

Reasons for the failure of the 2nd United Front (1937-1945)

Topic

- Following the Xian incident in 1936, the GMD and CCP united to form the 2nd United Front to counter the Japanese threat during the 2nd Sino-Japanese War from 1937-1945
- However, just like the First United Front during the 1920s, their cooperation was short-lived and China descended into a civil war once the United Front collapsed

Ideological

Topic Sentence

Ideological differences between the GMD and CCP ensured that any cooperation during the 2nd United Front would be superficial and short-lived.

- The CCP's ideology was firmly entrenched in Marxist-Leninist and Maoist principles, which argued for a classless society and a socialist economy
- In particular, the CCP desired to relieve the conditions of the peasantry, believing in a rural revolution rather than an urban one
- Long-term aim was the revolutionary overthrow of the bourgeoisie and the confiscation of private property
- In contrast, the GMD wanted the reunification of China under a democratic nationalist government, based on Sun Yixian's Three People's Principles – nationalism, democracy and people's livelihood
- Had close links with the wealthy elite such as businessmen and landlords, who were in favour of maintaining a capitalist, private enterprise system in China and saw the CCP's agenda as a direct threat to their interests
- **Hsu:** Both the CCP and GMD existed as revolutionary parties dogmatically committed to fundamentally different causes, meaning that peaceful coexistence or compromise was virtually impossible
- Thus, the incompatibility of the CCP and GMD's ideals in terms of their visions for China's future thus ensured that any cooperation would be superficial or short-lived

Political

Topic Sentence

The 2nd United Front was not genuinely entered into in order to create a united China prepared to resist the Japanese threat, but rather a short-term agreement to placate the Chinese people.

GMD

- From the GMD's point of view, the 2nd United Front was forced upon it
- Jiang recognized that public opinion greatly favoured a United Front with the Communists to expel the Japanese
- Jiang had continued to pursue the persecution of the CCP in the form of the Bandit Extermination Campaigns, which forced the CCP on the Long March in 1934
- Continued to pursue their destruction in spite of the 1931 Japanese invasion of Manchuria
- Considered the Japanese a "disease of the skin" while the Communists a "disease of the heart"
- Jiang's lack of concern for maintaining China's territorial integrity led to the Xian incident in 1936 where he was kidnapped by his own troops, forcing him to negotiate an agreement with the CCP and start the United Front
- Jiang believed that he had no choice but to comply
- A United Front would illustrate Jiang's desire for unity and overall ability to compromise with the communists
- Avoid the disintegration of his support base and being portrayed as unresponsive

Military

Topic Sentence

The New Fourth Army incident in January 1941 had created tensions between the GMD and CCP and effectively ended the 2nd United Front.

- The CCP raised the New Fourth Army in Jiangxi in addition to the military forces established in Yanan
- Nationalist commanders who regarded the Communist operations south of the Yangzi as an infringement of the agreement on zones ordered the army to move north
- The New Fourth Army's failure to comply led to fighting between GMD and CCP forces in January 1941
- The CCP cut off diplomatic relations with the GMD henceforth
- According to **Hsu**, this had all but ended the 2nd United Front
- Thus, it may be argued that the 2nd United Front was not doomed from the start

<p>Failure of Negotiations However, the collapse of the 2nd United Front was not inevitable, given the USA's attempt to reconcile both parties.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • US Ambassadors Patrick Hurley and George Marshall were appointed to lead negotiations between the GMD and CCP following the end of the 2nd Sino-Japanese War • Was able to reach certain agreements such as the commitment to a democratic political system, a unified military force, and elections for a national assembly • Mackerras: For Mao himself the Chongqing negotiations were beneficial, as he talked to Jiang as an equal • However, the talks failed as fundamental sources of conflict remained unresolved • Mao was not prepared to relinquish communist control on the ground whereas Jiang was determined to extend nationalist control over the whole of China • Mackerras: It was clear that what both sides wanted was victory, not compromise • Arguably, the failure of Hurley and Marshall's negotiations was due to the fact that they were both attempting to repair an irreparable relationship • The deep ideological divide and bitter fighting between the two factions since 1927 meant that any lasting peace was out of the question • Thus, ideological differences were the key reason for the failure of the 2nd United Front 	<p>CCP</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mao believed that he could make gains from the formation of a 2nd United Front with the GMD • Recognized the value of using the Japanese invasion as an opportunity to gain massive support from the Chinese people who resented the GMD's lack of concern • Would be able to gain credibility and spread Communist ideology • However, he knew that the small CCP alone would not be able to handle the Japanese threat and thus an alliance with the GMD was necessary • However, this was not the main reason for the CCP's decision to form a 2nd United Front • Mao said that his policy was 70% expansion, 20% dealing with the GMD, and 10% resisting the Japanese • The CCP's need for protection from the GMD was more important • Was on the brink of defeat following the Long March • The United Front would provide the CCP critical time to regroup and spread Communist and mass-line policies in Yanan • Mao exploited the 2nd United Front through his 3-stage strategy • 1. Achieve compromise with the GMD to safeguard its existence • 2. Struggle for parity with the GMD • 3. Infiltrate into central China and build up a new base to launch a counterattack • It is clear that once these aims were achieved, cooperation with the GMD would cease 	
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Conclusion

- Proved to be a “marriage of convenience” just like the First United Front
- Once the Japanese threat had been eliminated, old hostilities resurfaced and reconciliation between the two parties proved impossible
- The failure of Marshall's negotiations thus triggered the Chinese Civil War