

THE LONG MARCH IS A MANIFESTO, A PROPAGANDA FORCE, A SEEDING-MACHINE

THE LONG MARCH (1934–1935)

IN CONTEXT

FOCUS
Founding Communist China

BEFORE
1911–12 The Republic of China is born under Nationalist Sun Yat-sen; the last Qing emperor abdicates.

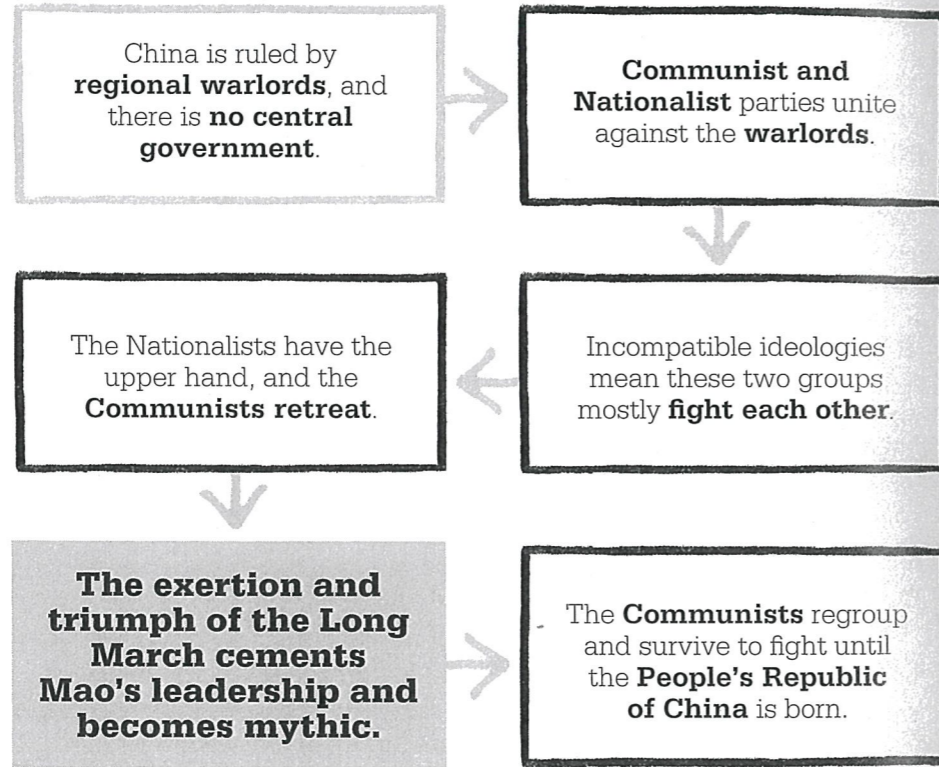
1919 The May Fourth Movement, a student-led protest, spreads ideas of nationalism and communism.

1921 The Communist Party founded in Shanghai promotes revolution based on Marxism.

AFTER
1958 Mao Zedong introduces the Great Leap Forward, a five-year economic plan.

1978 Premier Deng Xiaoping announces a new economic programme to make China a major financial power.

1989 Troops kill hundreds of pro-democracy supporters in Tiananmen Square.



In the autumn of 1933, the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) was on the brink of annihilation. Nationalists had taken control of the country and launched a major attack against their base in Jiangxi, a southeastern province. In October 1934, the Communists were forced to abandon their

stronghold and break through the Nationalist blockade. Some 80,000 set out on an extraordinary journey of 6,000km (3,700 miles) that lasted 368 days. It became known as the Long March.

Guided by their future leader Mao Zedong, the Communists faced bombs and machine-gun fire

See also: The Second Opium War 254–55 ■ The Treaty of Versailles 280 ■ The Cultural Revolution 316–17 ■ The global financial crisis 330–33

from the air and were constantly under attack by Nationalist troops on the ground. They travelled mostly at night, the unit splitting into different columns to make them harder to spot.

The Tibetan mountains, Gobi Desert, and miles of wilderness stood between them and their goal: to reach the safety of northern China and establish a new Communist base. Hundreds died of starvation: of the original 80,000 marchers, only about 8,000 survived. Far from being viewed as a failure, however, their feat was hailed as a triumph of endurance and ensured the survival of the CCP.

Unifying the nation

In 1895, China had suffered a heavy military defeat against Japan. Anti-Japanese feeling swelled following Japan's aggression against China during World War I. Huge protests erupted after the 1919 Treaty of Versailles handed former German colonies in China to Japan. In the wake of these protests, communist ideals gained support, and in



Mao Zedong rides his white horse alongside Communist Party members during the Long March of 1934–35. His role in the march ultimately saw him rise to leader of the nation.

1921 the CCP was founded. The Kuomintang, a Nationalist party, also grew and by the mid-1920s had begun unifying the country.

Massacre in Shanghai

Nationalists joined forces with Communists in 1926 under Chiang Kai-shek (Jiang Jieshi) in the Northern Expedition to regain territories controlled by regional warlords. During the expedition, as the CCP increased in strength, a bitter rivalry led to an attack by

Chiang Kai-shek



The foremost non-communist Chinese leader of the 20th century, Chiang Kai-shek (1887–1975) was a soldier who, in 1925, became leader of the Kuomintang (Nationalist Party), which had been founded by Sun Yat-sen.

During his various stints as China's premier, he ruled over a troubled country. He attempted modest reforms but was beset by intractable domestic strife, as well as by armed conflict with Japanese invaders.

Despite making attempts to crush his chief rivals, the Chinese Communists, when China was

Nationalists against the CCP in Shanghai, in April 1927. Hundreds of Communists were arrested and tortured. The massacre triggered years of anti-Communist violence, and the Communists retreated to the Jiangxi countryside.

The struggle for survival

After the Long March, the CCP regrouped in the north. Nationalists and Communists were forced into an uneasy alliance in 1937, when Japan invaded China. By 1939, large areas in the north and east had been conquered. After Japan's defeat in World War II, tension between Nationalists and Communists flared up again, leading to civil war in 1946. The Communists won after massive battles with more than half a million troops on either side. On 1 October 1949, Mao Zedong created the People's Republic of China.

The Long March was a feat of remarkable endurance. To the survivors, it provided a deep sense of mission and contributed to the perception of Mao as a leader of destiny and revolutionary struggle. ■

attacked by Japan his followers forced him to make an alliance with the Communists against the invading Japanese. The alliance did not survive the end of the World War II, and in 1949 Chiang and his party were driven from the mainland to the island of Formosa, which by that time had become known to Westerners as Taiwan. While he was there, Chiang set up a government in exile, which he controlled until his death in 1975. His government was recognized by many states as China's legitimate government.



SCATTER THE OLD WORLD, BUILD THE NEW

THE CULTURAL REVOLUTION (1966)

IN CONTEXT

FOCUS

Maoism to capitalism

BEFORE

1943 Mao becomes chairman of the Communist Party of China, which bolsters his image as a “strong leader”.

1945–49 A civil war between communists and nationalists ends with Mao’s victory.

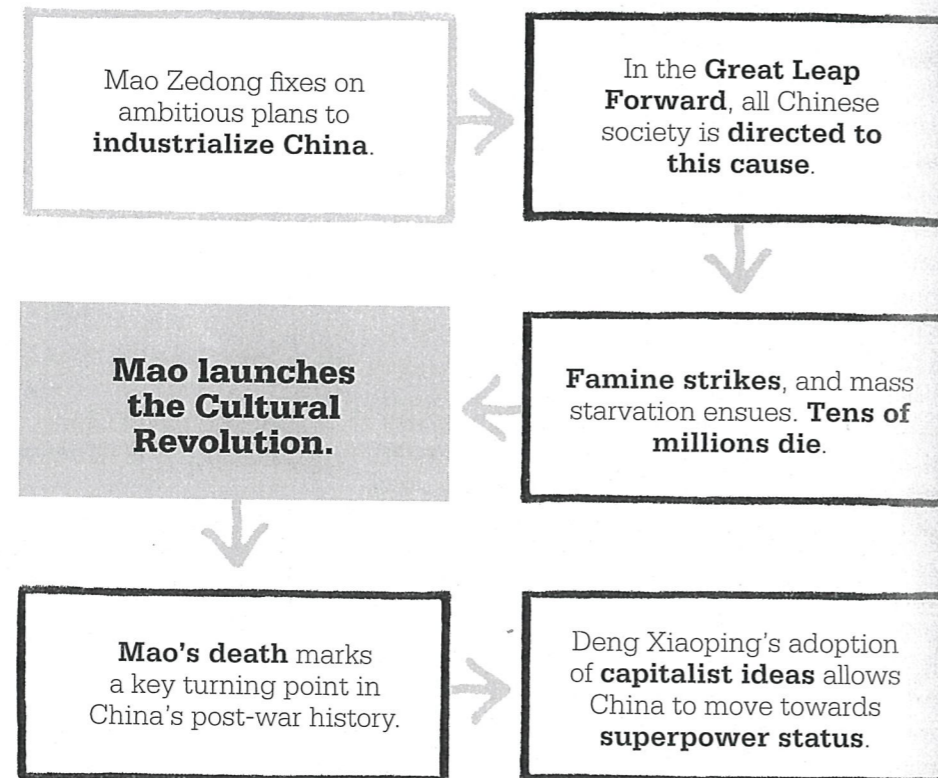
1958–61 Millions die during Mao’s Great Leap Forward, his attempt to modernize China.

AFTER

1972 US president Richard Nixon’s trip to China paves the way for diplomatic relations between the two countries.

1978 Deng Xiaoping becomes China’s new leader and starts economic reforms.

2015 The International Monetary Fund ranks China as the world’s largest economy, overtaking the United States.



The Cultural Revolution was one of the darkest periods in Chinese history. Since taking power in 1949, Communist Party leader Mao Zedong had neither created his ideal China nor secured his power. To bolster his primacy and ignite revolutionary fervour, Mao decided to purge any

opposition and transform capitalists and intellectuals into proletarians – ordinary workers. He ordered the Cultural Revolution, which would attack the “Four Olds”: old ideas, old habits, old customs, and old culture. Squads of young communists, incited by Mao and known as the Red Guards, terrorized intellectuals,



In this propaganda poster dating from around the time of the Cultural Revolution, the Red Guards are shown with a copy of Mao’s *Little Red Book*.

bureaucrats, and teachers. Some 36 million people were persecuted, and up to a million died in the turmoil, which lasted until 1976.

The Great Leap Forward

After creating the Chinese People’s Republic in 1949, Mao launched reforms to transform China’s semi-feudal, mostly agricultural society into an industrialized socialist state. In the late 1950s, in a bid to achieve rapid economic growth, Mao ordered the Great Leap Forward.

Mao Zedong



Industrial output climbed with steel and coal production, the rail network doubled, and more than half of all Chinese land was irrigated by 1961.

However, this development came at a terrible cost. Mao transformed rural China into a series of farming communes in which villagers pooled land, animals, tools, and crops. The authorities took vast amounts of grain from the communes to feed city workers, and this, along with a series of natural disasters, led to famine and starvation. The consequences were staggering: an estimated 45 million people died.

A new foreign policy

After the Cultural Revolution, Mao needed American expertise to restore China, and the US wanted an ally against the Soviet Union. In 1972, US president Richard Nixon travelled to Peking to meet with Mao. By the time Mao died in 1976, China had become a major oil producer with nuclear capabilities.

Deng Xiaoping, who led China from 1978 to 1997, was willing to use capitalist ideas to focus on economic

growth. But while he initiated new and far-reaching measures, such as inviting foreign firms to invest in Chinese industry and supporting developing technologies, he also resisted pressure to make democratic reforms.

By the beginning of the new millennium, China’s economic growth was spectacular. In 2001, the country was admitted to the World Trade Organization, and in 2008 it played host to the Olympic Games in Beijing. Some economists predict that by 2026 China will boast a gross domestic product (GDP) greater than Japan and Western Europe.

After Mao’s death, the Chinese Communist Party condemned the Cultural Revolution as a disaster. However, as the country experienced a period of unparalleled economic growth, a sense of nostalgia for Mao’s ideals, focused on the people and self-sufficiency, grew among farmers and members of the urban working class. Today, Mao’s legacy continues to cast a long shadow over a modernizing China. ■

Born in 1893 into a wealthy farming family from Hunan Province, Mao Zedong was the leader of Communist China from 1949 until his death in 1976. While working as a librarian at Peking University, he became a communist and helped found the Communist Party in 1921. Six years later, after leading an unsuccessful rebellion against nationalist leader Chiang Kai-shek, Mao was forced to retreat to the countryside, where he proclaimed the Chinese Soviet Republic in 1931. He took control of the Communist Party in 1935, after proving his leadership

during the Long March, and defeated Chiang during the civil war of 1945–49.

A devoted Leninist, Mao became disenchanted with the Soviet policy of “peaceful coexistence” towards the West and developed Maoism, a stronger form of communism. However, his radical ideas and experiments with collectivization led to the death and suffering of millions. One of his last acts, in 1972, was to hold a meeting with Richard Nixon, the first American president ever to visit China.

See also: The Second Opium War 254–55 ■ Stalin assumes power 281 ■ The Long March 304–05 ■ The global financial crisis 330–33 ■ Global population exceeds 7 billion 334–39