**Chinese Civil War:** 1945–1949

Chinese Civil War, (1945–49), military struggle for control of [China](https://www.britannica.com/place/China) waged between the [Nationalists](https://www.britannica.com/topic/Nationalist-Party-Chinese-political-party) (Kuomintang) under [Chiang Kai-shek](https://www.britannica.com/biography/Chiang-Kai-shek) and the [Communists](https://www.britannica.com/topic/Chinese-Communist-Party) under [Mao Zedong](https://www.britannica.com/biography/Mao-Zedong).

**The end of World War II and the collapse of the United Front**

During the [Second Sino-Japanese War](https://www.britannica.com/event/Second-Sino-Japanese-War) (1937–45), China was effectively divided into three regions—Nationalist China under control of the government, Communist China, and the areas occupied by Japan. Each was essentially pitted against the other two, although Chinese military forces were ostensibly allied under the banner of the [United Front](https://www.britannica.com/topic/United-Front-Chinese-history-1937-1945). By the time Japan accepted the surrender terms of the [Potsdam Declaration](https://www.britannica.com/event/Potsdam-Conference) on [August](https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/August) 14, 1945, China had endured decades of Japanese occupation and eight years of brutal warfare. Millions had perished in combat, and many millions more had died as a result of starvation or disease. The end of [World War II](https://www.britannica.com/event/World-War-II) did not mark the end of conflict in China, however.

Japan’s defeat set off a race between the Nationalists and Communists to control vital resources and population centres in northern China and [Manchuria](https://www.britannica.com/place/Manchuria). Nationalist troops, using transportation facilities of the U.S. military, were able to take over key cities and most railway lines in East and North China. Communist troops occupied much of the [hinterland](https://www.britannica.com/science/hinterland) in the north and in Manchuria. The United Front had always been precarious, and it had been tacitly understood by both the Nationalists and Communists that they would cooperate only until Japan had been defeated; until then, neither side could afford to seem to pursue internal aims at the cost of the national struggle. The growing wartime ineffectiveness and corruption of the Nationalists—who seemed, especially to the North Chinese, practically a government-in-exile in far-off [Chongqing](https://www.britannica.com/place/Chongqing)—left the Communists on a rising tide in 1945.

**The Marshall Mission and early Nationalist successes (1945–46)**

The stage was set for renewal of the civil war, but it initially appeared that a negotiated settlement between the Nationalists and the Communists might be possible. Even before the Japanese surrender had been finalized, Nationalist leader Chiang Kai-shek had issued a series of invitations to Communist leader Mao Zedong to meet with him in Chongqing to discuss reuniting and rebuilding the country. On August 28, 1945, Mao, accompanied by American ambassador [Patrick Hurley](https://www.britannica.com/biography/Patrick-J-Hurley), arrived in Chongqing. On October 10, 1945, the two parties announced that they had reached an agreement in principle to work for a united and democratic China. A pair of committees were to be [convened](https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/convened) to address the military and political issues that had not been resolved by the initial framework agreement, but serious fighting between government and Communist troops erupted before those bodies could meet.

U.S. Pres. [Harry S. Truman](https://www.britannica.com/biography/Harry-S-Truman) responded to the outbreak of violence by dispatching [George C. Marshall](https://www.britannica.com/biography/George-C-Marshall) to China in December 1945. The [Marshall Mission](https://www.britannica.com/event/Marshall-Mission) succeeded in bringing both sides back to the negotiating table, and on January 10, 1946, an armistice was concluded between the government and the Communists. On January 31 the Political Consultative Conference, a body composed of representatives from across the Chinese political spectrum, reached agreements on the following points: reorganization of the government and broadening its representation; [convocation](https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/convocation) of a national assembly on May 5, 1946, to adopt a constitution; principles for political, economic, and social reform; and unification of military command. In late February Marshall brokered an agreement on military force [integration](https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/integration) and reduction—the Chinese army would consist of 108 [divisions](https://www.britannica.com/topic/division-military-unit) (90 government and 18 Communist) under the overall command of a national ministry of defense. Before any of these agreements could be put into practice, renewed fighting broke out in Manchuria. The withdrawal of Soviet occupation troops in March–April 1946 triggered a scramble; Nationalist troops occupied Mukden ([Shenyang](https://www.britannica.com/place/Shenyang)) on March 12, while the Communists consolidated their hold throughout northern Manchuria. After government troops took [Changchun](https://www.britannica.com/place/Changchun) on May 23, a 15-day truce was declared in Manchuria from June 6 to June 22. Fighting intensified elsewhere, however, as government and Communist troops clashed in Jehol ([Chengde](https://www.britannica.com/place/Chengde)), northern Kiangsu ([Jiangsu](https://www.britannica.com/place/Jiangsu)), northeastern Hopeh ([Hebei](https://www.britannica.com/place/Hebei)), and southeastern Shantung ([Shandong](https://www.britannica.com/place/Shandong-province-China)).

Marshall and John Leighton Stuart, the newly appointed U.S. ambassador, tried to bring the two sides together in late August to discuss a [coalition government](https://www.britannica.com/topic/coalition-government), but the effort was fruitless, as neither side wished to give up its military gains. In late September 1946 Nationalist troops laid siege to [Kalgan](https://www.britannica.com/place/Kalgan), a major Communist base, and lead Communist negotiator [Zhou Enlai](https://www.britannica.com/biography/Zhou-Enlai) responded by withdrawing from peace talks. Kalgan fell to the Nationalists on October 11, and on October 21, Zhou was persuaded to return to the restored Nationalist capital at Nanking ([Nanjing](https://www.britannica.com/place/Nanjing-China)) for further negotiations. To induce the Communists and other parties to join the new [National Assembly](https://www.britannica.com/topic/National-Assembly-historical-French-parliament), Chiang issued a qualified cease-fire order on November 11 and postponed the opening of the assembly from November 12 to November 15. On November 20, Zhou flew from Nanking to the Communist stronghold at [Yan’an](https://www.britannica.com/place/Yanan). On December 4 Zhou wired Marshall that “if the Kuomintang would immediately dissolve the illegal National Assembly now in session, and restore the troop positions of January 13 [1946] the negotiations between the two parties may still make a fresh start.”

On December 25, 1946, the National Assembly, without the Communists or the left wing of the centrist Democratic League, adopted a new constitution. Combining features of both presidential and parliamentary systems with [Sun Yat-sen](https://www.britannica.com/biography/Sun-Yat-sen)’s [Five-Power Constitutional](https://www.britannica.com/event/Five-Power-Constitution) [democracy](https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/democracy), it was to be put into effect on December 25, 1947. Until the new constitution was enacted and a new president elected, the Nationalists would continue to be the ruling party.

**The tide turns (1947–48)**

On January 8, 1947, Marshall left [China](https://www.britannica.com/place/China), one day after he issued a scathing condemnation of the extremists among the [Nationalists](https://www.britannica.com/topic/Nationalist-Party-Chinese-political-party) and Communists for the continuance of the civil [war](https://www.britannica.com/topic/war). Peng Hsueh-pei, the government’s minister of information, proclaimed the Nationalists’ willingness to continue peace negotiations with the Communists. Gen. Zhang Zhizhong was selected to go to Yan’an in an attempt to renew talks, and a proposal was submitted to the Communists through Stuart. The Communists restated their demands for a return to the military positions of January 13, 1946, and for nullification of the new constitution, terms which previously had been rejected by the government. On January 21 the government offered four points as the basis for a resumption of peace talks: cessation of hostilities, with troops retaining their existing positions; army reorganization; reopening of communications; and a just and equitable solution of the problem of regional administration.

In the meantime, the Communists resumed their offensive in [Manchuria](https://www.britannica.com/place/Manchuria) while government troops launched major drives on Communist positions in Shantung and Shensi ([Shaanxi](https://www.britannica.com/place/Shaanxi)). Early in March the government ordered all Communist personnel to leave government territory, and on March 15 [Chiang Kai-shek](https://www.britannica.com/biography/Chiang-Kai-shek) charged the Communists with armed rebellion. The break between warring factions was final and complete. The capture of Yan’an by government troops on March 19 elated the Nationalists, but Communist spokesmen expressed confidence that they would achieve final victory. Indeed, Maoist strategy emphasized the importance of securing a base among the peasantry in the countryside at the expense of holding cities. By the end of the year, government military forces had made no further important gains, with the exception of the capture of Weihaiwei ([Weihai](https://www.britannica.com/place/Weihai)) and Chefoo ([Yantai](https://www.britannica.com/place/Yantai)) on the coast of Shantung in early October, which cut the Communist sea lane to the southern ports in Manchuria. Communist forces, however, made critical inroads into central China in September and caused the closing of the defensive gates at Nanking on September 18. In Manchuria the Communists succeeded in reducing the government’s control to Changchun and Mukden, an isolated pocket in Kirin ([Jilin](https://www.britannica.com/place/Jilin-province-China)), and the rail line leading from Mukden into China proper. In a report to the [Chinese Communist Party’s](https://www.britannica.com/topic/Chinese-Communist-Party) [Central Committee](https://www.britannica.com/topic/Central-Committee-Soviet-political-body) in December 1947, an optimistic Mao observed, “The Chinese people’s revolutionary war has now reached a turning point.…The main forces of the [People’s Liberation Army](https://www.britannica.com/topic/Peoples-Liberation-Army-Chinese-army) have carried the fight into the Kuomintang Area.…This is a turning point in history.”

China’s internal strife was closely linked with its diplomatic relations with the United States and the [Soviet Union](https://www.britannica.com/place/Soviet-Union). After more than a year of continuous effort to bring the national government and Communists together, the United States abandoned its task as a mediator. U.S. policy had become unpopular in China, and, to avoid further complication in China’s affairs, the U.S. government informed the Soviet Union that its forces in China would be reduced to 6,180 men by June 1, 1947. However, the deterioration of the economic and military situation in China and the spread of [communism](https://www.britannica.com/topic/communism) in East Asia led to the appointment of a U.S. fact-finding mission to China and [Korea](https://www.britannica.com/place/Korea) headed by Lieut. Gen. [Albert C. Wedemeyer](https://www.britannica.com/biography/Albert-Coady-Wedemeyer). Wedemeyer arrived in Nanking on July 22, and his mission was welcomed by the Chinese government but attacked by the Communists as imperialistic. Upon his departure from China on [August](https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/August) 24, Wedemeyer stated that “if the Chinese Communists are truly patriotic…they will halt voluntary employment of force” and that “to regain and maintain the confidence of the people, the Central Government will have to effect immediately drastic, far-reaching political and economic reforms.” The latter statement displeased the Chinese government, and Nationalist Premier Chang Chun (Zhang Qun) declared on September 2 that China would not alter either its domestic or its [foreign policy](https://www.britannica.com/topic/foreign-policy) as a result of Wedemeyer’s mission. Wedemeyer’s full report warned of an [imminent](https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/imminent) Communist victory unless the U.S. dramatically increased its support for the Nationalist government, and the [U.S. Department of State](https://www.britannica.com/topic/US-Department-of-State), deeming the report too sensitive, withheld its publication for two years. On November 11, Marshall, now secretary of state, submitted a program to Congress calling for $300 million in new aid for China.

At the end of 1947, official government figures put Nationalist military strength at some 5 million men, roughly half of whom were combat ready. The U.S. military estimated that Communist troop strength was around 1.1 million, but the Communists clearly held the momentum. By early 1948 the Nationalists’ military position had degraded to the point that it had lost the [initiative](https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/initiative) on all major fronts; worse, it was gradually but inexorably losing its superiority in numbers, equipment, and training. As the Nationalist war effort shifted to the defensive, the government’s strategy was to stabilize the situation in Manchuria by holding the four isolated areas of Changchun, Kirin, Mukden, and Chin Hsien, largely through airborne resupply; to maintain the Nationalist position in the important cities in the north; and to prevent Communist expansion in northwestern, central, and eastern China.

Having destroyed or blocked the overland supply routes of the government to its Manchurian posts and major centres in North China, the Communists under Gen. [Lin Biao](https://www.britannica.com/biography/Lin-Biao) struck at weak points along the Nationalist lines. As 1948 progressed, they steadily pushed the Nationalist army out of Manchuria and North China, and in several instances Communist victory was hastened by defections among government forces. In Manchuria, the Communists took Kirin on March 12, Chin Hsien on October 15, Changchun on October 20, and Mukden on October 30. With the capture of Mukden and the surrender of the city’s 140,000-man garrison, Manchurian operations virtually came to a close. In North China, the Communists took Lo-yang ([Luoyang](https://www.britannica.com/place/Luoyang)) on April 7 and recaptured their former capital of Yan’an on April 22. Other major urban centres of the north fell before year’s end: Tsinan ([Jinan](https://www.britannica.com/place/Jinan)) was taken on September 25, Cheng-chou ([Zhengzhou](https://www.britannica.com/place/Zhengzhou)) on October 24, and [Kalgan](https://www.britannica.com/place/Kalgan) on December 26. All the seaports of Shantung, with the exception of Tsingtao ([Qingdao](https://www.britannica.com/place/Qingdao)), were occupied by the Communists.

Communist-held territory had increased from about one-tenth of China in early 1946 to one-third in late 1948—an area of some 1 million square miles (2.6 million square km) containing more than 200 million inhabitants. The Communists had gained complete control of Manchuria, about half of [Inner Mongolia](https://www.britannica.com/place/Inner-Mongolia), and large portions of the provinces of Hopeh ([Hebei](https://www.britannica.com/place/Hebei)), Honan ([Henan](https://www.britannica.com/place/Henan)), Shantung ([Shandong](https://www.britannica.com/place/Shandong-province-China)), Shansi ([Shanxi](https://www.britannica.com/place/Shanxi)), Shensi ([Shaanxi](https://www.britannica.com/place/Shaanxi)), Kiangsu ([Jiangsu](https://www.britannica.com/place/Jiangsu)), and Anhwei ([Anhui](https://www.britannica.com/place/Anhui)). The [Yangtze River](https://www.britannica.com/place/Yangtze-River) was essentially the Nationalists’ last remaining line of defense against a Communist attack on the cities of Nanking ([Nanjing](https://www.britannica.com/place/Nanjing-China)) and [Shanghai](https://www.britannica.com/place/Shanghai). Communist troop strength now exceeded that of the Nationalists, and the Communists had captured such huge stocks of [small arms](https://www.britannica.com/technology/small-arm), [artillery](https://www.britannica.com/technology/artillery), and [armour](https://www.britannica.com/topic/armour-protective-clothing) that they were better equipped than the Nationalists. On September 1, 1948, the Communists proclaimed the North China People’s Government as a forerunner to a people’s republic that would [encompass](https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/encompass) all of China.

The continuous Communist offensive cut off the Nationalists from natural resources, paralyzed communication and commerce in the war zones, and intensified the financial crises in government-held areas. Public morale was further lowered as the Nationalist government failed to check galloping [inflation](https://www.britannica.com/topic/inflation-economics) and soaring [living costs](https://www.britannica.com/topic/cost-of-living). The Nationalists had financed much of the war effort by simply printing more money and had, in the process, destroyed the purchasing power of their currency, the yuan. Some 9 trillion yuan were in circulation in late 1946, but by August 1948 that number had increased to 700 trillion. Professionals and middle-class workers in the Nationalist heartland saw their savings wiped out as the government seemed unwilling or unable to help. Strikes, student demonstrations, and labour unrest became commonplace, and [black market](https://www.britannica.com/topic/black-market) traffic dramatically increased. In desperation, the government introduced rigid [price and wage controls](https://www.britannica.com/topic/incomes-policy) and began enforcing harsh criminal penalties for economic crimes such as hoarding. These measures, along with the creation of a new currency called the gold yuan, temporarily halted the economic meltdown. The Chinese public, however, noted that those with close ties to the Nationalist government avoided prosecution for even the most glaring violations of the new laws, and morale was further eroded by the return of inflation. Nearly 300 billion gold yuan were introduced into circulation in August 1948; within eight months, more than 5 quadrillion gold yuan had been printed. Chiang concluded the year by indicating his willingness to negotiate a peace that would be acceptable to all parties. The Communists marked the end of 1948 by publishing a list of 25 “war criminals” that was topped with Chiang’s name.

**Nationalist collapse and the establishment of the People’s Republic of China (1949)**

The two-decade struggle for China between the [Nationalists](https://www.britannica.com/topic/Nationalist-Party-Chinese-political-party) and the Communists reached its conclusion in 1949. The year began with a Nationalist appeal to the “Big Four” (the United States, the United Kingdom, France, and the Soviet Union) to mediate a settlement with the Communists. The United States, which had for so long supported the Nationalist cause, immediately replied that such an effort would not serve any useful purpose. On January 14 Mao declared his willingness to negotiate on the following terms: (1) punishment of “war criminals,” (2) abrogation of the 1946 constitution, (3) abolition of the existing form of government, (4) reorganization of Nationalist armies, (5) confiscation of “bureaucratic” [capital](https://www.britannica.com/topic/capital-economics) from Nationalist Party elites and functionaries, (6) [land reform](https://www.britannica.com/topic/land-reform), (7) abrogation of “treasonous” treaties, and (8) establishment of a democratic [coalition government](https://www.britannica.com/topic/coalition-government) without the participation of “reactionary” (Nationalist) elements. Meanwhile, the Communist advance continued, and Tientsin ([Tianjin](https://www.britannica.com/place/Tianjin-China)) fell on January 15, 1949. Chiang announced his resignation as president of China on January 21, and Nationalist leadership passed to Gen. Li Tsung-jen (Li Zongren). On January 22, Li accepted Mao’s eight conditions as a basis for peace negotiations, and Nationalist forces began their withdrawal from Peking ([Beijing](https://www.britannica.com/place/Beijing)). With the fall of Peking, the Communist drive on the Nationalist capital of Nanking could begin in earnest.

Following a meeting with a preliminary peace delegation from Nanking, Mao, now in Peking, agreed on February 9 to call an official peace conference within a month. On February 20 Li flew to Canton ([Guangzhou](https://www.britannica.com/place/Guangzhou)), the newly designated Nationalist capital, in an effort to rally the various Nationalist [contingents](https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/contingents) behind his peace efforts. Premier Ho Ying-chin (He Yingqin) designated Gen. Chang Chih-Chung (Zhang Zhizhong) as head of the Nationalist peace delegation, while the Communists selected [Zhou Enlai](https://www.britannica.com/biography/Zhou-Enlai) to head their mission. Talks were scheduled to begin on April 1 in Peking, a timetable that gave the Communists sufficient time to regroup their forces along the Yangtze and near Nanking. From April 2 to April 12 the delegates exchanged views informally over three fundamental Communist demands: (1) Communist armies must be allowed to cross the Yangtze to help reorganize Nationalist troops; (2) an [interim](https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/interim) government with Mao as chairman and Li as one of the vice-chairmen must be established; (3) the Chiang, [Soong](https://www.britannica.com/topic/Soong-family), Kung, and Chen families must be punished. Formal negotiations opened on April 13, and within three days Mao’s peace program had expanded to 24 items, with the crossing of the Yangtze by Communist armies and the elimination of the national government as the key issues. On April 17 the Communists gave the Nationalists three days to respond. Li’s government formally rejected Mao’s peace draft on April 19, and within hours the Communists had launched an all-out offensive. The fall of Nanking on April 24 marked the beginning of the disintegration of the Nationalist government.

In rapid succession, the Communists captured Hankow ([Hankou](https://www.britannica.com/place/Hankou)) on May 17, Tsingtao ([Qingdao](https://www.britannica.com/place/Qingdao)) on May 25, and Shanghai on June 2. To consolidate Nationalist forces, a supreme council was created at Canton with [Chiang Kai-shek](https://www.britannica.com/biography/Chiang-Kai-shek) as chairman, Li Tsung-jen as deputy, and Yen Hsi-shan (Yan Xishan) as premier. In July the Communists launched offensives into South China and the northwest. The vital commercial centre of [Changsha](https://www.britannica.com/place/Changsha) fell on [August](https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/August) 5, the port of Foochow ([Fuzhou](https://www.britannica.com/place/Fuzhou-China)) on August 17, and the northwestern fortress city of Lanchow ([Lanzhou](https://www.britannica.com/place/Lanzhou)) on August 28.

It was clear that the end was rapidly approaching for the Nationalist cause on the mainland. From his capital at Peking, Mao proclaimed the establishment of the [People’s Republic of China](https://www.britannica.com/place/China) on October 1, 1949. Within days the [Soviet Union](https://www.britannica.com/place/Soviet-Union) and the communist bloc recognized it as the [legitimate](https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/legitimate) government of China, and by year’s end several other countries had followed suit. On October 10 the Nationalist government officially informed foreign diplomats that it was relocating its capital again, this time to Chungking ([Chongqing](https://www.britannica.com/place/Chongqing)). The Communists took Canton on October 15 and Amoy ([Xiamen](https://www.britannica.com/place/Xiamen)) on October 17. By this time, the Communists had penetrated the southwest, and the Nationalists abandoned Kweiyang ([Guiyang](https://www.britannica.com/place/Guiyang)), about 200 miles (320 km) south of Chungking, on November 13.

On November 20 Li flew to [Hong Kong](https://www.britannica.com/place/Hong-Kong), and on December 5 he traveled to the United States for medical treatment. On November 24 the Nationalists designated Chengtu ([Chengdu](https://www.britannica.com/place/Chengdu)) as the seat of a much-reduced national government. Chungking fell on November 30, and on December 8 the national capital was moved to [Taipei](https://www.britannica.com/place/Taipei), Formosa ([Taiwan](https://www.britannica.com/place/Taiwan)). After the Communists took [Nanning](https://www.britannica.com/place/Nanning) in far southern China on December 6, one of the last remaining Nationalist armies in the field, under Gen. Pai Chung-hsi, disintegrated and fled to [Hainan](https://www.britannica.com/place/Hainan) and [French Indochina](https://www.britannica.com/place/Indochina). By December 10, when Chiang left the mainland for Formosa, the exodus of people, goods, and institutions was largely complete. Assets of the Nationalist [air force](https://www.britannica.com/topic/air-force) had begun relocating to the island as early as August 1948, and they were soon followed by the navy and the government’s gold reserves. The remaining pockets of Nationalist control eroded as generals and provincial governors in Sinkiang ([Xinjiang](https://www.britannica.com/place/Xinjiang)), [Yunnan](https://www.britannica.com/place/Yunnan), and Sikang (Xikang) switched their [allegiances](https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/allegiances) to the Communists in early December 1949. By the end of 1949, virtually all of mainland China was under Communist control**.**

The cost of the [war](https://www.britannica.com/topic/war) was enormous. Official Communist figures counted some 1.5 million dead and wounded among the [People’s Liberation Army](https://www.britannica.com/topic/Peoples-Liberation-Army-Chinese-army). Some 600,000 Nationalists troops were killed in combat, while roughly three times that many defected to the Communists. Nearly 7 million Nationalist troops were captured during four years of combat. Approximately 5 million civilians died as a result of combat, famine, and disease.

**Civil war**

**Civil war**, a violent conflict between a [state](https://www.britannica.com/topic/state-sovereign-political-entity) and one or more organized non-state actors in the state’s territory. Civil wars are thus distinguished from interstate conflicts (in which states fight other states), violent conflicts or riots not involving states (sometimes labeled intercommunal conflicts), and state repression against individuals who cannot be considered an organized or [cohesive](https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/cohesive) group, including [genocides](https://www.britannica.com/topic/genocide), and similar [violence](https://www.britannica.com/topic/violence) by non-state actors, such as [terrorism](https://www.britannica.com/topic/terrorism) or violent crime.

The definition of civil war clearly [encompasses](https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/encompasses) many different forms of conflict. Some analysts distinguish between civil wars in which [insurgents](https://www.britannica.com/topic/insurgency) seek territorial secession or [autonomy](https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/autonomy) and conflicts in which insurgents aim for control of the central government. Conflicts over government control may involve insurgents originating from within the centre or state apparatus, as in military [coups](https://www.britannica.com/topic/coup-detat), or challengers from outside the political establishment. Other analysts distinguish between [ethnic civil wars](https://www.britannica.com/topic/ethnic-conflict), in which the insurgents and individuals in control of the central government have separate ethnic identities, and revolutionary conflicts, in which insurgents aim for major social transformation. [Colonial](https://www.britannica.com/topic/Western-colonialism) conflicts are sometimes singled out as a type distinct from civil wars on a state’s core territory. Notwithstanding those distinctions, a given civil war will often combine several elements. For example, insurgencies may be both ethnic and ideologically based, and the insurgents’ aims can shift over time from secession for a limited territory to controlling the entire state.

**Trends from the mid-20th century**

Armed challenges to state authority are as old as [states](https://www.britannica.com/topic/nation-state) themselves. Despite numerous historical accounts of civil wars, however, there is little [empirical](https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/empirical) data on civil conflicts prior to 1945. Although there have been relatively few interstate wars since then, civil wars have been common. Whereas interstate conflicts tend to be short, civil wars often persist for a long time, are less likely to be settled by formal agreements, and are much more likely to recur. Many experts regarded the outbreak of new civil conflicts immediately following the [Cold War](https://www.britannica.com/event/Cold-War) as evidence that the world would be more turbulent and violent after a long period of stability based on the [strategy](https://www.britannica.com/topic/strategy-military) of nuclear [deterrence](https://www.britannica.com/topic/deterrence-political-and-military-strategy) adopted by the [United States](https://www.britannica.com/place/United-States) and the [Soviet Union](https://www.britannica.com/place/Soviet-Union). Yet the number of new civil wars actually declined in relative terms after the initial peak after the Cold War. The specific causes that may underlie that decline remain disputed, and the number of ongoing civil wars remains high in absolute terms.

Civil wars are generally less severe than interstate wars, as measured in direct battle deaths. However, civil wars have been more frequent and lengthier, and the great majority of the recorded deaths in battle since the Cold War stem from civil wars. Furthermore, war can have a substantial indirect impact on human welfare beyond the direct loss of life. Studies have indicated that countries experiencing civil war suffer a pronounced decline in [gross domestic product](https://www.britannica.com/topic/gross-domestic-product) and never recover their earlier [economic-growth](https://www.britannica.com/topic/economic-growth) trajectory. Civil wars also disrupt trade and investment and leave large social [legacies](https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/legacies) in unemployed former combatants and displaced individuals. The negative consequences of civil war are not limited to the countries that experience them: neighbouring countries also suffer negative economic impacts and may be more prone to violence themselves.

**Economic causes of civil war**

Most civil wars take place within relatively poorer societies. Early contributions to the study of violence within societies tended to focus on [economic](https://www.britannica.com/topic/economic-system) deprivation and grievances as key motives. The American political scientist Ted Gurr, for example, highlighted inequality and how groups may resort to rebellion if they are dissatisfied with their current economic status relative to their [aspirations](https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/aspirations). The literature on nationalist conflicts emphasized how both relatively poorer and wealthier groups are likely to rebel against the centre if they believe that they can do better under independence. Civil wars in [Latin American](https://www.britannica.com/place/Latin-America) countries were often interpreted within a framework focusing on economic grievances arising from either unequal land distribution or high [income inequality](https://www.britannica.com/topic/income-inequality). However, the empirical evidence linking individual income inequality and civil conflict is mixed.

Subsequent political-economic studies of civil war tended to dismiss the role of grievances. Some researchers argued that grievances are [ubiquitous](https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/ubiquitous) and that it is more important to focus on variation in the opportunities for violence. Thus the British economists Paul Collier and Anke Hoeffler argued that low overall income makes it easier to mobilize insurgencies, since potential recruits have less to lose in foregone income from normal economic activities. The American political scientists James Fearon and David Laitin claimed that civil war is primarily a problem of weak states and that weakness is largely determined by [economic development](https://www.britannica.com/topic/economic-development). Researchers in this tradition also linked [mobilization](https://www.britannica.com/topic/mobilization) to the role of individual incentives. Opportunities for insurgencies are greater when participants can prosper from war—for example, through looting or by gaining control of valuable [natural resources](https://www.britannica.com/science/natural-resource). Empirical studies also supported the supposed link between the existence of valuable natural resources and a higher risk of civil war. Civil wars in [Africa](https://www.britannica.com/place/Africa) are often taken to support those perspectives.

**Political causes of civil war**

Political deprivation, such as [colonial](https://www.britannica.com/topic/colonialism-international-relations) subordination or lack of political [rights](https://www.britannica.com/topic/human-rights), provides another plausible motivation for resorting to violence. Many conflicts after 1945 first emerged as groups sought to achieve independence for areas under colonial rule. The [Indochina wars](https://www.britannica.com/event/Indochina-wars)(1946–75) and the [Algerian War of Independence](https://www.britannica.com/event/Algerian-War) (1954–62) helped to mobilize movements in other countries by showing how overwhelmingly more-powerful colonial powers could be defeated through sustained violent campaigns. Many ethnically distinct groups within empire states such as the [Soviet Union](https://www.britannica.com/place/Soviet-Union) and Ethiopia undertook similar struggles of national liberation.

There is little evidence that [ethnic](https://www.britannica.com/topic/ethnic-group) [diversity](https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/diversity) itself makes a country more prone to civil conflict. More relevant is the extent to which certain ethnic groups are systematically excluded from political power or discriminated against by the state. Ethnically [diverse](https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/diverse) countries are generally not more prone to conflict if they have [inclusive](https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/inclusive) institutions or grant [autonomy](https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/autonomy) rights to ethnic groups and if control of the state or access to power does not always follow directly from the relative size of ethnic groups.

Struggles for broader political rights in [autocratic](https://www.britannica.com/topic/absolutism-political-system) regimes provide another [context](https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/context) in which violence may occur. Autocratic regimes typically deny citizens room for political activities and often resort to severe repression of protests, which in turn may motivate resort to arms. Protests against autocratic or exclusionary regimes often turn violent and sometimes lead to sustained conflicts, as in [South Africa](https://www.britannica.com/place/South-Africa) under the [apartheid](https://www.britannica.com/topic/apartheid) system. Claims for greater political rights and freedom are clearly important elements of the [rhetoric](https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/rhetoric) of many insurgent movements, even those that do not immediately [implement](https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/implement) democratic institutions once they have achieved power.

Many scholars have pointed out that, although autocratic institutions provide fewer avenues for nonviolent political activities and protest, autocratic regimes are often repressive enough to deter any significant dissent. Accordingly, regimes that combine autocratic and democratic features are arguably the most prone to violent conflict, because they combine a lack of political freedom with sufficient opportunities for protest, which would be absent under a more repressive regime.

**Opportunity structures of civil war**

Most of the theories discussed above emphasize structural factors that rarely change or that change only slowly over time. Such persistent structural features do not provide clear explanations for why civil wars break out at specific times and not others. Research on [social movements](https://www.britannica.com/topic/social-movement) suggests that certain events can create “political opportunity structures” that afford groups better prospects for extracting [concessions](https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/concessions) from the state. Such factors may include demonstrations of state weakness, conflict between [elites](https://www.britannica.com/topic/elite-sociology), or events that make it easier for groups to mobilize—for example, by bringing groups together or indicating focal points for organizing protests. Many existing arguments and findings in civil war research can be interpreted within this framework. Regime change and other signals of weakened state authority can increase the perceived chances of success or extract concessions from a government. Economic crises and natural disasters can also increase the risk of conflict. This is consistent with the idea that crises and emergencies can help provide a setting for rallying protest against the government. For example, the 1973 earthquake in Nicaragua—and the massive corruption and lack of subsequent reconstruction—generated widespread disillusionment and helped a long-standing Marxist [insurgency](https://www.britannica.com/topic/insurgency) dramatically increase recruitment.

**International dimensions of civil war**

Factors outside individual countries can play an important role in the outbreak and evolution of civil conflicts. In many civil wars, the participants are not always confined to the countries in which most of the fighting takes place. Ethnic groups often span international boundaries, and [transnational](https://www.britannica.com/topic/transnationalism) kin frequently participate in or provide support for insurgencies in other states. The status of international borders generates different constraints and opportunities for governments and rebels. Borders are, in a technical sense, just lines in the sand and are often not difficult to cross from a purely military perspective. However, the fact that borders formally [delineate](https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/delineate) state [sovereignty](https://www.britannica.com/topic/sovereignty) makes it more difficult for governments to combat insurgencies by rebels based in other states. In addition, the presence of conflict in a neighbouring state can help to [facilitate](https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/facilitate) violent [mobilization](https://www.britannica.com/topic/mobilization), either through emulation of successful rebellion or through the direct imports of arms and combatants. Finally, civil wars are often closely linked to interstate war. Poor relations between states may motivate governments to support insurgencies in rival countries, and civil wars may in turn promote military conflict between states—for example, as a result of border violations or [alleged](https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/alleged) support for insurgents.

**Chiang Kai-shek: Chinese statesman**

Chiang Kai-shek/ Chiang Chieh-shih, official name Chiang Chung-cheng, (born October 31, 1887, [Fenghua](https://www.britannica.com/place/Fenghua), Zhejiang province, China—died April 5, 1975, [Taipei](https://www.britannica.com/place/Taipei), Taiwan), soldier and statesman, head of the Nationalist government in [China](https://www.britannica.com/place/China) from 1928 to 1949 and subsequently head of the Chinese Nationalist government in exile on [Taiwan](https://www.britannica.com/place/Taiwan).

Chiang was born into a moderately prosperous merchant and farmer family in the coastal province of [Zhejiang](https://www.britannica.com/place/Zhejiang). He prepared for a military career first (1906) at the Baoding Military Academy in North China and subsequently (1907–11) in Japan. From 1909 to 1911 he served in the Japanese army, whose Spartan ideals he admired and adopted. More influential were the youthful compatriots he met in Tokyo; plotting to rid China of the [Qing](https://www.britannica.com/topic/Qing-dynasty) (Manchu) [dynasty](https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/dynasty), they converted Chiang to republicanism and made him a revolutionary.

In 1911, upon hearing of revolutionary outbreaks in China, Chiang returned home and helped in the sporadic fighting that led to the overthrow of the [Manchus](https://www.britannica.com/topic/Manchu). He then participated in the struggles of China’s republican and other revolutionaries in 1913–16 against China’s new [president](https://www.britannica.com/topic/president-government-official) and would-be emperor, [Yuan Shikai](https://www.britannica.com/biography/Yuan-Shikai).

After these excursions into public life, Chiang lapsed into obscurity. For two years (1916–17) he lived in Shanghai, where he apparently belonged to the Green Gang (Qing Bang), a [secret society](https://www.britannica.com/topic/secret-society) involved in financial manipulations. In 1918 he reentered public life by joining [Sun Yat-sen](https://www.britannica.com/biography/Sun-Yat-sen), the leader of the [Nationalist Party](https://www.britannica.com/topic/Nationalist-Party-Chinese-political-party), or Kuomintang. Thus began the close association with Sun on which Chiang was to build his power. Sun’s chief concern was to reunify China, which the downfall of Yuan had left divided among warring military satraps. Having wrested power from the Qing, the revolutionists had lost it to [indigenous](https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/indigenous) [warlords;](https://www.britannica.com/topic/warlord-Chinese-history) unless they could defeat these warlords, they would have struggled for nothing.

Shortly after Sun Yat-sen had begun to reorganize the Nationalist Party along Soviet lines, Chiang visited the [Soviet Union](https://www.britannica.com/place/Soviet-Union) in 1923 to study Soviet institutions, especially the [Red Army](https://www.britannica.com/topic/Red-Army). Back in China after four months, he became [commandant](https://www.britannica.com/topic/commandant) of a military academy, established on the Soviet model, at [Whampoa](https://www.britannica.com/place/Whampoa-Academy), near [Guangzhou](https://www.britannica.com/place/Guangzhou). Soviet advisers poured into Guangzhou, and at this time the [Chinese communists](https://www.britannica.com/topic/Chinese-Communist-Party) were admitted into the Nationalist Party. The Chinese communists quickly gained strength, especially after Sun’s death in 1925, and tensions developed between them and the more [conservative](https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/conservative) elements among the Nationalists. Chiang, who, with the Whampoa army behind him, was the strongest of Sun’s heirs, met this threat with [consummate](https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/consummate) shrewdness. By alternate shows of force and of leniency, he attempted to stem the communists’ growing influence without losing Soviet support. Moscow supported him until 1927, when, in a bloody [coup](https://www.britannica.com/topic/coup-detat) of his own, he finally broke with the communists, expelling them from the Nationalist Party and suppressing the labour unions they had organized.

Meanwhile, Chiang had gone far toward reunifying the [country](https://www.britannica.com/topic/nation-state). Commander in chief of the revolutionary army since 1925, he had launched a massive Nationalist campaign against the northern warlords in the following year. This drive ended only in 1928, when his forces entered Beijing, the capital. A new central government under the Nationalists, with Chiang at its head, was then established at [Nanjing](https://www.britannica.com/place/Nanjing-China), farther south. In October 1930 Chiang became Christian, apparently at the instance of the powerful Westernized [Soong family](https://www.britannica.com/topic/Soong-family), whose youngest daughter, [Mei-ling](https://www.britannica.com/biography/Soong-Mei-ling), had become his second wife. As head of the new Nationalist government, Chiang stood committed to a program of social reform, but most of it remained on paper, partly because his control of the country remained precarious. In the first place, the provincial warlords, whom he had neutralized rather than crushed, still disputed his authority. The communists posed another threat, having withdrawn to rural strongholds and formed their own army and government. In addition, Chiang faced certain war with Japan, which, after seizing [Manchuria](https://www.britannica.com/place/Manchuria) (Northeast Provinces) in 1931, showed designs upon China proper. Chiang decided not to resist the coming Japanese invasion until after he had crushed the communists—a decision that aroused many protests, especially since a complete victory over the communists continued to elude him. To give the nation more [moral](https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/moral) cohesion, Chiang revived the state cult of [Confucius](https://www.britannica.com/biography/Confucius)and in 1934 launched a campaign, the so-called [New Life Movement](https://www.britannica.com/topic/New-Life-Movement), to inculcate Confucian [morals](https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/morals).

In December 1936 Chiang was seized by one of his generals who believed that Chinese forces should concentrate on fighting the Japanese instead of the communists. Chiang was held captive for some two weeks, and the [Sian (Xian) Incident](https://www.britannica.com/event/Xian-Incident), as it became known, ended after he agreed to form an alliance with the communists against the Japanese invaders. In 1937 the mounting conflict between the two countries erupted into war (*see* [Sino-Japanese War](https://www.britannica.com/event/Second-Sino-Japanese-War)). For more than four years China fought alone until it was joined by the Allies, who with the exception of the Soviet Union declared war on Japan in 1941. China’s reward was an honoured place among the victors as one of the Big Four. But internally Chiang’s government showed signs of decay, which multiplied as it resumed the struggle against the communists after the Japanese surrendered to the [United States](https://www.britannica.com/place/United-States) in 1945. Civil war recommenced in 1946; by 1949 Chiang had lost continental China to the communists, and the People’s Republic of China was established. Chiang moved to Taiwan with the remnants of his Nationalist forces, established a relatively [benign](https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/benign) dictatorship over the island with other Nationalist leaders, and attempted to harass the communists across the [Formosa Strait](https://www.britannica.com/place/Taiwan-Strait). The chastened Chiang reformed the ranks of the once-corrupt Nationalist Party, and with the help of generous American aid he succeeded in the next two decades in setting Taiwan on the road to modern economic development. In 1955 the United States signed an agreement with Chiang’s Nationalist government on Taiwan guaranteeing its defense. Beginning in 1972, however, the value of this agreement and the future of Chiang’s government were seriously called in question by the growing rapprochement between the United States and the People’s Republic of China. Chiang did not live to see the United States finally break diplomatic relations with Taiwan in 1979 in order to establish full relations with the People’s Republic of China. After his death in 1975 he was succeeded temporarily by Yen Chia-kan (C.K. Yen), who was in 1978 replaced by Chiang’s son [Chiang Ching-kuo](https://www.britannica.com/biography/Chiang-Ching-kuo).

Among the reasons for Chiang’s overthrow by the communists, one frequently cited is the corruption that he [countenanced](https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/countenanced) in his government; another was his loss of flexibility in dealing with changing conditions. Growing more rigid in his leadership over the years, he became less responsive to popular [sentiment](https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/sentiment) and to new ideas. He came to prize loyalty more than competence and to rely more on personal ties than on ties of organization. His dependence on a trusted clique also showed in his army, in which he favoured narrow traditionalists over many abler officers. Chiang initially maintained his position as republican China’s paramount leader by shrewdly playing off provincial warlords and possible Nationalist rivals against each other and later by his [adroit](https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/adroit) cultivation of American military, diplomatic, and financial support for his regime. His overthrow by the communists can perhaps be traced to his strategy during World War II; he generally refused to use his U.S.-equipped armies to actively resist China’s Japanese occupiers and counted instead on the United States to eventually defeat Japan on its own. He chose rather to preserve his military machine until the time came to unleash it on the communists at the war’s end and then crush them once and for all. But by that point Chiang’s strategy had backfired; his passive stance against the Japanese had lost him the [prestige](https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/prestige) and support among the Chinese populace that the communists ultimately gained by their fierce anti-Japanese resistance. The morale and effectiveness of his armies had decayed during their enforced passivity in southwestern China, while the communists had built up large, battle-hardened armies on the strength of their appeal to Chinese nationalist sentiment. Finally, it can be said that Chiang “lost China” because he had no higher vision or [coherent](https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/coherent) plan for making the deep social and economic changes needed to bring Chinese society into the 20th century. From his purge of the Nationalists’ communist partners in 1927 and his subsequent alliance with the landowning and mercantile classes, Chiang inexorably followed an increasingly conservative path that virtually ignored the plight of China’s oppressed and impoverished peasantry. The peasants formed almost 90 percent of China’s population, though, and it was their support, as demonstrated by the communist victory, which proved crucial in once more establishing a strong central government that could achieve the modern unification of China.

**Peng Dehuai: Chinese military leader**

Peng Dehuai’s original name was **Peng Dehua**, (born Oct. 24, 1898, [Xiangtan](https://www.britannica.com/place/Xiangtan), [Hunan](https://www.britannica.com/place/Hunan) province, China—died Nov. 29, 1974, Beijing), military leader, one of the greatest in Chinese communist history, and minister of national defense of [China](https://www.britannica.com/place/China) from 1954 until 1959, when he was removed for criticizing the military and economic policies of the party.

Peng was a military commander under a local warlord and later under [Chiang Kai-shek](https://www.britannica.com/biography/Chiang-Kai-shek) (Jiang Jieshi) but broke with him in 1927 when Chiang attempted to rid the [Nationalist Party](https://www.britannica.com/topic/Nationalist-Party-Chinese-political-party) (Kuomintang) of leftist elements. In 1928 Peng became a communist and soon afterward became involved in guerrilla activity, leading a series of peasant uprisings. He became a senior military commander under [Mao Zedong](https://www.britannica.com/biography/Mao-Zedong) and participated in the [Long March](https://www.britannica.com/event/Long-March) (1934–35).

Peng was the second-ranking man in the communists’ military [hierarchy](https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/hierarchy) from the outbreak of the Sino-Japanese War in 1937 to 1954 and was a member of the [Political Bureau](https://www.britannica.com/topic/Politburo) (Politburo) of the [Chinese Communist Party](https://www.britannica.com/topic/Chinese-Communist-Party) (CCP) from 1936. He led Chinese forces in the [Korean War](https://www.britannica.com/event/Korean-War) and signed the armistice at [P’anmunjŏm](https://www.britannica.com/place/Panmunjom) on July 27, 1953. In 1954 he became minister of national defense. In 1959, however, he criticized as impractical the policies of the [Great Leap Forward](https://www.britannica.com/event/Great-Leap-Forward), which emphasized ideological purity over professional expertise in both the military forces and the economy. Peng was deprived of office for a while and in 1965 was sent to the CCP’s Southwest Bureau in [Sichuan](https://www.britannica.com/place/Sichuan) province. Peng was posthumously “rehabilitated” in December 1978 under the post-Mao regime.

**Zhou Enlai: Premier of China**

Zhou Enlai, (born March 5, 1898, [Huai’an](https://www.britannica.com/place/Huaian), [Jiangsu](https://www.britannica.com/place/Jiangsu) province, China—died Jan. 8, 1976, Beijing), was the leading figure in the [Chinese Communist Party](https://www.britannica.com/topic/Chinese-Communist-Party) (CCP) and [premier](https://www.britannica.com/topic/prime-minister) (1949–76) and foreign minister (1949–58) of the [People’s Republic of China](https://www.britannica.com/place/China), who played a major role in the [Chinese Revolution](https://www.britannica.com/event/Chinese-Revolution-1911-1912) and later in the conduct of China’s [foreign relations](https://www.britannica.com/topic/international-relations). He was an important member of the CCP from its beginnings in 1921 and became one of the great negotiators of the 20th century and a master of policy implementation, with [infinite](https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/infinite) capacity for details. He survived internecine purges, always managing to retain his position in the party leadership. Renowned for his charm and subtlety, Zhou was described as [affable](https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/affable), [pragmatic](https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/pragmatic), and persuasive.

Zhou was born to a gentry family, but the family’s fortune declined during his early youth. In 1910 he was taken by one of his uncles to [Fengtian](https://www.britannica.com/place/Shenyang) (present-day Shenyang) in northeastern China, where he received his [elementary education](https://www.britannica.com/topic/elementary-education). He graduated from a well-known middle school in [Tianjin](https://www.britannica.com/place/Tianjin-China) and went to Japan in 1917 for further studies. He returned to Tianjin in the wake of the student demonstrations in [Beijing](https://www.britannica.com/place/Beijing) that became known as the [May Fourth Movement](https://www.britannica.com/event/May-Fourth-Movement) (1917–21). He was active in student publications and agitation until being arrested in 1920. After his release from jail that fall, he left for France under a work-and-study program. It was in France that Zhou made a lifelong commitment to the communist cause. He became an organizer for the CCP in Europe after its founding in [Shanghai](https://www.britannica.com/place/Shanghai) in July 1921.

In the summer of 1924 Zhou returned to China and took part in the national revolution, led by [Sun Yat-sen’s](https://www.britannica.com/biography/Sun-Yat-sen) [Nationalist Party](https://www.britannica.com/topic/Nationalist-Party-Chinese-political-party) (Kuomintang) in [Guangzhou](https://www.britannica.com/place/Guangzhou) (Canton) with CCP collaboration and Russian assistance. It was at this time, in 1925, that he married [Deng Yingchao](https://www.britannica.com/biography/Deng-Yingchao), a student activist who later became a prominent member of the CCP. Zhou was appointed deputy director of the political department of the Whampoa (Huangpu) Military Academy, where future Nationalist leader [Chiang Kai-shek (Jiang Jieshi)](https://www.britannica.com/biography/Chiang-Kai-shek) was the commandant. Early in 1927 Zhou became director of the military department of the CCP Central Committee.

When Chiang’s troops were on the outskirts of Shanghai in March 1927, Zhou organized the workers’ seizure of that city for the Nationalists. But Chiang soon afterward purged his former communist allies, and Zhou barely escaped with his life to [Wuhan](https://www.britannica.com/place/Wuhan), the new centre of communist power, where the CCP was still working closely with the left-wing branch of the Nationalist Party. There, in April 1927, during the party’s Fifth National Congress, Zhou was elected to the CCP Central Committee and to its Politburo.

Following the left-Nationalist split with the communists, Zhou took a major role in organizing the communist insurrection known as the [Nanchang Uprising](https://www.britannica.com/topic/Nanchang-Uprising) (August 1927). Upon the Nationalists’ recapture of the city of Nanchang, Zhou retreated to eastern [Guangdong](https://www.britannica.com/place/Guangdong) province and then escaped to Shanghai via [Hong Kong](https://www.britannica.com/place/Hong-Kong).

Zhou was confirmed in his party leadership posts during a visit to [Moscow](https://www.britannica.com/place/Moscow) in 1928 for the Sixth National Congress of the CCP, after which he returned to China to help rebuild the battered CCP organization. In the late 1920s the CCP centre, operating underground in Shanghai, continued to stress urban uprisings, but communist attempts to seize major cities failed repeatedly, with great losses. Zhou left Shanghai in 1931 for Jiangxi province, where [Zhu De](https://www.britannica.com/biography/Zhu-De) and [Mao Zedong](https://www.britannica.com/biography/Mao-Zedong) had been developing communist rural bases (soviets) since 1928. In late 1931 the party centre, under increasingly heavy police pressure in Shanghai, also moved to [Jiangxi](https://www.britannica.com/topic/Jiangxi-Soviet), and Zhou succeeded Mao as the political commissar of the [Red Army](https://www.britannica.com/topic/Peoples-Liberation-Army-Chinese-army), which was commanded by Zhu De.

Although Zhou initially allied himself with the CCP leaders who wrested control of policy making in the Jiangxi soviet from Mao’s hands, the two men eventually entered into a close association that would last unbroken until Zhou’s death. Chiang Kai-shek’s campaigns finally forced the communists to retreat from Jiangxi and other soviet areas in south-central China in October 1934 and begin the [Long March](https://www.britannica.com/event/Long-March) to a new base in northern China. Mao gained control of the party apparatus during the Long March; he also took over Zhou’s directorship of the [Central Committee’s](https://www.britannica.com/topic/Central-Committee-Soviet-political-body) military department. Zhou thenceforth faithfully supported Mao’s leadership in the party.

The Long March ended in October 1935 at [Yan’an](https://www.britannica.com/place/Yanan) in northern Shaanxi province, and, with the securing of the communists’ base there, Zhou became the party’s chief negotiator and was set to the difficult task of forming a tactical alliance with the Nationalists. Exploiting the growing national [sentiment](https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/sentiment) against Japanese aggression and carrying out Moscow’s new so-called popular-front strategy against fascism, the CCP in late 1935 proposed to unite with the Nationalists and all patriotic Chinese in order to resist Japan. When in December 1936 Chiang Kai-shek was arrested in [Xi’an](https://www.britannica.com/event/Xian-Incident) (in Shaanxi; the [Xi’an Incident](https://www.britannica.com/event/Xian-Incident)) by his generals, who wanted to stop the CCP-Nationalist civil war, Zhou immediately flew to that city. He persuaded the dissident commanders not to kill Chiang and helped obtain the Nationalist leader’s release on condition that he cease military attacks against the communists and cooperate with them in the [United Front](https://www.britannica.com/topic/United-Front-Chinese-history-1937-1945) against Japan.

Zhou helped negotiate the formation of the United Front after the outbreak of the [Sino-Japanese War](https://www.britannica.com/event/Second-Sino-Japanese-War) in July 1937, and from then until 1943 he was the CCP’s chief representative to the Nationalist government. Two weeks after the Japanese surrender in [August](https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/August) 1945, Zhou accompanied Mao Zedong to [Chongqing](https://www.britannica.com/place/Chongqing) for peace talks with Chiang Kai-shek. When Mao returned to Yan’an six weeks later, Zhou remained in Chongqing to continue the negotiations. Zhou was also a leading participant in the unsuccessful peace negotiations with the Nationalists in 1946 that were sponsored by the [United States](https://www.britannica.com/place/United-States) and held under Gen. [George C. Marshall](https://www.britannica.com/biography/George-C-Marshall). Zhou’s skillful cultivation of the communists’ image among liberal politicians and [intellectuals](https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/intellectuals) who had become disenchanted with the Nationalists at that time became an important factor in Chiang’s eventual downfall after the resumption of full-scale civil war in 1947.

As premier of the People’s Republic of China from its inception in October 1949, Zhou became the chief administrator of China’s huge civil [bureaucracy](https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/bureaucracy). Serving concurrently as foreign minister, he also bore heavy responsibilities in foreign affairs and continued to play a key role in diplomacy after relinquishing the post of foreign minister. On Feb. 14, 1950, Zhou signed in Moscow a 30-year Chinese-Soviet treaty of alliance, and, at the 1955 Afro-Asian conference that [convened](https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/convened) at Bandung, Indon. (the [Bandung Conference](https://www.britannica.com/event/Bandung-Conference)), he offered China’s support to Asian nonaligned nations. Between 1956 and 1964 Zhou traveled widely throughout Europe, Asia, and Africa, proclaiming the latter continent “ripe for revolution.” Zhou visited Moscow in 1964, but he was unable to resolve the fundamental differences that had arisen between China and the [Soviet Union](https://www.britannica.com/place/Soviet-Union). After the U.S. envoy [Henry A. Kissinger](https://www.britannica.com/biography/Henry-Kissinger) visited him in Beijing in July 1971, Zhou’s reputation as a diplomat and negotiator was widely noted by the American press. The historic meeting between Mao Zedong and U.S. Pres. [Richard M. Nixon](https://www.britannica.com/biography/Richard-Nixon) that took place in Beijing in February 1972 was, to a great extent, arranged and [implemented](https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/implemented) by Zhou.

Zhou meanwhile maintained his leading position in the CCP. In 1956 he was elected one of the party’s four vice chairmen. Although [Lin Biao](https://www.britannica.com/biography/Lin-Biao) emerged after the [Cultural Revolution](https://www.britannica.com/event/Cultural-Revolution) (1966–76) as the only vice chairman of the party, Zhou remained the third-ranking member of the Standing Committee of the Politburo. During the Cultural Revolution he played a key role in exercising restraints on the extremists and was probably the single most important stabilizing factor during that chaotic period. During the waning of the Cultural Revolution in the early 1970s, Zhou sought to restore [Deng Xiaoping](https://www.britannica.com/biography/Deng-Xiaoping) and other former moderate leaders to positions of power.

**Kalgan:** China

Kalgan is a Chinese (Pinyin) city in northwestern [Hebei](https://www.britannica.com/place/Hebei) *sheng* (province), northern [China](https://www.britannica.com/place/China). Kalgan, the name by which the city is most commonly known, is from a Mongolian word meaning “gate in a barrier,” or “frontier.” The city was colloquially known in Chinese as the Dongkou (“Eastern Entry”) into Hebei from [Inner Mongolia](https://www.britannica.com/place/Inner-Mongolia). It is about 100 miles (160 km) northwest of [Beijing](https://www.britannica.com/place/Beijing). Pop. (2002 est.) city, 688,297; (2007 est.) urban agglom., 1,046,000.

**History**

Kalgan was the point at which the main caravan route from Beijing to Inner Mongolia and beyond passed through the [Great Wall](https://www.britannica.com/topic/Great-Wall-of-China) of China at the foot of the escarpments reaching up to the lower [Mongolian Plateau](https://www.britannica.com/place/Mongolian-Plateau). The [Han dynasty](https://www.britannica.com/topic/Han-dynasty) (206 BCE–220 CE) placed the region under Guangning county, the seat of which was slightly east of Kalgan, but the area remained only on the margins of effective Chinese control. During the [Three Kingdoms](https://www.britannica.com/topic/Three-Kingdoms-period) (220–280) and the Xi (Western) [Jin dynasty](https://www.britannica.com/topic/Jin-dynasty-China-AD-265-316-317-317-420) (265–316/317), it was the seat of a Wuhuan commandery. Later it became an important centre of the Xianbei, Mongol invaders of the 4th century. In 1429 the [Ming dynasty](https://www.britannica.com/topic/Ming-dynasty-Chinese-history) (1368–1644) constructed a fort—the present-day Xia Bao (“Lower Fort”)—as part of the defenses against the Mongols. In 1613 the present Laiyuan Bao (“Upper Fort”) was built north of it as a trading centre. The town of Kalgan then grew up on the west bank of the Qingshui River, a tributary of the [Yongding River](https://www.britannica.com/place/Yongding-River), between the forts. The main trading centre was Kouwai, outside the north gate of the Laiyuan Bao.

Administratively, in [Qing](https://www.britannica.com/topic/Qing-dynasty) times (1644–1911/12), Kalgan was subordinated to [Xuanhua](https://www.britannica.com/place/Xuanhua), about 17 miles (27 km) south. It was the seat of a civil prefect and also of the military governor of the Mongols of Chahar, a former province of what is now Inner Mongolia.

Kalgan’s importance, however, was always primarily commercial—as the terminus of the principal caravan route to Mongolia and Russia, bearing most of the vast Siberian tea trade. In 1860, under the Sino-Russian Treaty, it was opened to Russian trade, and in 1902 it was opened to [international trade](https://www.britannica.com/topic/international-trade). In 1911 the railway from Beijing reached Kalgan, and it was then steadily extended to the northwest. This was, however, the zenith of Kalgan’s international trade, when the city contained some 7,000 commercial firms and when the caravan traffic employed hundreds of thousands of camels, great numbers of ox wagons, and many thousands of men. After 1920, trade slumped because the [Russian Revolution](https://www.britannica.com/event/Russian-Revolution) of 1917 and because political changes in [Outer Mongolia](https://www.britannica.com/place/Mongolia) had drastically reduced the importance of the caravan traffic. Civil disorder and banditry were rampant in the area north and west of Kalgan, while the extension of the railway to Hohhot in Inner Mongolia meant that Kalgan itself was no longer a railhead.

In 1937 the Japanese occupied the area and established an [autonomous](https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/autonomous) government, Cha-nan (South Chahar), at Kalgan. In 1937 the Federated Mengjiang Commission was set up at Kalgan to supervise the economic affairs, banking, communications, and industry of Japanese-occupied Inner Mongolia. Colonization by Chinese settlers was checked as part of the pro-Mongol policies pursued by the Japanese. After [World War II](https://www.britannica.com/event/World-War-II) the area was occupied by Chinese communists, and, although the [Nationalist](https://www.britannica.com/topic/Nationalist-Party-Chinese-political-party) armies drove them out briefly, Kalgan was retaken in 1948. From 1948 to 1949, Kalgan was the capital of the Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region, although located outside its borders. In 1952, when Chahar province was abolished, Kalgan again became a part of Hebei province.

Although the traditional commercial dominance of Kalgan was diminished, it remained a political and strategic centre. After the foundation of the republic in 1911, it was given the name Wanquan county. In 1928 Kalgan was made the administrative capital of a new Chahar province, which accelerated the colonization of the area by Chinese settlers. By the early 1930s, Chinese settlers had pushed 75 miles (120 km) beyond Kalgan, causing great damage to the [environment](https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/environment) by destroying the natural pasture and bringing about extensive soil erosion.

**The contemporary city**

Some light industry—primarily the preparation of furs, leatherwork, tanning, and shoemaking—had already existed in the 1920s and ’30s. Light industry and [food processing](https://www.britannica.com/technology/food-processing) were also encouraged under the Japanese occupation. After the establishment of the People’s Republic of China in 1949, Kalgan developed rapidly, its population trebling between 1948 and 1958. Kalgan’s proximity to the ranching area and the rich [coal](https://www.britannica.com/science/coal-fossil-fuel) and [iron](https://www.britannica.com/science/iron-chemical-element) mines in its vicinity meant the rapid growth of [coal mining](https://www.britannica.com/technology/coal-mining), metallurgical, machine-making (mostly mining machines), and power industries. In addition, it is still an important centre of fur processing and tanning; other manufactures include woolen fabric, cigarettes, and processed food. An expressway built in the 1990s connects the city with Beijing.

There are numerous historical sites in and around Kalgan. North of the city, near the town of Zhangbei, are the ruins of Zhongdu, the former middle capital of the [Yuan dynasty](https://www.britannica.com/topic/Yuan-dynasty) (1206–1368). Southwest of the city, near the [Sanggan River](https://www.britannica.com/place/Sanggan-River) in the Nihewan Basin, are a group of sites that have been identified as being of Paleolithic to Neolithic age.

**Albert Coady Wedemeyer:** United States general and statesman

Albert Coady Wedemeyer, (born July 9, 1897, [Omaha](https://www.britannica.com/place/Omaha-city-Nebraska), Neb., U.S.—died Dec. 17, 1989, Ft. Belvoir, Va.), American military leader who was the principal author of the 1941 Victory Program, a [comprehensive](https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/comprehensive) war plan devised for the U.S. entry into [World War II](https://www.britannica.com/event/World-War-II).

After graduating from the U.S. Military Academy at West Point (1919), Wedemeyer was assigned to Tientsin, [China](https://www.britannica.com/place/China), where he studied Mandarin Chinese. He excelled at the Command and General Staff School at Fort Leavenworth, Kansas (1934–36), and was chosen to attend the German War College in Berlin (1936–38), about which he wrote a report on the German military mind and machine. In 1941 he joined the War Plans Division of the War Department General Staff and by 1942 he had become a [brigadier general](https://www.britannica.com/topic/brigadier-general) and a protégé of General [George C. Marshall](https://www.britannica.com/biography/George-C-Marshall), chief of staff of the U.S. Army during World War II.

Wedemeyer drafted the “Germany first” strategy, formulated much of the Allied strategy for the Mediterranean theatre, and helped plan the successful Allied invasion of Normandy in France (June 6, 1944). After serving as deputy commander under Admiral Lord Mountbatten (1943), the British head of the [Southeast Asia](https://www.britannica.com/place/Southeast-Asia) Command, he was appointed chief of staff to General [Chiang Kai-shek](https://www.britannica.com/biography/Chiang-Kai-shek) and commander of U.S. forces in China (1944–46). His 1947 report of the situation in China and Korea, which warned of an [imminent](https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/imminent) Communist triumph in China unless greater U.S. support was given to the Nationalists, was deemed so sensitive that its publication was suppressed for two years. Three years after his 1951 retirement, Wedemeyer was promoted to the permanent rank of [general](https://www.britannica.com/topic/general). He wrote the autobiography *Wedemeyer Reports!* (1958).

**Marshall Mission:** Chinese history

Marshall Mission, special mission undertaken in late 1945 by U.S. general [George C. Marshall](https://www.britannica.com/biography/George-C-Marshall) to negotiate a settlement of the [Chinese civil war](https://www.britannica.com/place/China/Civil-war-1945-49#ref71834) (1945–49), fought between the [Nationalist](https://www.britannica.com/topic/Nationalist-Party-Chinese-political-party) and the [communist](https://www.britannica.com/topic/Chinese-Communist-Party) forces. Though Marshall stayed in [China](https://www.britannica.com/place/China) for more than a year, his mission ended in failure.

Marshall’s dispatch to China by U.S. president [Harry S. Truman](https://www.britannica.com/biography/Harry-S-Truman) in December 1945 came at a time when U.S.-sponsored negotiations between [Chiang Kai-shek](https://www.britannica.com/biography/Chiang-Kai-shek), the Nationalist president of China, and [Mao Zedong](https://www.britannica.com/biography/Mao-Zedong), the leader of the communists, had broken down, and civil war seemed [imminent](https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/imminent). The appointment of the distinguished [World War II](https://www.britannica.com/event/World-War-II) chief of staff Marshall as a special presidential ambassador forced the two enemies to enter into serious negotiations once again. By Jan. 10, 1946, both sides had agreed to an immediate cease-fire and the [convocation](https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/convocation) of a Political Consultative Conference that would negotiate the eventual [composition](https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/composition) of the [coalition government](https://www.britannica.com/topic/coalition-government), through which both sides could jointly rule China. On February 25 a proposal was concluded for the joint reduction of the two armies, based on a 5 to 1 ratio of Nationalist troops to communists.

By spring, however, the truce between the two sides had collapsed. Fighting began first in northeastern China ([Manchuria](https://www.britannica.com/place/Manchuria))—a region that contained China’s major industrial base by the end of the Japanese occupation of it in 1945—as Soviet troops, who in the course of accepting the Japanese surrender had temporarily occupied Manchuria, evacuated and plundered the area. Marshall was recalled from China in January 1947.

**Weihai:**China

Weihai, a port city in eastern [Shandong](https://www.britannica.com/place/Shandong-province-China) *sheng* (province) China, lies on the north coast of the [Shandong Peninsula](https://www.britannica.com/place/Shandong-Peninsula).

Until the 14th century Weihai was no more than a minor fishing village, but in 1398, as part of the coastal defense policy against the raids of Japanese pirates, it became a military strongpoint (*wei*). It was fortified with walls almost 2 miles (3.2 km) in circumference, construction of which was carried out from 1403. The port has a fine natural harbour, surrounded by mountains some 1,300 feet (400 metres) high on the landward side and sheltered to seaward by Liugong Island. In the 1880s the island was developed into a naval base for the newly founded Chinese Beiyang (“North Ocean”) Fleet. Together with Port Arthur (Lüshun; now part of [Dalian](https://www.britannica.com/place/Dalian)), in Liaoning province, to the north of Bohai Strait, it was to control the entrance to the [Bo Hai](https://www.britannica.com/place/Bo-Hai) (Gulf of Chihli). During the [Sino-Japanese War](https://www.britannica.com/event/First-Sino-Japanese-War-1894-1895) (1894–95) the Japanese destroyed the remnants of the Chinese fleet there and took the base without difficulty. In 1898, when the Russians leased Port Arthur on the northern shore of the strait, the British forced the Chinese to lease them Weihai. Under the name Port Edward it remained a summer station for the British fleet until 1923 and enjoyed the status of a [free port](https://www.britannica.com/topic/free-trade-zone). Its communications, however, were poor, and its hinterland consisted of unproductive mountains, so it never flourished as a trading port. The British voluntarily relinquished their lease in 1930, after which Weihai reverted to Chinese administration. From 1938 to 1945 it was occupied by the Japanese. In 1949 it again became a base for the Chinese navy.

In 1987 Weihai was designated by the national government as one of the "open" cities along the China seacoast that was encouraged to attract foreign investment. Since then, petrochemical, building-material, textile, and pharmaceutical manufactures, as well as various light industries, have been developed in the area; there are also aquaculture and food-processing operations. A branch rail line connects the city with the Lancun-Yantai line at Taocun and with the Jiaozhou-Jinan trunk line. Expressways to [Yantai](https://www.britannica.com/place/Yantai) and [Qingdao](https://www.britannica.com/place/Qingdao) have been built. The city’s airport provides scheduled flights to [Beijing](https://www.britannica.com/place/Beijing), [Shanghai](https://www.britannica.com/place/Shanghai), and other Chinese cities as well as [Hong Kong](https://www.britannica.com/place/Hong-Kong). Weihai seaport has direct navigation with dozens of domestic and foreign seaports. With its great natural beauty and pleasant [environment](https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/environment), the Weihai area has become an ideal destination for tourists and recuperating patients. Pop. (2002 est.) 392,947.

**Anglo-American Chain of Command in Western Europe, June 1944**

When U.S. President [Franklin D. Roosevelt](https://www.britannica.com/biography/Franklin-D-Roosevelt) and British Prime Minister [Winston Churchill](https://www.britannica.com/biography/Winston-Churchill) met at the [Arcadia Conference](https://www.britannica.com/event/Arcadia-Conference) (December 1941–January 1942), they began a period of [wartime](https://www.britannica.com/event/World-War-II) cooperation that, for all the very serious differences that divided the two countries, remains without parallel in military history. Anglo-American cooperation was formally embodied in the [Combined Chiefs of Staff](https://www.britannica.com/topic/Combined-Chiefs-of-Staff), which was not so much a body as a system of consultation, reinforced by frequent conferences, between the British Chiefs of Staff Committee and the U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff. Between conferences, the British Joint Staff Mission, based in Washington, D.C., maintained contact with the U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff on behalf of their counterparts in the United Kingdom.

For the invasion of northwest Europe, the Combined Chiefs created the temporary position of Supreme Commander Allied Expeditionary Force and assigned it to General [Dwight D. Eisenhower](https://www.britannica.com/biography/Dwight-D-Eisenhower), an American with a proven ability to work amicably with the often considerable personalities who directed the Allied armies in Europe. Eisenhower’s [Supreme Headquarters Allied Expeditionary Force](https://www.britannica.com/topic/Supreme-Headquarters-Allied-Expeditionary-Force) (SHAEF) had authority over all the branches (air, sea, and land) of the armed forces of all countries whose contribution was necessary to the success of Operation Overlord (the planned [Normandy invasion](https://www.britannica.com/event/Normandy-Invasion)). These were grouped for the invasion under the Allied Naval Expeditionary Force, the Allied Expeditionary Air Force, and the Twenty-first Army Group (the expeditionary ground force)—all commanded by Britons. For the duration of Overlord, the U.S. Strategic Air Forces in Europe and the Royal Air Force Bomber Command were placed directly under the supreme commander’s authority, ensuring the contribution of those very important commands to the overall invasion plan. The European Theater of Operations, U.S. Army, was to direct the gigantic effort of supplying an entire invasion army as it crossed the English Channel and advanced into the Continent. French General [Charles de Gaulle](https://www.britannica.com/biography/Charles-de-Gaulle-president-of-France), president of the French Committee of National Liberation but by no means the universally acknowledged head of the French government-in-exile, maintained a liaison with SHAEF through the commander of the Free French Forces in Britain.

Below the level of expeditionary force or army group, the various air forces, naval task forces, and armies were divided into British or American commands (the First Canadian Army achieving coequal status during the Normandy campaign). Even at the operations level, however, the cooperation among the fighting units reflected the binational structure of SHAEF and the Combined Chiefs of Staff. In this manner the Anglo-American allies managed to avoid the division of responsibility that was built into the [German chain of command](https://www.britannica.com/topic/German-Chain-of-Command-in-Western-Europe-June-1944-1673116) and that proved fatal to the Germans’ war effort from D-Day on.