

Further reading

Try reading the relevant chapter/sections of the following books:

- Bessel, R. 1987. *Life in the Third Reich*. Oxford, UK. Oxford University Press.
- Evans, R. J. 2003. *The Coming of the Third Reich*. London, UK. Penguin Books.
- Evans, R. J. 2005. *The Third Reich in Power*. London, UK. Penguin Books.
- Evans, R. J. 2008. *The Third Reich at War*. London, UK. Penguin Books.
- Grunberger, R. 1971. *A Social History of the Third Reich*. London, UK. Penguin Books.
- Housden, M. 1996. *Resistance and Conformity in the Third Reich*. London, UK. Routledge.
- Kershaw, I. 1985. *The Nazi Dictatorship – Problems and Perspectives of Interpretations*. London, UK. Arnold.
- Kershaw, I. 1998. *Hitler 1889–1936: Hubris*. London, UK. Penguin Books.
- Kershaw, I. 2000. *Hitler 1936–1945: Nemesis*. London, UK. Penguin Books.
- Overy, R. 2004. *The Dictators: Hitler's Germany, Stalin's Russia*. London, UK. Allen Lane/Penguin Books.
- Stackelberg, R. and Winkle, S. A. (eds). 2002. *The Nazi Germany Sourcebook: An Anthology of Texts*. London, UK. Routledge.



4 Mao and China

1 Origins and rise, 1894–1949

Key questions

- What was China like in the early 20th century?
- How did Mao Zedong achieve leadership of the Chinese Communist Party?
- Why did civil war break out in China in 1946?
- Why did Mao become ruler of China in 1949?

Overview

- In the early 20th century China suffered from a lack of unity and was politically unstable. It was dominated by foreign powers that had gained land, rights and privileges there.
- China became a republic in 1912 but its nationalist government was ineffective. A period of warlordism ensued between 1916 and 1928, when the GMD captured Beijing and established a central nationalist government, with Nanjing as the capital and Jiang Jieshi as president.
- The Chinese Communist Party (CCP) was established in China in 1921, but Mao Zedong was not initially dominant. The CCP built up its membership and co-operated with Jiang Jieshi's nationalist Guomindang (GMD) in a United Front until 1927, when the GMD broke the alliance.
- The communists were forced to set up base areas, as at Jiangxi, and formed the Red Army. Surrounded by GMD forces, a large group (including Mao) broke out and undertook the Long March of 1934–35. They established a new base at Yan'an where Mao became undisputed leader and implemented his social policies, such as land reform.
- The Second Sino-Japanese War (1937–45) briefly reunited the GMD and CCP forces and the CCP grew. After Japan's defeat in 1945, the CCP fought a civil war against the GMD. This ended in complete victory for the communists and placed Mao in the position of ruler of China.

Timeline

- 1894–95** First Sino-Japanese War
- 1898–01** Boxer Rebellion
- 1912 Jan:** Chinese Republic is established
- 1916 Jun:** period of warlordism begins
- 1921 July:** 1st National Congress of the Chinese Communist Party is held; Mao Zedong is one of the 12 delegates
- 1926 Jul:** Jiang Jieshi and GMD undertake northern campaign against the warlords
- 1927 Apr:** massacre of communists in Shanghai leads GMD to break alliance with communists
- 1928 Oct:** GMD establish a central government in China, with Nanjing as the capital and Jiang Jieshi as president
- 1931 Sep:** Japan begins invasion of Manchuria
- Nov:** Mao is established as head of the Chinese Soviet Republic at Jiangxi
- 1934 Oct:** communists undertake the Long March (ends October 1935), with new base established at Yan'an
- 1937 Jul:** Japan captures Beijing; GMD and communists form United Front
- 1941** United Front gradually breaks up when Jiang's forces attack communist troops
- 1945 Sep:** Japan is defeated in the Second World War and is forced to withdraw
- 1946 Jun:** full-scale civil war breaks out between the GMD and communists
- 1949 Jan:** communist forces capture Beijing
- Oct:** People's Republic of China is proclaimed in Beijing by Mao Zedong

What was China like in the early 20th century?



Fact

- China is nearly 50 times the size of Britain, larger than the whole of Europe and slightly smaller than the total land area of the United States.
- In the early 20th century, the majority of the population barely had enough to eat.
- Foreigners dominated industry and trade and had settlements (concessions) where they lived by their own laws.
- Society was very structured and valued scholarship. Trade was ranked as a lowly profession.

Sun Yat Sen (1866–1925)

Sun Yat Sen came from a peasant background. He was a Christian and was educated in the West. He founded the first anti-imperial organisation in 1894 and campaigned for a republic. In 1905, he founded a revolutionary league and advocated nationalism, democracy and the improvement of livelihoods through socialism. In January 1912, he became president of the new Chinese republic, but resigned in March 1912 to avoid civil war.

Question

Why was China such an unstable state in the early 20th century?

A map showing the Chinese Empire at the end of the Qing Dynasty

China had endured '100 years of humiliation' by foreigners following its defeat in the 'Opium Wars' of 1839–42 and 1856–60 and by the Japanese in 1894–95. Industrialising nations, led by Britain, sought to make profits in China and divided the country into 'spheres of influence'. Resentment of foreign domination provoked the Boxer Rebellion of 1898–1901.

In the early 20th century, peasants in China were struggling to survive and consequently resented heavy government taxes. Townspeople were under pressure from inflation and hostile to the corrupt government officials. Students were resentful of foreign influence and in despair at the failure of the dynasty to bring about effective reforms.

In 1911, a revolutionary uprising started in central China that brought together peasants, townspeople and students. The recognised leader of the young revolutionaries was **Sun Yat Sen**, who had formed a revolutionary league in 1905. Most of southern China was swept up in the movement that led to the proclamation of a Chinese republic. The Qing Dynasty, which had ruled China since 1644, collapsed.

Sun Yat Sen was declared president of a new National Assembly and the republic was formally established on 1 January 1912. The last emperor, six-year-old Puyi, abdicated in February. Sun resigned in March in favour of Yuan Shikai, a conservative army leader who had the loyalty of China's military forces. In August 1912, the nationalist **Guomindang** (GMD) party was formed, with Sun as its leader. The party brought together Sun's revolutionary league and other smaller revolutionary parties.

Yuan failed to live up to expectations and even tried to have himself crowned emperor. On his death in 1916, many of his former subordinates took the opportunity to seize control of their own provinces. They refused to acknowledge the authority of the republic and behaved as independent **warlords**.

The end of the First World War in Europe in 1918 increased Chinese humiliation. The 1919 Treaty of Versailles gave former German concessions in China to the Japanese, which provoked a patriotic march of students in Beijing on 4 May 1919. This was followed by nationwide demonstrations.

In 1925, the army officer **Jiang Jieshi** took the leadership of the GMD and in 1926 undertook a campaign against the warlords. Among those supporting his efforts were communists such as the young Mao Zedong, who worked among the peasants of Hunan, and Zhou Enlai, who helped to organise a strike among Shanghai workers, thus allowing the GMD to take the city in 1927.

Nevertheless, Jiang regarded the communists as a threat to his authority. He spoke of the Japanese as a 'disease of the skin' but of the communists as 'a disease of the heart'. Consequently, after taking Shanghai, Jiang turned his army on the striking workers and their communist leaders. Thousands were killed. Jiang also expelled the GMD's Russian advisers. Such moves were popular with China's business class, who provided the GMD with financial support. Similarly, Western powers also provided loans in an attempt to keep communism out of China.

By 1928, Jiang had overcome the warlords sufficiently to capture Beijing and establish a central government with Nanjing as the capital. Jiang's nationalist government brought China a new, more stable currency and some industrial growth, but the Japanese remained in Manchuria and set up a puppet administration, Manchukuo, headed by Puyi, the former emperor.

How did Mao Zedong achieve leadership of the Chinese Communist Party?

Mao became a Marxist whilst studying and working as a library assistant at Beijing University in 1919. He came to believe that 'all power grows out of the barrel of a gun' and that violence was the only way to achieve change in China. He met and corresponded with other communist thinkers, helped to organise strikes and took part in the 4 May protest movement in 1919 against the granting of former German territory in China to Japan.

The Russian **Comintern**, established in 1919 in order to spread Marxist revolution beyond Russia, encouraged the formation of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) in 1921. The party was led by Chen Duxiu and Li Dazhao, but Mao was one of 12 delegates who attended the 1st National Congress of the party in July 1921.

Guomindang This was the nationalist political party founded in China in 1912; it governed China from 1928 to 1949.

warlords Warlords were generals who commanded bands of soldiers who terrorised peasants into giving food and paying taxes.

Jiang Jieshi (1887–1975)

(Also known as Chiang Kai-Shek) Jiang became leader of the GMD in 1925 and from 1928 dominated the nationalist government as president and commander-in-chief of the army in China. He lost popularity by failing to enforce reforms or prevent the Japanese invasion. After the GMD's defeat by the communists, he fled to Taiwan in 1949, which he ruled until his death.



Comintern The Communist International or Comintern was founded in Moscow in March 1919 to fight 'by all available means, including armed force, for the overthrow of the international bourgeoisie and for the creation of an international Soviet republic as a transition stage to the complete abolition of the state'. It sent advisers to other countries to encourage communist revolution.

As ordered by the Comintern, CCP members also joined the GMD in order to drive the 'imperialists' from China and bring about Chinese unity. Mao worked as a GMD political organiser in Shanghai and, in 1924, was elected to both the Central Committee of the CCP and that of the GMD.

When Jiang Jieshi broke the alliance with the CCP in 1927, Mao developed his own brand of communism in the rural areas. He believed (contrary to Comintern advice) that communism had to be established among Chinese peasants if it was to succeed.

Mao attempted a revolt of peasants in his native Hunan in 1927, but this was bloodily suppressed. He then led his followers to a more secure base in the remote mountains of Jinggangshan. Here, he formed the communist Red Army.

Mao built up a well-disciplined and reliable force by providing basic provisions and pay and insisting that all generals, including himself, shared the hardships of the ordinary men. Although the ranks had to obey orders, they were otherwise treated as equals and could not be beaten by officers. Unlike the GMD army, the force was ordered to help the peasants. By 1928, the Red Army consisted of 12,000 men.

The army was, however, poorly equipped and relied on bamboo spikes more commonly than guns. This led it to develop guerrilla tactics. Small, lightly armed bands of Red Army soldiers merged with the civilian population, disguised as peasants, or retreated into underground tunnels linking villages to attack the larger enemy forces when and where they least expected it.



Members of the Red Army in 1927, with newly supplied Russian equipment; the Red Army was created from willing peasant recruits

Fact

Mao said: 'The Red Army lives among people as a fish dwells in water.' And, in reference to tactics:

'The enemy advances, we retreat.
The enemy camps, we harass.
The enemy tires, we attack.
The enemy retreats, we pursue.'

Fact

The 'Six Principles of the Red Army' were:

- Put back all doors when leaving a house.
- Rice-stalk mattresses must all be bundled up and returned.
- Be polite. Help people when you can.
- Give back everything you borrow, even if it's only a needle.
- Pay for all things broken, even if only a chopstick.
- Don't help yourself or search for things when people are not in their houses.

In 1929, Mao's band moved to more fertile land in the south of Jiangxi province around Ruijin, where they established a base and in 1931 set up the Jiangxi Soviet. Mao referred to the area as the 'Chinese Soviet Republic'. It contained a population of 1 million.

Mao became CCP party secretary and ordered land redistribution. Poorer peasants were encouraged to kill their richer peasant neighbours and landlords, and those who disagreed with Mao's line and those he suspected of disloyalty were purged. In 1930, Mao ordered 2000 Red Army soldiers to be shot for staging a revolt at Futian, for example.

The Long March

Despite four different campaigns from 1930 onwards, Jiang Jieshi failed to defeat the Red Army. However, when the GMD surrounded the communist stronghold

Fact

Jung Chang and Jon Halliday calculated that, between 1931 and 1934, 700,000 people died at the Ruijin base. Half were murdered as 'class enemies'; the rest were worked to death or died from other causes attributable to the regime.



The route of the Long March

Fact

The Long March from Jiangxi was much celebrated in later Maoist mythology. However, there is evidence that Mao was not the initial leader of the march – nor even automatically selected to take part in it (see Xinran, *Chinese Witness*). Hurdles included crossing the swollen Dadu River by a suspension bridge that had been sabotaged and had no planks in the first section.

Question

Why do you think that the Long March was later afforded such an important place in Maoist propaganda?

Fact

In 1936, Mao asked a US sympathiser, the Beijing school teacher Edgar Snow, to write the story of the communist movement in China. His *Red Star Over China* romanticised Mao's movement, and tens of thousands of young, educated Chinese went to Yan'an in a spirit of idealism. However, they found themselves suspected as 'bourgeois intellectuals', class-enemies or nationalist spies.

Question

Why had Mao Zedong emerged as the unchallenged leader of the CCP by 1945?

in an attempt to starve the red forces into surrender, Mao recognised the need to move elsewhere. Consequently, in October 1934, Mao and the main body of the Red Army broke through where Jiang's forces were weakest, to the west, and began their Long March. On 20 October 1935, the marchers arrived at Shaanxi. Around 5000 of 100,000 original marchers survived the 13,000 km (8000 mile) ordeal.

SOURCE A

Has there ever been in history a Long March like ours? No, never. The Long March is also a manifesto. It proclaims to the world that the Red Army is an army of heroes and that the imperialists and their jackals, Jiang Jieshi and his like, are perfect nonentities. The Long March has sown many seeds in eleven provinces, which will sprout, grow leaves, blossom into flowers, bear fruit and yield a crop in future.

From a speech by Mao in December 1935 on the importance of the Long March of 1934–35. Quoted in Schools Council. 1977. *Rise of Communist China* (Modern World Studies). Edinburgh, UK. Holmes McDougall. p. 29.

The Yan'an Soviet

The surviving marchers settled in the Yan'an Soviet. Here, peasants were won over by land redistribution and rent control (a slightly milder approach than that used at Jiangxi, with no mass killings of rich peasants or landlords). Campaigns were undertaken to improve literacy and stamp out corruption, while homes, schools, hospitals and factories were created in cliff caves and huts.

Mao and the communist leadership undertook all political decision-making, but peasants and others participated in 'revolutionary committees'. Mass meetings were also held that helped build support and increase the number of military recruits for the anti-Japanese struggle.

Mao wrote a number of political and philosophical works here, which helped him impose his personal authority. A series of 'rectification campaigns' in 1942 removed any suspected disloyalty, as men and women were forced to confess to 'crimes' that went against Mao's orders and beliefs, and were publicly stripped of possessions or posts. There were regular 'self-criticism' sessions at which everyone was encouraged to air their doubts and secrets. Not to speak at such a meeting brought even greater suspicion on an individual, but to air too many faults could lead to demotion and punishment. No outside press or radio communication was permitted to witness what was going on, and no letters could be sent to or received from the outside world.

Why did civil war break out in China in 1946?

A full-scale attack on China by the Japanese in 1937 led Jiang Jieshi to approach the CCP once again to form a United Front. This enabled the communists to

expand their army and develop their guerrilla tactics, tying down some Japanese forces in the north. However, the GMD nationalists were rapidly forced into retreat and they had to abandon Beijing as the Japanese advanced into southern China and along the Yangtze River. Jiang's prestige was severely weakened.

In 1941, Jiang broke his agreement and again attacked communist forces in the south – an action portrayed by the communists as unprincipled. When the USA and Britain entered the war in the Far East, following the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbour in December 1941, Jiang's government was accused of dependence on foreign allies. The CCP, on the other hand, were able to advertise themselves as the only true Chinese patriots.

The outbreak of civil war between the GMD and CCP followed the ending of the Second World War. Despite the nationalists' poor showing in the war against the Japanese, the Japanese defeat in 1945 left the Allies ready to recognise the legitimacy of Jiang Jieshi's government in China (even though it only controlled a fraction of that country's territory). They gave China a seat on the Security Council of the United Nations.

The USA continued to supply aid, arms and advisers to Jiang and helped the nationalists to move back into areas of northern China and Manchuria that had been liberated by the Soviet Red Army. The communists resisted this move and reinforced their soldiers with weapons captured from the Japanese and handed over to them by the former Russian occupation forces.

Nevertheless, neither Russia nor the USA wanted to see civil war in China. In August 1945, the USA organised a meeting between **Mao Zedong** and Jiang Jieshi at which it was agreed they would work together towards the creation of a democratically elected National Assembly and a single army.

However, no sooner had the agreement been signed, than fighting broke out over the nationalists' attempt to reclaim Manchuria. A ceasefire was agreed under US auspices in January 1946. A document outlining a constitution for China was drawn up, but when the GMD subsequently tried to change this to gain greater dominance, the communists withdrew.

In July 1946, the GMD launched a major offensive against the communist forces in Manchuria, while the communists seized the industrial city of Harbin in northern Manchuria and consolidated their hold in the rural areas. From July 1946, a full-scale civil war broke out and the US negotiator, George Marshall, returned home.

Why did Mao become ruler of China in 1949?

Although the nationalists and communists had been struggling for power since 1927, it was the civil war of 1946–49 that, against all the odds, secured Mao as ruler of China. In 1946, Mao's communist military forces were reorganised as a single army, known as the People's Liberation Army (PLA), and given a unified command. In the fierce four-year struggle, the PLA defeated Jiang Jieshi's forces, despite Jiang's US aid and the fickleness of Soviet Union leader Joseph Stalin, who, to the end, engaged in negotiations with Jiang.

The table on page 122 illustrates some of the strengths and weaknesses of each side and helps to explain the ultimate communist victory in the civil war.

Mao Zedong (1893–1976)

Mao came from a relatively prosperous peasant background. He learnt the Confucian Classics and enjoyed reading, although he left school at 13 to work on the land. However, in 1913 he decided to train as a teacher and founded the New People's Study Society in 1917. He became a library assistant in Beijing in 1919 and studied Marxism. He attended the first Congress of the Chinese Communist Party in July 1921 and was its leader from 1935. He was chairman of the People's Republic of China from 1949 to 1959. From 1966, he was 'worshipped' in the Cultural Revolution.

**Activity**

Draw a diagram to show the long- and short-term causes of the civil war that broke out in China in 1946.

Activity

Using the information contained in the chart on page 122, explain why the communists won the civil war that took place in China between 1946 and 1949.

Strengths and weaknesses of the GMD and CCP/PLA in the civil war, 1946–49

Issue	Nationalists – GMD	Communists – CCP/PLA
Troops	Army larger and better equipped than the communists' army (2,800,000 troops at the start of the war); had an air force; experienced in conventional fighting; able to take initiative in the early stages. But troops were largely conscripts with low morale and poor training.	Had fewer troops than the nationalists (no more than 800,000 at the start of the war); were poorly equipped and had no aircraft. But by June 1948 armies were roughly equal in size; soldiers trained as pilots; experienced in guerrilla warfare; morale and discipline good.
Territory	Controlled most territory and population/most large cities/most of railway network and main waterways at outbreak of war. But control could depend on local warlords; behaviour of soldiers lost some support from local populations.	19 base areas with main base at Yan'an at outbreak of war. But from 1948 took cities; key railway junction (Jinzhou) gave control of Manchuria; controlled whole of northern China including Beijing by January 1949 and most of the south and west during 1949.
Foreign powers	Recognised by other powers (including Soviet Union) as legitimate government; the USA gave almost \$3 billion in aid, provided equipment and military assistance; Soviet Union signed treaty of alliance and tried to curb Mao. But the USA was critical of Jiang's style of rule and the Russian Red Army aided the PLA in the early stages.	Soviet troops in Manchuria gave PLA forces training (e.g. as pilots), and equipment at the outset. But Stalin ordered that cities be given to the nationalists in November 1945 (although the PLA retained Harbin). Stalin urged Mao not to send forces across the Yangtze River to the south in 1949 but Mao ignored him.
Popular support	Had 10 years' experience of running a one-party state; used police, army and harsh reprisals to keep peasants and workers in check. But noted for corruption, inefficiency, minimal reform, inflation and rationing; had poor reputation from struggle against the Japanese; were reliant on wealthy businessmen and landlords; did not try to build up mass support.	Supported by peasantry who feared revenge if an area was recaptured by the GMD; had a good reputation from the struggle against the Japanese; kept troops restrained, took steps to control prices; used propaganda to win support (particularly targeted at the young). But only controlled Harbin and a few cities at the outset; dealt harshly with those who did not conform.
Leadership	Jiang: experienced, hard-working, confident, ruthless; controlled military strategy. But could be stubborn, inflexible, not good at delegation, poor judge of character, relied on corrupt advisers.	Mao: personality cult, inspired confidence; allowed field commanders to fight without interference. But insisted on defending a pass between China and Manchuria (November 1945), which failed; not good in dealings with foreign powers.
Military factors	Early advantages – Yan'an taken, March 1947. But sent best troops to Manchuria before establishing control of northern and central China; lost Manchuria in early 1948; no retreats allowed; generals corrupt, incompetent; communication lines long; troops in cities had to be supplied by air; increasing surrenders without fighting (e.g. Beijing, January 1949).	Guerrilla warfare maintained pressure and, once men were trained, from 1948, began conventional warfare; in spring 1948, retook Yan'an, which was a psychological boost; Lin Biao organised the army, capturing transport links to isolate GMD forces in cities. But initially inferior in equipment and numbers.

On 1 October 1949, Mao Zedong gave a triumphant victory speech from the Gate of Heavenly Peace (formerly the entrance to the Imperial Palace) in the capital of Beijing. The crowds cheered as Mao, **Zhou Enlai** and other communist leaders watched a procession of Red Army soldiers, peasant fighters and other party workers. As they did so, the communist forces were still sweeping west and south almost unopposed. Jiang, with the remaining members of his army and government, fled to Taiwan and declared it to be the seat of the legitimate Chinese government. However, it seemed only a matter of time before he would be ousted.



Mao Zedong proclaiming the founding of the People's Republic of China (PRC) in Beijing, 1 October 1949

SOURCE B

We announce the establishment of the People's Republic of China. Our nation will from now on enter the large family of peace-loving and freedom-loving nations of the world. It will work bravely and industriously to create its own civilisation and happiness and will, at the same time, promote world peace and freedom. Our nation will never again be an insulted nation. We have stood up.

An extract from Mao Zedong's victory speech, 1 October 1949. Quoted in Schools Council. 1977. Rise of Communist China (Modern World Studies). Edinburgh, UK. Holmes McDougall. p. 41.

Zhou Enlai (1898–1976) Zhou Enlai attended university in Japan, but returned to China in 1919 and became involved in the 4 May movement (see page 117). He went to France and returned to join the Military Academy at Whampoa in 1924. He worked there as a deputy political director during the United Front period. In 1927, he joined the Central Committee of the CCP and, from 1949, served Mao as prime minister and third in the hierarchy (after Lin Biao). He was regarded as a moderate, particularly in foreign affairs.

Fact

Taiwan is a group of islands off the east coast of mainland China. Jiang Jieshi ruled Taiwan as the Republic of China (ROC) and until 1971 it was recognised by many Western nations and by the UN as the only legitimate government of China, with a seat on the security council.

Lin Biao (1908–1971) Lin Biao attended the Whampoa Military Academy and became an able military commander for the CCP. He transformed the PLA into a modern army. In 1949, he was ranked second in the governing hierarchy and recognised as heir to Mao. He became minister of defence in 1959 and was responsible for the support that some army units gave Mao during the Cultural Revolution. However, he apparently died in a plane crash in Mongolia in September 1971, after what was declared to be a failed coup to oust Mao.