



Security Council (1950)

Situation in Korea

Topic Overview

Since the end of World War II and the Japanese occupation of the Korean Peninsula, the specter of conflict has loomed over Korea. Today, the United Nations Security Council must reckon with a Korea split at the 38th parallel and determine how to accomplish their mandate of maintaining peace and security throughout the world. As tensions rise, a conflict in Korea could emerge and act as a flashpoint for a showdown between the developing Eastern and Western blocs. The Security Council, as the preeminent organ of the United Nations, will need to determine the best course of action if violence is to arise.

Historical Background

The End of World War II

As is commonly known, World War II was in part caused by aggression on the part of Nazi Germany and Imperial Japan, who both sought to use military conquest to establish dominance over Europe and East Asia. The key to Nazi Germany's ideology and practice was its policy of racial superiority and, consequently, racial elimination and genocide. As such, Nazi Germany systematically purged peoples they found inferior, including Jewish people, the Romani, homosexuals, and the disabled. Jews were especially targeted, with an estimated 6 million dying in a genocide known as the Holocaust, a state-sponsored campaign of torture and murder. The horrors of the Holocaust and the Nazi regime would define World War II as one of moral, not just military, proportions.

There were two opposing alliances that became the principal belligerents in the war. The first was the Axis Powers, composed of Germany, Italy, and Japan, who formally allied by signing the Tripartite Pact in 1940. The second was the Allied Powers, composed of the "Big Three" - Great Britain, the United States, and the Soviet Union, who was aided by China and France (until France was occupied by Nazi Germany in 1940). The United States, led by President Franklin Delano Roosevelt, joined the war in December of 1941 after the Japanese empire attacked Pearl Harbor, a U.S. naval base near Honolulu, Hawaii. The Soviet Union was pushed to join the war on June 22, 1941, after being subject to a surprise invasion by Nazi Germany.

The entrance of the United States and the Soviet Union would prove pivotal to the outcome of World War II. The Nazi and Japanese empires found themselves spread thin, unable to deal with the superior force of the new entrants. Nazi Germany surrendered on May 8, 1945,

after losing the Battle of Normandy to the Allied invasion and liberation of northern France. The fate of the Japanese empire was sealed in August 1945 after the United States ended the war by dropping two atomic bombs on Japan, first on Hiroshima, then on Nagasaki. Imperial Japan surrendered on August 14, 1945.

The Beginning of the Cold War

Despite their military alliance, the “Big Three” shared differing political aims and visions of the postwar order; these differences would lead to the rising tensions and eventual divide between the United States and the Soviet Union, the centerpiece of the Cold War. Throughout World War II, Stalin was suspicious of Winston Churchill, Great Britain’s Prime Minister, and President Roosevelt, fearing that they would quash any of his attempts to expand Soviet influence in Eastern Europe once the war was over. These suspicions would lead to disagreements between the leaders at meetings meant to determine the post-war order. These disagreements would define the newly antagonistic relationship between the United States and the Soviet Union.

The end of the war, consequently, created two spheres of influence on the European continent — and in the rest of the world — each led by one of the victors of World War II. On one side, the United States emerged from the war as an economic and military superpower, the only country able to produce nuclear weapons, and the leader of the new economic order. On the other side, the USSR emerged from the war with an aura of prestige, having expanded its territory and number of satellites under its control. It also had a large, conventional land military, one of, if not the most, powerful in the world. Each superpower was afraid of the other, leading to the formation of opposing international ideological and military blocs.

To the West, there were the capitalist, democratic countries such as the United States, Great Britain, and France, newly democratic under the Fourth Republic after its occupation during World War II by Nazi Germany (the “Western Bloc”). Countries falling under this categorization would eventually form a military alliance in 1949 called the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), in which each member committed themselves to “safeguard the freedom, common heritage and civilization of their peoples, founded on the principles of democracy, individual liberty and the rule of law.” To the East, there was the Soviet Union and its satellite states, including Poland, Czechoslovakia, and Hungary (the “Eastern Bloc”). These countries were united under a communist ideology and the central control of the USSR.

Eventually, the tensions between these two blocs would come to be known as the Cold War, a concept first articulated by Bernard Baruch in 1947. This idea of a Cold War is significant because it underscores the multifaceted nature of the conflict between the United States and the Soviet Union. This war was not only fought by each superpowers’ respective militaries. Instead, it was characterized by a variety of tensions — diplomatic hostility, espionage, propaganda — all measures which fall short of open warfare.

Current Situation

At the time this Security Council meeting is scheduled to take place, the Korean peninsula is host to burgeoning tensions between North and South — and the Eastern and Western blocs. These tensions have the potential to escalate into a larger conflict as disagreements become increasingly irreconcilable.

Korea has long been a contested territory due to its strategically significant location. Situated as a peninsula separating the Yellow Sea from the Sea of Japan, it shares a border with the Manchuria region of mainland China and the Soviet Union, connecting these two powerful countries with islands in the Pacific Ocean and the rest of Southeast Asia. These islands include Japan, Taiwan, and the Philippines.

Prior to the Cold War, the Second World War, even the First World War, the Korean peninsula had been subject to decades of occupation and exploitation. By defeating the Russian empire in the Russo-Japanese War in 1905, the Japanese empire proved itself to be the most dominant power in East Asia. As part of its victory, written in the Treaty of Portsmouth, the empire pushed back the Russians from Korea and secured control of the territory as a protectorate. This protectorate status expanded to full settler colonization in 1910.¹ Consequently, from 1910 to 1945, Korea was a territory of the Japanese empire. As a colonizing power, Japanese rule over Korea was often brutal. The Japanese empire ruled directly through its military, crushing all signs of Korean dissent. During World War II, Koreans were forced to² work in Japanese factories and fight as soldiers for the Japanese army.

The end of World War II saw the defeat of the Japanese empire and the Axis Powers in the Pacific theater. After the Japanese surrender on August 15, 1945, Korea was divided into two zones of occupation, one controlled by the Soviet Union to the north of the 38th parallel, and one controlled by the United States to the south. The northern region of Korea was more industrialized than the south because it had served as a base for the Japanese empire's war preparations. In contrast, the south had a more developed agricultural sector, giving leftist³ causes more influence due to continuous debates between Japanese landlords and Korean tenants. This was a cause of concern for the U.S. planners, as they worried the Soviet Union's communist ideology would hold sway over the Koreans.

Despite the USSR's favorable political situation, the U.S. government still attempted to assume control over Korea and the establishment of its independent government. It developed two different plans to maintain U.S. authority over Korea: one was to make Korea a trustee of the United States (headed by the State Department); the other was to create a U.S.-led governmental



¹ <https://history.state.gov/milestones/1899-1913/portsmouth-treaty>

² http://afe.easia.columbia.edu/main_pop/kpct/kp_koreaimperialism.htm

³ <https://www.jstor.org/stable/pdf/43111427.pdf?refreqid=excelsior%3Ad0f34b83e763882ae609f786d447>

and administrative agency in Korea (headed by the U.S. Army Military Government in Korea — USAMGIK). However, both these plans were considered unfeasible, and thus were unable to be carried out, due to Soviet and Korean disapproval of them.⁴

Consequently, the United States went to the United Nations to achieve their aims. On November 14, 1947, the UN General Assembly adopted Resolution 112. It called for a general election in Korea under the supervision of the United Nations Temporary Commission on Korea (UNTCOK), a new body created to oversee the elections. The Soviet Union opposed this plan⁵ and would not allow the UNTCOK to access the zone of Korea it occupied. In spite of this development, the UN still chose to hold elections in the parts of Korea where the UNTCOK was allowed access, south of the 38th parallel.

The lead-up to these elections was chaotic. The United States chose to support Syngman Rhee for President, the leader of the Korean Provisional Government-in-exile during Japanese imperial control. He was a right-wing politician who supported many of the same values as the U.S. government, including free-market capitalism, anti-Communism, and a strong federal government. Another advantage of backing Rhee lies with the fact he had lived in the United States for many years, making communication with Western officials easier. The choice of Rhee was opposed by many Koreans, who saw him as⁶ yet another puppet of foreign control. Some also feared that Rhee's anti-communist stance would make reconciliation of the Korean peninsula under one government impossible and further inflame tensions with the Soviet Union. In addition, non-communist nationalists to the left of Rhee were also excluded from government, further diminishing the legitimacy of Rhee to the Korean populace at large.

These elections occurred on May 10, 1948, and afterward, the path to Rhee's victory was not certain. Rhee's National Association (NAARKI) party only won 55 out of 200 available seats in the Korean Constitutional Assembly, with independents winning 85 of the seats. Still, in July, the Assembly ratified a new constitution deeply influenced by the U.S. constitution, though it gave heightened powers to the executive branch, and elected Syngman Rhee as the President of the Republic of Korea. This signaled the end of the American Military Government's occupation of South Korea.⁷

On the other side of the 38th parallel, the Provisional People's Committee of North Korea controlled political life, centralizing power in North Korea. The Committee was led by its Soviet-appointed chairperson, Kim Il-sung.⁸ On March 23, 1946, Kim issued a 20-Point Platform specifying the desired economic, political, and cultural reforms for North Korea, including centralized price and market management, collectivized land reform, and state-controlled art and education.⁹ This was followed by a series of land reforms which confiscated land from Japanese organizations, landowners, and religious institutions and redistributed it to hundreds of thousands of households.¹⁰

⁴<https://www.jstor.org/stable/pdf/2145848.pdf?refreqid=excelsior%3A43087598870377cc9092f285bf7762>

⁵ <https://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/theme/cold-war-history>

⁶ <https://koreanwarlegacy.org/chapters/significance-of-the-may-1948-election/>

⁷ https://www.jstor.org/stable/42703994?seq=3#metadata_info_tab_content

⁸ https://www.jstor.org/stable/pdf/j.ctt7s1ss.6.pdf?ab_segments=0%2Fbasic_search%2Fcontrol

⁹ <http://www.korea-dpr.com/lib/9003.pdf>

¹⁰ https://www.jstor.org/stable/651343?seq=2#metadata_info_tab_contents

In response to the declaration of the Republic of Korea, a “national election” was held and the Communist Party of Korea formally established the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea (DPRK) on September 9, 1948. Kim il-Sung was made premier.¹¹ Consequently, the Korean peninsula hosted two governments, each of whom desired unification of the territory under their sole control.

At the time of the U.S. military exit, the North has remained more politically stable, with Rhee facing opposition from the Korean Democratic Party, who sought to mitigate his power through the National Assembly.¹² Furthermore, North Korean troops sent to China to fight on behalf of the communists have returned and North Korea and the Soviet Union signed a major arms pact in 1949.¹³

Tensions between the RoK and the DPRK have already begun to manifest in violent conflict, one which has the potential to escalate to a full-scale war if one side were to invade the other. Beginning in 1948, DPRK-backed communist insurgencies and uprisings have occurred in South Korea; these uprisings have led to tens of thousands of deaths and brutal ROK-based government suppression.¹⁴ Border conflicts have also broken out along the 38th parallel, including one incident on August 4, 1949, when South Korean troops occupying territory to the north of the border were routed by the DPRK’s army.¹⁵

Possible Solutions

There are several possible paths forward for the Security Council to respond to the situation in Korea. The first, and strongest, would be to directly intervene in the affairs of the peninsula to enforce the results of the prior UN elections. This intervention could take shape in multiple ways. One could be direct military interference, in which the United Nations sends its own troops — potentially in collaboration with its Members — to achieve its aims. Other forms of intervention could take a more humanitarian or peacekeeping tilt, in which UN personnel are not present to interfere politically, but maintain the safety of civilians in the case of a war. Both of these plans present the benefit of allowing the UNSC more agency over the crisis, as well as establishing the UNSC as a powerful player in international affairs. However, they also will likely meet opposition from members of the Eastern Bloc, who are displeased at the United Nation’s pro-American bias. Additionally, sending in UN personnel could prove risky in terms of potential to lose lives, waste UN funding, and make the UN a political agent, rather than a neutral arbiter of global peace.

To take a more diplomatic approach, the UNSC could use its political clout to begin a peace process and reconciliation on the peninsula. Whether acting as a third party mediator in ceasefires and future negotiations, or as a forum to bring the two Koreas and other regional actors together, the UNSC can help de-escalate the conflict while simultaneously avoiding a difficult and costly intervention that may not even have the full support of the UN member states. This course of action also has the advantage of maintaining the UNSC’s neutral position in the

¹¹ <https://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/theme/cold-war-history>

¹² https://www.jstor.org/stable/pdf/j.ctt7s1ss.6.pdf?ab_segments=0%2Fbasic_search%2Fcontrol

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Gibby, Bryan (2012). *Will to Win: American Military Advisors in Korea, 1946–1953*. University Alabama Press. p. 72.

¹⁵ Ibid.

peninsula, which will help the UNSC cement its role as a valuable diplomatic hub for decades to come. The challenge for this policy will be incentivizing the parties to come to the table in the first place, and then abide by subsequent agreements, so the members of this committee will have to create a comprehensive and creative plan to make the diplomatic course of action feasible.

The last potential foreseeable path is one to let the cards fall where they may. Should the UNSC opt for the most hands-off approach, the situation in Korea would develop as it may and no longer be considered the UNSC's concern, regardless of what events may come to pass. This presents many obvious concerns, such as the predominant risk of the UNSC failing its mandate to achieve peace in the world. However, it could, theoretically, lead to the UNSC avoiding a dangerous situation and risking escalating the conflict more. An armed intervention or demanding diplomatic talks might risk the conflict boiling over, and either could be the flash point resulting in all out global war, potentially of a nuclear nature. Committing to remaining outside of the peninsula in all forms may be a risky maneuver, but potentially one that avoids conflict.

Bloc Positions

- *Eastern Bloc* = the Eastern Bloc consists of the Soviet Union and its allies. Countries in this bloc should aim to impede Western influence and expansion at all costs. However, the power of this bloc may be limited due to the Republic of China holding the Security Council's China seat and the Soviet Union's distaste for working through the United Nations, which it believes is a puppet for American imperialists.
- *Western Bloc* = the Western Bloc consists of the United States and its allies. The goal of this bloc is to prevent communist expansion. Members of this bloc must decide whether direct intervention in Korea is necessary and sufficient to achieve this aim.
- *Non-Aligned* = Non-aligned countries are those that are neither members of the Eastern or Western Blocs. Countries in this position should look to their individual interests for policy motivation — as the world is becoming increasingly divided, their Security Council votes could hold significant political sway if deployed correctly.

Discussion Questions

- What actions can the UNSC take in the Korean peninsula to prevent the emergence of large-scale conflict in the near future?
- Should the UNSC place an emphasis on upholding the status quo, promoting reconciliation between the two regimes, or setting a completely new course of action?
- If conflict were to emerge between the DPRK and the ROK, how can the UNSC help facilitate a speedy end to conflict?
- Is the initial goal for a Korean peninsula united via a popular referendum now unattainable? If not, how can the UNSC adapt the original UNTCOK plan to meet present conditions?

Situation in China

Topic Overview

The aftermath of the Chinese Civil War has left the region unstable and highly volatile. The newly-established Communist People's Republic of China seeks legitimacy in the international arena in order to begin its ascent to the status of major world power. The leaders of the previous Nationalist government of China, the Republic of China, have fled to the island of Taiwan. However, they have not given up claims of being the legitimate government of all mainland China and are still considering a possible takeover. The international community has yet to take a uniform stance on the legitimacy of either government but must act quickly. This friction and the establishment of another powerful communist nation have left the region's future highly tumultuous.

Historical Background

The Foundation of the UN Security Council

The Security Council of the United Nations was one of the original bodies defined within the newly drafted United Nations Charter in 1945. The explicit purpose of the Security Council is to ensure international peace and security, as its name suggests. The Security Council's primary responsibilities include investigating situations that may threaten international peace and security and mediating disputes.¹⁶ This body has the following powers: order any member state to sever ties (communication, economic, or diplomatic) with any other member state, deploy UN military forces, and pass binding resolutions. The Security Council is the only UN body able to pass binding resolutions. Currently, the Security Council consists of 11 members: 5 of which are permanent, while the other 6 rotate every two years. The permanent members are the United States, the United Kingdom, the Soviet Union, France, and the Republic of China (colloquially known as Taiwan). These members have the unique ability to veto any action of the Security Council but cannot unilaterally prevent debate on any topic.¹⁷

The Origins of the Chinese Civil War and Ensuing Regional Instability

The two conflicting sides of the Chinese Civil War, the Nationalist Party and the Communist Party, established themselves during the same period. However, the partys' origins are vastly different.

¹⁶ <https://www.un.org/en/sections/un-charter/chapter-v/index.html> (See Chapters V-VIII and XII)
¹⁷ <https://web.archive.org/web/20120620101548/http://www.unfoundation.org/what-we-do/issues/united-nations/the-un-security-council.html>

Origins of the Chinese Nationalist Party (KMT)

The Nationalist Party originated from the Tomenghui, an underground resistance movement against the Qing Dynasty in the early 1900s, organized by Sun Yat-sen (pictured right). The name “Nationalist Party” was adopted in 1912. After several failed attempts to gain legitimacy, Sun Yat-sen finally succeeded in 1923. He was elected the President of a new regime in a region of southern China recently freed from militarists and proclaimed it to be the legitimate government of China.¹⁸



Origins of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP)

The Chinese Communist Party grew directly from the May 4th Movement of 1919 (pictured below). This event was a student protest



demanding that former German colonies in China be given back under Chinese control and calling for reforms within the Chinese government.¹⁹ As such, the leaders of the Movement and some of its early members were professors and students. Inspired by the Russian Revolution of 1917, socialist and Marxist ideologies, they dreamed of a socialist revolution in China. They established early ties with

the Soviet Union, and with the help of the Comintern, the Soviet Union’s international Communist organization, the party gained footing and began recruitment. In 1921 the Party held its First Congress, and by 1923, it had 50 full party members and several thousands of members in its Youth League.²⁰

Early Inter-Party Coalition

The two parties initially worked separately. However, at the Third Communist Congress in 1923, Comintern advisors pushed the Communist Party to join forces with the Nationalists to launch a national revolutionary movement. Sun Yat-sen was initially hesitant to form a multi-party alliance but eventually agreed in hopes of building power in the Chinese masses. In 1924, the Nationalist Party drafted a new constitution outlining its goal of broad social reform and organized itself into a Soviet-like system. Although Sun Yat-sen was the leader; there was a

¹⁸ <https://www.britannica.com/biography/Sun-Yat-sen/The-revolution-of-1911>

¹⁹

<https://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/2019/05/03/why-chinas-may-fourth-celebrations-also-bring-new-concerns-beijing/>

²⁰

<https://www.nytimes.com/2019/05/03/opinion/china-may-fourth-movement-protests-1919-wusi.html>

small executive committee with the highest concentration of power and a descending hierarchy of Regional governments from then onward. The Nationalist Party also aimed to infiltrate and gain control of all organizations, including labor unions, schools, and merchant associations, to build a solid foundation for future organizing.

Growing Tensions

Unfortunately, Sun Yat-sen died within a year of liver cancer. His death set off a period of conflict within the government caused by the radicalizing influence of its Communist members. The Communist Party hoped to push the government in an increasingly radical direction against the wishes of the conservatives in the Nationalist Party. The radical stance of the Communists initially seemed appealing. Still, the communists had organized a series of strikes and boycotts in response to foreign interference (Britain, France, Japan), which turned out to be costly and drawn-out. The strikes led to a significant pushback against radical action, and Communists were no longer permitted to hold high government offices.²¹

In 1926, Chiang Kai-shek (pictured right), the commander of the National Revolutionary Army, received approval for a northern military campaign against the warlords in the region. Though vastly outnumbered, the Revolutionary Army's forces fought with great spirit with the help of the Soviet military advisers, made considerable gains. However, an issue arose when Communist-organized protests and strikes erupted in the newly-gained territories. As a result, foreign residents and members of the upper class fled from those regions.



The divide between the Communists and the Nationalists only grew deeper from there, culminating in March of 1927. A strike began in Shanghai led by the Communists, bringing fear to the area's more conservative population. They began urging Chiang Kai-shek to expel the Communists for good and suppress the Shanghai General Labor Union, an organization heavily involved in organizing the strike. Several months later, in July, the Nationalists got word of a directive issued by Joseph Stalin, the leader of the Soviet Union, planning to arrange for the Communist radicals to capture the government. This action prompted the Nationalist leadership to expel all Communists from its leadership and offices and send out all Soviet advisors. Having lost hold of power positions and Soviet support, the Communist Party held several uprisings. Almost all were of the uprising suppressed by the Nationalist forces. As a result, the Communist Party loses nearly all of its members. Those remaining establish their bases in the mountains or the plains away from Nationalist strongholds. In the meantime, the Nationalist forces continued on and successfully completed their Northern Expedition, defeating the major warlords and capturing the cities and railways of Eastern China. On October 10, 1928, the Nationalists formally established the National Government of the Republic of China with its capital at Nanjing and Chiang Kai-shek as its leader.

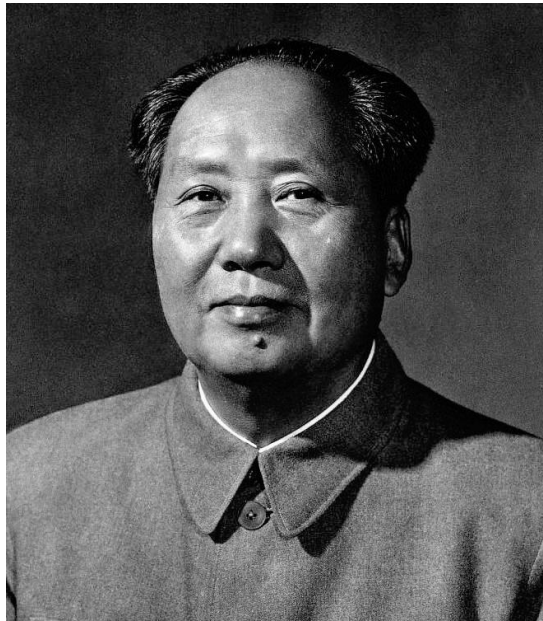
The Young Republic

The young Nationalist Republic faces significant challenges in asserting its control in the West, where it had virtually no authority and recently gained eastern territories. This change

²¹ <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/china/1939-07-01/strategy-chiang-kai-shek>

leads to civil war against local eastern governments. In addition, Chiang Kai-shek's leadership was generally marked by militarism and unilateral decision-making, intentionally pitting different government factions against one another to leave the final call on all decisions in his hands.

Nevertheless, the Republic of China did implement substantial reforms in its early years. It established a structured modern government and a coherent monetary system, improved taxation and transportation, expanded industry and education, and even regained some territory from foreign powers. Many of these developments were confined to only urban centers. As a result, much of the rural population was illiterate, unemployed, and disease-stricken. This situation was being exacerbated by the increase in taxes imposed by the government to fund its numerous civil wars.



Meanwhile, the Communist Party continued to organize across rural regions of central and western China under the leadership of Mao Zedong, the new party chairman (pictured below). The conflict between the Communist and Nationalist forces persists with Chiang Kai-shek continuing his anti-communist policies. But this became increasingly unpopular with the threat of Japanese aggression in the region. So much so that when Chiang urged the Manchurian and Northwestern army leaders to renew the anti-communist campaign at a meeting, he was forcibly detained by the leader of the exceptionally resistant Manchurian forces, Zhang Xueliang, in an event known as the Sian Incident. Because war was eminent many fear if Chiang were removed from leadership, China would dissolve into chaos and urged his release. Within two weeks pressure from the Communists, the

Nationalists, and the Soviet Union, caused Chiang to be released on the condition that he would put an end to the inter-party conflict and form a united front against Japan. This unification did not happen immediately, and the quarreling status quo continued for a while longer, but with the eruption of the Sino-Japanese War in 1937, a culmination of years of friction between the two neighboring nations, the Nationalists finally agreed to join forces with the Communist Party against the Japanese in a war that would continue for the next 8 years.²²

Current Situation

1950 marks exactly one year since the establishment of the People's Republic of China on China's mainland with its capital in Beijing. This has come after 8 years of fighting Japanese aggression and a 4-year brutal Civil War between the Nationalist Party and the Chinese Communist Party. Which results in a complete overhaul of the existing government, replacing it with a Communist republic.

²² <https://www.britannica.com/biography/Mao-Zedong/The-Cultural-Revolution>

Inter-Party Relations during the Sino-Japanese War

The Second Sino-Japanese War had temporarily united the Communists and the Nationalists, although each was fighting against the Japanese aggressors, simultaneously making moves to gain an advantage over the opposing faction. Though neither side wished to escalate the conflict to a full-blown civil war, it was clear the rift was not going away.

The Nationalist army had weakened significantly over the course of the war, and the government's policies grew increasingly unpopular. The inflation had risen to alarmingly high rates while salaries lagged far behind, leading to both widespread poverty and a flourishing black market. This situation, combined with the government's active surveillance and suppression of dissent, led to unrest and dissatisfaction with the Nationalist government.

In contrast, the Communist Party's ranks multiplied as the war went on. Communist forces focused on mobilizing the greatest possible force against the Japanese. They helped organize local governments and urged greater participation, especially among younger leaders, formed peasant associations, labor unions, and youth leagues, and fostered economic cooperation through mutual aid teams (these later came to double as guerilla forces). As such, the Communists were able to garner support for their cause and gain a stronghold in an area of roughly 90 million people.

Several attempts at negotiations took place during the latter half of the war to prevent the eruption of an inter-party conflict between the Nationalists and the Communists. These were the main concerns with the expanding influence of the Communist forces and control over established regional governments. Both sides wished to retain their respective control, the Nationalists over the government in its entirety and the Communists over its armies and regional governments it helped organize. Neither trusted the other side to have its best interests at heart.

Eruption of Civil War

As such, upon the conclusion of the Second Sino-Japanese War in 1945, China plunged head-first into a long-looming conflict: the Chinese Civil War. The withdrawal of Japanese forces from mainland China left a power vacuum and a large territory of land, Manchuria (pictured on the map in orange), that both parties wanted to take for themselves. Manchuria is a region with a population of approximately 40 million people. It is the industrial hub of China, holding the country's largest concentration of heavy industries and railways, as well as substantial reserves of coal, iron, and other minerals. Previously occupied by Japanese forces during the war and by the Soviet Union for 3 months after the war had ended, it now became the target of control for the two contesting Chinese parties. Both saw Manchuria as the key to China's future economic and political development and were willing to risk military confrontation to capture it. Although the Nationalist troops were aided by the United States



military, they were unable to fully capture the region. Instead, in the first few months of struggle, the Communists were able to establish themselves in the northern part of China and take control of many of the region's key railways. Meanwhile, the Nationalists reestablished their control over large areas in southern and western China, several of the important cities in the north, and Taiwan.²³

Failed Attempts at Peace



Meanwhile, party officials continued to negotiate for peace. In October of 1945, the parties reached an agreement that called for a convening of a multi-party Political Consultative Council that would plan a post-war government and draft a constitution. Said Council would include the presence of George C. Marshall (pictured left), a special representative from the United States. At first, this Council proved effective in issuing recommendations on the structure of government, reconstruction, military reduction, the creation of a national assembly, and a constitution. President Chiang Kai-shek even agreed to carry out said recommendations, and the rest of the party leaders expressed their approval and willingness to abide by them. This lasted roughly until 1946 when the time came for military reductions. Conservatives within the Nationalist Party were ardently opposed to this policy, claiming that it would dilute their power within the government. This and the

confidence that both sides could win better by means of war than by negotiations led to the rapid resumption of fighting after a brief period of easing tensions. This military zeal was unacceptable for moderates and the United States, who were both heavily involved in mediating peace negotiations. As a result the United States chose to no longer take part in the talks. Thus, war became the only option.²⁴

Deterioration of Nationalist Control and Communist Victory

At this point, the two parties were in vastly different situations. The Nationalist Party was encouraged by several initial victories with the help of United States forces. The party also convened an assembly to adopt a new constitution, affirm its ideology, and prepare for elections in 1947. However, these victories could not hide the myriad of on-military problems the Nationalists were fighting. The government attempted to finance its military operations primarily by printing money, causing rampant inflation. Tax collection was complicated because of government corruption. The government imported large quantities of goods without restriction, further worsening its financial situation. And despite ample aid from the United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration and the United States (providing: food, clothes, means for rehabilitating several industries, army resources, etc.), the financial situation only continued to spiral out of control. Morale declined rapidly as Nationalists were proving unable to take care of the needs of their citizens. In addition to this, the Nationalists actively repressed and censored any dissent, going as far as assassinating particularly vocal opponents of government policy. This

²³ <https://www.britannica.com/place/Manchuria>

²⁴ <https://www.pbs.org/wgbh/americanexperience/features/macarthur-general-george-c-marshall/>

diverted a substantial amount of supporters to the Communist cause.²⁵

In contrast, the Communist numbers were on the rise. The troops were fighting for liberation, a message they wholeheartedly believed in and bolstered by extensive anti-United States propaganda. Thus morale remained high. Their cause hit close to home for many rural citizens, and they were pleased with the reforms the communist promised to implement. The Communists began a land revolution, encouraging peasants to take substantial portions of their landowners' land. They organized meetings and encouraged peasants to break free of their age-old fear of hierarchy and authority to reclaim their rightful land, significantly expanding the Communists' rural base.

In this way, Communists successfully captured half of what was previously Nationalist territory and cut off vital communication lines from the weakened Nationalist forces. The Nationalist forces now suffered from poor morale, desertion, and indecisive leadership. Now clearly on the defensive against the Communists with troops thinly spread with only a few cities within their grip. The situation only worsened with the Communist army proving able to win significant victories using guerilla tactics. They took control of more and more territories, cutting off supply lines and taking over means of transportation. The Nationalists made several futile attempts at regaining what they had lost but proved unable to battle inflation, corruption, speculation, the black market. They failed to impose their will on the general populace. They were weak and disoriented in the face of a consolidated and powerful enemy. Even though the Nationalists had more troops than the Communists they were poorly trained, under-resourced, and broken, a combination that proved a true recipe for failure against the organized and spirited Communist troops.²⁶ The Nationalists made one last attempt at peace, but it proved futile, with the United States refusing to mediate once again. As such, the Nationalists took Taiwan and a few other islands off the coast of China, where they retreated and established a base. Shortly after, the Communist Party proclaimed power over mainland China under the leadership of Mao Zedong in Beijing on October 1, 1949 (pictured above).²⁷

The Issue at Hand

Even with the Communists now in control on the mainland of China and the Nationalists establishing themselves on the island of Taiwan, there is no clear transition of power. Moreover, the Nationalists continue to claim legitimate control over all of China and consider Taiwan to be a temporary base. This claim is bolstered by their occupying China's seat in the United Nations at large and in its Security Council. In the same vein, the newly formed People's Republic of China



²⁵ <https://www.crf-usa.org/images/t2t/pdf/Wf>

²⁶ <https://www.crf-usa.org/images/t2t/pdf/Wf>

²⁷ <https://www.britannica.com/place/China/R>
<https://history.state.gov/milestones/1945-1952/chinese-rev;>
[https://home.bt.com/news/on-this-day/october-1-1949-victorious-mao-proclaims-the-peoples-republic-of-china-a-communist-state-11364008061378.](https://home.bt.com/news/on-this-day/october-1-1949-victorious-mao-proclaims-the-peoples-republic-of-china-a-communist-state-11364008061378)

claimed legitimate control over the island of Taiwan and mainland China. As such, the relations between the two remain uncertain and tense.²⁸ The international community has yet to fully resolve the question of which China is The China.²⁹ 1617

Bloc Positions

Besides neutrality, the situation seemingly split countries into two main blocs divided roughly along ideological lines: The USSR and Communist Bloc and The United States and Western Bloc.

The USSR and Communist Bloc

As the first communist nation in the world, the Soviet Union has a significant interest in forming alliances with and gaining the support of other communist nations. This is especially necessary in the wake of rising tensions with the West regarding the United States in particular. The Soviet Union formed an early friendship with the Chinese Communists and was the first nation to recognize the Communist People's Republic of China as the legitimate government of China.³⁰ China looks to the Soviet Union as a model and as a source of support. The two nations even signed the Treaty on Friendship, Union, and Mutual Assistance in February of 1950, reinforcing economic and cultural ties and agreeing to act in concert on the international stage. The Soviet Union, therefore, has a vested interest in handing over Taiwan's seat to the People's Republic of China. It has introduced a resolution to do so, but it was rejected, prompting the Soviet Union to boycott meetings of the Security Council.³¹ This continues into the present, stalling much-needed progress on a multitude of international issues.

The United States and Western Bloc

With the rise of Communism in the East, the United States and other western nations begin to feel uneasy. The United States, in particular, having won and suffered least during WWII, acted swiftly to prevent the spread of Communism. President Harry S. Truman delivered an address to Congress proclaiming the urgent need to provide political, military, and economic assistance to democratic nations under threat of succumbing to Communism.³² Additionally, the United States launches the Marshall Plan, which provides economic aid to western countries heavily affected by WWII and in unstable economic positions.³³ However, the United States also has an incredibly complicated home front. The Truman administration has the "loss of China" on

²⁸ <https://www.crf-usa.org/images/t2t/pdf/WhyDidCommunistsWinChineseRevolution.pdf>

²⁹ <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-16178545>;
<https://www.history.com/topics/china/china-timeline>.

³⁰ <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-russia-medvedev-foreign-timeline/timeline-russia-china-relations-idUSL1912530020080519>

³¹ <https://www.history.com/this-day-in-history/soviets-boycott-united-nations-security-council>

³² <https://history.state.gov/milestones/1945-1952/truman-doctrine#:~:text=With%20the%20Truman%20Doctrine%2C%20President,external%20or%20internal%20authoritarian%20forces.&text=Truman%20asked%20Congress%20to%20support%20the%20Greek%20Government%20against%20the%20Communists>.

³³ <https://www.history.com/topics/world-war-ii/marshall-plan-1#:~:text=The%20Marshall%20Plan%2C%20also%20known,rebuilt%20efforts%20on%20the%20continent>.

its hands after the United States backed out of facilitating peace negotiations between the Communists and Nationalists.³⁴ Though the administration has issued the China White Paper explaining the logic and circumstances that led to that decision, the public remains unresponsive, blaming Truman for the further spread of Communism. Thus, the United States was initially unwilling to admit support for what it felt was a stubborn and oppressive Nationalist regime; however, these feelings soon changed.

Additionally, Senator Joseph McCarthy of Wisconsin gains popularity with his anti-communist crusade in the Senate while the House of Representatives' Un-American Activities Committee continues to investigate any possible communist loyalties within society and the government. Communism is considered dangerous, unacceptable; therefore, there must be global efforts to contain its spread.³⁵ Although the United States and the western nations haven't taken a firm stance, they have a significant interest in keeping communists out of international decision-making by keeping Taiwan as a permanent member of the Security Council.

Discussion Questions

- Which government of China should be formally recognized as legitimate?
- Which government should be allowed to be a part of the United Nations: China (People's Republic of China), Taiwan (Republic of China), or both?
- What measures should be taken to avoid the eruption of further conflict between China and Taiwan?
- Does the recent governmental turnover in China present a threat to peace, stability, and security in the surrounding region? If so, how can that be prevented or mitigated?

Key Terms

- KMT/Kuomintang- Chinese Nationalist Party
- CCP- Chinese Communist Party
- People's Republic of China (also known as "China")- Communist government of mainland China under the leadership of Mao Zedong
- Republic of China (also known as "Taiwan")- previous formal government of all of China under the leadership of Chiang Kai-shek, currently based on the island of Taiwan
- Manchuria- Region in northwestern China under Japanese control during the Second Sino-Japanese War and ceded back to China upon Japan's surrender in 1945
- Taiwan- Small island off the coast of China under Japanese rule during the Sino-Japanese War and ceded back to China upon Japan's surrender in 1945, currently serving as the base for the Republic of China
- UNSC- The United Nations Security Council, a critical operating body within the United Nations able to pass binding resolutions and demands on other member nations
- Cross-Strait Relations- Relationship between mainland China and Taiwan (across the Taiwan Strait)

³⁴ <https://digitalcommons.iwu.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1121&context=constructing>

³⁵ <https://www.history.com/topics/cold-war/red-scare>

Additional Resources

[History of China- Encyclopedia Britannica](#)

[History of the Chinese Civil War- United States State Department](#)

[Timeline of the History of China- The History Channel](#)

[Why did the Communists Win the Chinese Civil War? - Constitutional Rights Foundation](#)

[The Causes and Effects of the Chinese Civil War- Seton Hall University](#)

China: A Century of Revolution (Documentary Film)