTC=1

General Analysis of the Japanese Army:

<https://www.ibiblio.org/hyperwar/Japan/IJA/HB/HB-7.html>

KMT vs. CPC:

<https://www.jstor.org/stable/2643790?seq=3>

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