



# The Republic of China

## (1<sup>st</sup> January 1912)

The Republic of China (ROC) was founded on January 1, 1912, but Taiwan observes its founding on October 10, known as Double Ten Day. This date commemorates the Wuchang Uprising on October 10, 1911, a crucial event that initiated the revolution which overthrew the Qing Dynasty, thus ending imperial rule and leading to the establishment of the ROC.

**The Warlord Era in China (1912–1928)** was a chaotic period of political fragmentation and military conflict that followed

the Qing Dynasty's collapse and the Republic of China's establishment. Regional warlords, former military commanders or opportunistic leaders, commanded private armies and governed territories with disregard for the central government. Constant warfare, economic instability, and social disruption marked this era, as warlords exploited the population and resources. The weakened central government couldn't assert control, leading to anarchy and suffering for the Chinese people.

**The May Fourth Movement (1919)**, was a Chinese anti-imperialist, cultural, and political movement which grew out of student protests in Beijing on May 4, 1919. It was a response to China's weak response to the Treaty of Versailles, especially the Shandong Problem. The movement sparked a surge in Chinese nationalism, a turn towards political mobilisation and a move away from cultural activities. It had a profound impact on Chinese intellectuals and played a key role in the rise of Chinese communism.

## **Sun Yat-sen and Yuan Shikai's Agreement**

Sun Yat-sen 孫中山 ceded the provisional presidency to Yuan Shikai 袁世凱, hoping this would unify China. Yuan's support was key to convincing the Qing Emperor to step down, paving the way for the Republic of China. However, this decision later fuelled conflict as Yuan consolidated power and tried to

restore the monarchy under his rule. The Nationalists sought to unify China under a strong central government and implement reforms to modernise the country. They established a base in Guangzhou and, with the help of **Soviet advisors and military aid**, built up a formidable army. In 1926, Chiang Kai-shek launched the Northern Expedition, a military campaign aimed at defeating the warlords and reunifying China. The Northern Expedition proved largely successful, as the Nationalist army advanced rapidly, defeating or co-opting many of the warlords along the way.

By 1928, the Nationalists had largely succeeded in consolidating their control over much of China, establishing a new Nationalist government in Nanking. However, the Warlord Era did not entirely come to an end, as some warlords continued to hold onto their territories and challenge the authority of the Nationalist government. Moreover, the Nationalists faced new challenges, including the growing threat of the Chinese Communist Party and the looming specter of Japanese aggression. Nevertheless, the Nationalist Consolidation marked a significant turning point in Chinese history, laying the foundation for a more unified and modern China, albeit one that would continue to face immense challenges in the years to come.

# **The First Chinese Civil War**

## **(1927-1937)**

A tumultuous period in China's history, was a conflict primarily between the ruling Kuomintang (KMT), led by Chiang Kai-shek, and the Communist Party of China (CPC), led by Mao Zedong. This internal strife was rooted in ideological differences and a struggle for control over China after the collapse of the Qing Dynasty.

The war's initial phase saw the KMT forces launching a series of purges against the Communists, effectively driving them from urban centres and into the countryside. This led to the establishment of Communist-controlled rural bases, where they implemented land reforms and built a support base among the peasantry. The Long March, a strategic retreat by the Red Army, was a defining moment, solidifying Mao Zedong's leadership.

However, the escalating Japanese aggression in the early 1930s gradually shifted the focus. The Second Sino-Japanese War broke out in 1937, forcing the KMT and CPC to form a fragile alliance against the common enemy. This uneasy truce brought a temporary halt to the civil war, while the KMT forces were engaged in combat, the CCP, under Mao Zedong, strategically utilised the Second United Front to consolidate power in Yan'an. They garnered substantial peasant support by promising land reforms, expanded their Red Army, and acquired Japanese weaponry as the war concluded. Simultaneously, they discreetly prepared for the impending civil war, utilise CCP spies within KMT to gather vital information, leveraging Soviet influence in Manchuria and

establishing their legitimacy through effective local administration, ultimately paving the way for the CCP's victory in the post-1945 civil war.

## **The Marco Polo Bridge Incident** **盧溝橋事變(7<sup>th</sup> July 1937)**

Near Beijing, was the direct spark that ignited the Second Sino-Japanese War, a small clash between Chinese and Japanese troops that rapidly escalated into full-scale invasion due to Japan's expansionist policies and growing Chinese nationalism. While some Chinese historians consider the 1931 Japanese invasion of Manchuria as the true beginning (leading to a "Fourteen Years' War"), the Marco Polo Bridge incident (a false flag) marked the start of total warfare in 1937.

The Marco Polo Bridge Incident, which served as a catalyst for the Second Sino-Japanese War, has been the subject of various theories. One such theory alleges that the incident was a false flag operation orchestrated by Mao Zedong and the Chinese Communist Party. This theory suggests that Mao deliberately provoked the conflict to weaken the ruling Nationalist government and create an opportunity for the Communists to seize power amidst the chaos of war.

# The Second Sino- Japanese War (1937-1945)

The Second Sino-Japanese War was a pivotal conflict in modern Chinese history. Despite facing immense challenges, Chiang Kai-shek's Nationalist government, though plagued by internal divisions and corruption, led the war effort with tenacious resistance, while the Communists, under Mao Zedong, engaged in guerilla warfare in the countryside. This approach allowed them to avoid direct confrontations with the better-equipped Japanese army, conserve strength, and ultimately contributed to their victory in the second Chinese civil war. The second Sino-Japanese war became a crucial turning point for the Chinese Communist Party, allowing them to expand their influence and gain popular support.

The early years of the war saw Japan make rapid advances, capturing major cities like Beijing, Shanghai, and Nanking. The infamous Nanking Massacre in December 1937, where Japanese troops committed horrific atrocities against Chinese civilians. During this period, the Imperial Japanese Army engaged in widespread murder, rape, and looting, resulting in the deaths of tens of thousands of unarmed civilians and disarmed soldiers. Adding to the dark legacy of second Sino-Japanese war atrocities is the inhumane experimentation conducted by Unit 731. This covert biological and chemical warfare research unit of the Japanese army subjected prisoners of war and civilians to horrific experiments under the guise of scientific advancement. These experiments included vivisections, forced infections with deadly diseases,

and exposure to extreme environmental conditions, all without anaesthesia or regard for human life.

Following the Japanese invasion, Chiang Kai-shek's government retreated to Chongqing, establishing it as the new capital, and adopting **a strategy of protracted resistance**, hoping to wear down the Japanese forces. The Second Sino-Japanese War then merged with World War II after the Pearl Harbor attack in 1941, concluding with Japan's surrender in 1945 after the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. These conflicts had a tremendous detrimental effect on China, leading to widespread displacement, millions of deaths, and infrastructural devastation, while also intensifying socio-political tensions and bolstering communism, ultimately setting the stage for the Communist triumph in the Chinese Civil War and their subsequent control of mainland China.

## **The Tumultuous Tale of China's Kuomintang (KMT)**

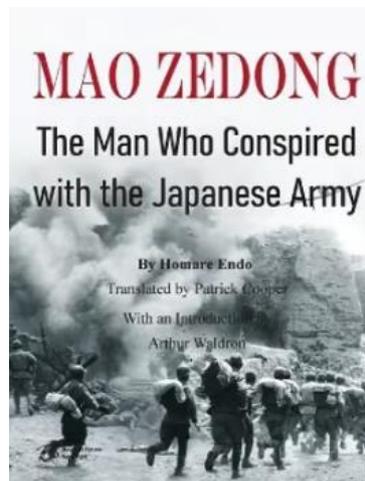
The Kuomintang (KMT), or Nationalist Party, emerged from the late Qing Dynasty through the revolutionary efforts of Dr. Sun Yat-sen, who founded the Revive China Society 興中會 in 1894. The party's initial aim was to overthrow the Qing Dynasty and establish a republic in China.

Revive China Society evolved into the Tongmenghui 同盟會 in 1905, uniting various anti-Qing groups. The Tongmenghui was instrumental in the Xinhai Revolution of 1911, which led to the collapse of the Qing Dynasty and the establishment of the Republic of China in 1912. In 1919, the Tongmenghui was reorganised into the Kuomintang, solidifying its position as a major political force.

Sun Yat-sen's Tongmenghui pioneered socialism in China, with Sun championing welfare rights. He later formed the First United Front between the Kuomintang (KMT) and the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) under Soviet guidance, with advisors like Borodin persuading Sun of the CCP's value in combating warlords, despite differing ultimate goals. Sun's "Three Principles of the People," while advocating social welfare, weren't strictly Marxist.

Chiang Kai-shek's 1923 Moscow visit instilled scepticism regarding Soviet motives within the KMT-CCP alliance. Following Sun Yat-sen's death in 1925, Chiang's ascent was characterised by worries over the CCP's increasing influence. In 1927, he purged Communists, ending the United Front due to ideological conflicts and fears of the CCP's revolutionary ambitions. Chiang viewed communism as a threat supported by the Soviets. This purge solidified his control, setting the stage for the creation of the Nationalist government in Nanking and, led to the Chinese Civil War.

Under Chiang Kai-shek, the KMT significantly consolidated power and modernised China through reforms in education, infrastructure, and industry; however, the Second Sino-Japanese War briefly reunited them against Japanese invaders. During the conflict with the Japanese imperial army, the KMT engaged in direct combat while the CCP ostensibly fought but **covertly collaborated with the enemy**. Remnants of CCP agents infiltrated the KMT as sleeper cells, secretly providing critical intelligence to both the CCP and, subsequently, the Japanese imperial army.



After World War II, the Chinese Civil War reignited. Despite initial advantages, the KMT gradually lost ground due to the CCP's effective guerrilla warfare, land reform policies that garnered rural support, and successful portrayal of the KMT as corrupt and disconnected from the populace. Key defeats and territorial losses further weakened the KMT, ultimately leading to the CCP's control of mainland China in 1949, the establishment of the People's Republic of China, and the KMT's retreat to Taiwan.