



# SciMUNC XVII

*HISTORICAL CRISIS COMMITTEE*

## Xi'an Incident

**BACKGROUND GUIDE**

*HISTORICAL CRISIS COMMITTEE*

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## Letter from the Dais

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Dear Delegates,

My name is Jayden Lin and I will be your Chair for the Xi'an incident committee. I am a current junior and I've been a member of Model UN since freshman year. Public speaking has never been my strong suit and I often struggle with communicating to a large audience. Model UN, however, has been a way for me to improve on this. Though it wasn't easy, Model UN gave me the opportunity to speak through the numerous speaking drills and exciting conferences. For me, MUN has been life changing, improving my overall ability to speak and giving me more confidence. In this committee, I hope that you can find the same benefits that MUN had for me.

Hello! My name is Matthew Lau and I'm excited to be your Vice Chair for this committee. I joined Model UN in my sophomore year, going to the first meeting because my friend told me to join him. But what I didn't expect is how much fun I would have in MUN. Whether it's learning about diplomacy and representing a whole country, or having to solve Formula 1 problems as Lando Norris, MUN has helped me break out of my shell. Through both publicly speaking to the committee or having to work with my fellow delegates on different problems, I've definitely grown socially since I've joined MUN and I hope this conference will be a similar experience for you too! Through this committee I hope you learn about the complex problems which the Kuomintang and CCP faced whose effects can still be seen today. If you have any questions at all you can reach out to either of us via email ([jayden123@nycstudents.net](mailto:jayden123@nycstudents.net) or [matthew1343@nycstudents.net](mailto:matthew1343@nycstudents.net)). Good luck and have fun!

Sincerely,

Jayden Lin and Matthew Lau

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## Committee Description

The Xi'an Incident is a crisis that occurred in Shanxi in 1936. Chiang Kei-Shek, the leader of the Nationalists, has just been arrested by his officers. The officers, Zhang Xueliang and Yang Hucheng, are looking to change the internal policy of the KMT to be more friendly to the CCP and want to force Chiang Kei-Shek into an alliance with the CCP.

This committee will take place directly following the start of the Xi'an Incident in Xi'an, Shanxi. Delegates representing the Nationalists, Communists, or rebelling officers will have to discuss in a tense environment with diverging interests. They will need to attempt a peaceful and rapid resolution while keeping the interests of their respective parties in mind. All delegates will have an equal opportunity to present their ideas for resolving the conflict and have the same power when voting. As a result, delegates will need to collaborate with other individuals to pass a plan to bring internal peace to China.

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## Background Information

The year is 1936 and China is in a state of chaos. Japan has been on a relentless path of conquest and China is destined to be next on the chopping block. With the threat of Japanese invasion at any moment, along with internal power struggles, China will be racing against the clock to resolve internal conflicts and form a united front against the Japanese. The two dominant parties in China at this time were the Kuomintang (KMT) and the Chinese Communist Party (CCP).

### *Internal Conflict*

Following the dissolution of the Qing dynasty, China was stable for much of the 20th century. Initially stable, the nation's unity eroded as ideological differences deepened and power struggles intensified. In addition, aspiring warlords started to gain power in their respective regions leading to even less stability. Governments composed of warlords, nationalists, and communists thus appeared and have been at odds with each other attempting to usurp power and reunify China under their ideology and rule. The Nationalists, or the KMT, is a party that believes in Chinese nationalism and a mixed economy. The Communists or the CCP, on

the other hand, is a party rooted in Marxist-Leninist ideals and a much more state involved economy. In addition to the two major parties, there were also many warlords. These warlords commanded their own armies and ruled their territories independently, leading to a period of political chaos and instability. They often clashed with each other and with nationalistic and communist forces, exacerbating China's internal divisions and hindering efforts for reunification. The presence of warlords significantly contributed to the challenges faced by the country during this tumultuous period. These, along with other ideological differences, made the Nationalists and Communists constantly clash. Though alliances between the two have existed, a violent purge targeted at Communist leaders by the Nationalists led to the Chinese Civil War. At the time of this committee, China is still in its civil war and an end cannot be seen even with the looming Japanese threat. While the government led by the KMT in Nanjing is still widely recognized as the main government, the Communists contest this position, leading to instability within China as a whole.

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### *Chinese Civil War*

In 1935, following the purges and campaigns by the KMT, a complete civil war broke out. Communists had left the new central government led by the KMT and were engaging in guerilla warfare around China. At first, the CCP had very few options with military defeats and little strength, causing them to constantly have to retreat. The KMT were quickly approaching their base in Southeastern China, so a drastic move was planned. They were able to make their way north, escaping the armies of the KMT but suffering lots of casualties (approximately 8,000 of 100,000 troops who had started the march survived). This famous event led by Mao Zedong, now known as the Long March, positioned the People's Liberation Army (PLA) further north into Shanxi. During the march, the CCP was able to recruit many peasants in rural areas to join their party. This event also solidified Mao's leadership in the party, as he had the strongest army after the march. The Communist Party of China (CCP) gained widespread support and strengthened its influence, transforming into a formidable political entity.

### *Japanese Threat*

By 1936, Japan had had expansionist policies for well over a few decades. Following the Meiji Restoration and modernization of Japan, Japan placed a renewed focus on obtaining more natural resources. The modernization of Japan allowed them to utilize new machinery, weaponry, and technology that unlocked many new opportunities for the growing state. Their main restricting factor was their lack of resources however. Many of these new technologies were costly to manufacture and needed timber, metals, and rubber which Japan had little of in their mainland. Due to the lack of natural commodities within Japan, the Japanese government began to set their sights outwards. Naturally, one of the targets of the Japanese Empire was China. The 1931 invasion of Manchuria (a region in Northeast China) by Japan was largely successful for the Japanese. China, being decentralized and fractured, were unable to mount a successful defense despite their best efforts and the region quickly became subjugated by the Japanese who installed a puppet government in the region. The invasion had immediate and substantial events which gave Japan a lifeline from their woes of lack of resources, and provided

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Japan an opportunity to expand further into China. Now, five years later, Japan is looking to further their empire again with another invasion of China. Emboldened by their first invasion and fueled by fanatical nationalism, Japan is ready to strike at any moment. This next strike, however, will not focus on Manchuria but on the entirety of China. If a fast solution to the Xi'an Incident is not found and an alliance is not formed, China will have no chance against this rapidly mobilizing force bound to tear China apart once they strike.

## Main Committee Topic

The main topic being discussed in the committee will be the Xi'an incident, a crisis that occurred on December 12th, 1936. On this day in the city of Xi'an, two of Chiang Kai-shek's officers, Zhang Xueliang and Yang Hucheng, kidnapped Chiang Kai-shek in order to force him to negotiate with the Communists. The ongoing situation of political tension and power struggles within China had Zhang Xueliang decide that drastic action was necessary immediately. This arrest enraged the KMT government in Nanjing, which bombed the surrounding areas of the city and even had plans to bomb the city itself, but stopped because of pleas from Chiang Kai-shek's wife, Soong Meiling. This intervention halted the initial immediate military response though with different officials advocating for both violent and peaceful solutions, the situation was still difficult to maneuver. Despite calls from some quarters for Chiang's execution, both sides recognized the dire consequences such an action would entail, potentially reigniting full-scale conflict between the Nationalists and the Communists. As a result, they refrained from pursuing this drastic measure.

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Although there was lots of tension on both sides, with some in the KMT government having plans to militarily recover Chiang Kai-shek from Xi'an, negotiation talks commenced. They were initially just between Chiang's captors and the government in Nanjing but the CCP, represented by Zhou Enlai, were also requested to be represented by Zhang who had been in contact with the party before this incident happened. This committee will represent the highly tense meetings that occurred between these party officials looking to resolve this crisis as quickly as possible to deal with the impending Japanese.

Chiang's kidnapping showed a division within the KMT, but also helped solidify Chiang Kai-shek's position within his own party. He was already a popular leader before going to Xi'an so when he was captured by Zhang and Yang there were protests in the streets and he gained lots of sympathy from the Chinese people. This also led to there being celebrations in the city when he was released. Although Zhang and Yang were promised power over the Xi'an area, both of the captors were detained by the government shortly after. Zhang

Xueliang was sentenced to 10 years in prison but was also put under house arrest for the next 40 years. Yang Hucheng would be sent to prison for 13 years before being executed before the KMT retreated to Taiwan. This incident also helped the communists because the event itself with the fight against the Japanese allowed them to recover from the Long March, when the communists were at its closest point to losing the war. They could also make themselves be seen in a better light because they were putting the country before the party and wanted to go after the Japanese instead of the KMT.

This, however, was to fulfill the larger goal of trying to rally China against the Japanese. Chiang Kai-shek saw the Communists as the bigger threat and believed in solving internal conflict before turning outwards. This refusal culminated in this kidnapping where Chiang Kai-shek will be held to be forced to negotiate.

### ***The Future of China***

It is clear that some form of unification will be needed for China to stand a chance against Japan. The last 50 years have been extremely significant to the

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Japanese, with their society undergoing massive modernization and Westernization. They have proven their might on the world stage after fighting off the Russians in the Russo-Japanese War, shocking the Western European powers. Further aggressive actions by Japan have shown that they have grown significantly from the weak country that was taken advantage of by Western powers a century prior. Delegates must be careful to ensure that Chiang Kai-shek stays alive, or else the fallout could prevent any alliance from being formed. Without the combined might of the majority of forces in China, any single party will find it hard to defend against Japan on its own.

### ***Past Actions***

Despite the political instability of China, the Xi'an incident would not be the first time that there was a creation of a Chinese United Front. If a Chinese United Front is created by the end of the Xi'an incident, it would be the second. The First Chinese United Front was formed by Communists and Nationalists to defeat warlords and the Beiyang government (the Chinese government with most international recognition prior to the Nationalists). The

United Front succeeded in some aspects. This expedition led to the overthrow of the Beiyang government and the establishment of a more centralized rule under the Nationalists. However, the unity within the First United Front was precarious due to the deep ideological differences between the KMT and CCP. While they shared a common goal of expelling warlords and foreign influence, their long-term visions for China diverged significantly. The Nationalists under Chiang Kai-shek increasingly saw the Communists as a threat to their own power and sought to suppress them. By the late 1920s, tensions between the Nationalists and Communists reached a breaking point. The Shanghai Massacre of 1927 marked a turning point as Nationalist forces turned on Communist allies, leading to a violent suppression of the Communist movement in urban areas. This event effectively ended the First United Front and set the stage for a bitter struggle between the Nationalists and Communists for control over China. Relations have since broken down significantly, there are still many on all sides that still believe in unifying against the Japanese and the need for peace.

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**Positions*****Questions to Consider***

1. How can Chiang Kai-shek be released safely and non violently?
2. Is there a way to de-escalate tensions or pacify the Japanese? Should the Chinese negotiate with them or is war the only option?
3. How will China come together to fight the Japanese? Which alliances will need to be created and what compromises occur as a result?

***Chiang Kai-Shek***

Chiang Kai-shek was the leader of the KMT and the Generalissimo (top military leader) of the Republic of China. He played a central role in Chinese politics and military affairs during this period. His leadership and approach to dealing with internal divisions and external threats were key factors in the Xi'an Incident. While he currently views the Communists as a large threat and wants only the KMT in charge of China, concessions will have to be made by someone to come to a successful compromise. Though allowed to negotiate here, Chiang Kai-Shek is currently under detainment by his officers Zhang Xueliang and Yang Hucheng.

***Zhang Xueliang***

Zhang Xueliang was a prominent Chinese warlord in Northeast China and a military leader. He was discontented with Chiang Kai-shek's strategy and sought a united front with the Chinese Communist Party to resist Japanese aggression. He played a central role in the Xi'an Incident by orchestrating Chiang's kidnapping.

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### ***Yang Hucheng***

Yang Hucheng was another Chinese general involved in the Xi'an Incident. Like Zhang Xueliang, he had concerns about Chiang's leadership and the Nationalists' ability to effectively resist Japanese expansion. He joined Zhang in the decision to take Chiang captive in order to compel him to cooperate with the Communists.

### ***He Zhuguo***

A loyal supporter of Zhang Xueliang, He Zhuguo supported Zhang's detainment of Chiang Kei-Shek in the Xi'an Incident. While not a CCP member, he understands a peaceful solution is necessary and is willing to work closely with them.

### ***He Yingqin***

He Yingqin was a high-ranking military officer in the Nationalist government. During the Xi'an Incident, he was part of the Nationalist government that wanted aggressive action against the rebels and recommended a military unit to rescue Chiang Kei-Shek.

### ***Wang Jingwei***

Wang Jingwei was a left-wing Kuomintang politician who clashed with Chiang Kai-shek on many issues. In the early 1930's, Wang and Chiang fought over power in the party, with Wang declaring Wuhan as the capital and Chiang declaring Nanjing as the capital of the country. Despite these differences, during the Xi'an Incident Wang was publicly for the release of Chiang as he favored sending a military expedition to attack Zhang and Yang, similar to He Zhuguo.

### ***Soong Mei-ling***

Soong Mei-ling was the wife of Chiang Kai-shek, and a prominent political figure. She played a significant role in promoting Chinese nationalism and advocating for international support against Japanese aggression. She prioritized the safety of Chiang Kei-Shek and wanted to negotiate. She is also the sister of T.V. Soong.

### ***T.V. Soong***

T.V. Soong or Soong Tse-vung was a brother-in-law of Chiang Kai-shek and sister of Soong Mei-ling. He held significant

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power in the Kuomintang before resigning because of disagreements with Chiang Kai-Shek. He advocated for China's alliance with Western nations, such as the United States and the UK, in order to block Japan's growing military power in the early 1930s. Despite their disagreements, Soong still wanted to negotiate for the safety of Chiang Kai-Shek.

### ***Kong Xiangxi***

Kong Xiangxi was a prominent Chinese politician and banker. He served in various government positions and was closely associated with the Nationalist government. He also believed in negotiations to free Chiang Kei-Shek.

### ***Zhou Enlai***

Zhou Enlai was a key figure in the Chinese Communist Party and a close associate of Mao Zedong. He was involved in the negotiations between the Nationalists and the Communists during the Xi'an Incident, working to find a solution that would lead to Chiang's release and the formation of a united front.

### ***Lin Boqu***

Lin Boqu was a Chinese diplomat and politician who played a role in bridging communication between the KMT and CCP. Despite his affiliation with the CCP, Lin Boqu worked to bridge the gap between these two major political factions, aiming to foster negotiations that would hopefully pave the way for a strategic alliance between the Nationalists and Communists in China.

### ***Bo Gu***

Bo Gu is a senior CCP member representing the CCP alongside its other representatives. As a result, his viewpoints are very well represented by the CCP as a whole.

### ***Chen Cheng***

Chen Cheng was a commander in the Kuomintang army in charge of the 18th army. A good ally of Chiang Kai-shek, he was given the task of leading the army to suppress the CCP. He was able to defeat the communists and send them to retreat on the Long March. He came with Chiang to Xi'an and is very invested in seeing his safe release.

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***William Henry Donald***

William Henry Donald was an Australian journalist who was an advisor in China to both Chiang Kai-shek and Zhang Xueliang. He was sent to Xi'an by Soong Mei-ling to assist with the negotiations. Because of this, he believes in safely freeing Chiang and can use his relationship with Zhang to help make it happen.

***Yi Jianying***

Yi Jianying was a member of the CCP who was a good ally and friend of Zhuo Enlai. He was a part of the group which was requested by Zhang to negotiate in Xi'an. As such he is for the safe release of Chiang Kai-shek and a united front against the Japanese.

***Dai Li***

Dai Li was a Kuomintang spymaster who was also the head of the Lixingshe, or the Blue Shirts society. This group was a secret nationalist group whose views lined up with Chiang Kai-shek. Therefore, Li is focused on Chiang's safe release but might support an attack if Zhang and Yang become too big of a threat.

***Chen Lifu***

Chen Lifu was a member of the Kuomintang who worked as a secretary within the party. In the months leading up to the Xi'an Incident, he had been meeting Zhuo Enlai in secret to negotiate a plan to attack the Japanese. Although keeping Chiang Kai-shek safe is a goal of his for the safety of the party, he's more focused combining the KMT and CCP's forces to fight the Japanese.

***Xue Yue***

Xue Yue was a general in the Kuomintang party who vowed to arrest Chiang Kai-shek and deliver him to the CCP if he didn't decide to cease the fight with the communists and start fighting the Japanese. Because of this Yue is more focused on making a deal to combine forces with the communists against the Japanese as opposed to Chiang Kai-shek's release.

***Li Xongren***

Li Xongren was a Kuomintang general and a warlord in the Guangxi province in southern China. Although he is against communists and the CCP, he doesn't have a good relationship with Chiang Kai-

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shek as Chiang removed Li's power in the party a few years before the incident. Li is interested in keeping the communists and the Japanese out of power but unlike others doesn't care for Chiang's safe release.

### ***Yan Xishan***

Yan Xishan is a warlord in the Shanxi province in northern China who was aligned ideologically with the Kuomintang. Even though he was against communists, Yan has been fighting with Chiang Kai-shek for the last decade over land and control over the party. Yan also supported Zhang and Yang in the Xi'an Incident but was against Chiang being executed because he believed Chiang staying alive was key to a united front against the Japanese.

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