

“CHINA CANNOT BE CONQUERED” (SPEECH, 1939)
By Chiang Kai-shek

Introduction

Chiang Kai-shek (Jiang Jieshi, 1887-1975) took over as leader of the Guomindang (Nationalist Party) after the death of Sun Yat-sen (b. 1866) in 1925. As leader of the Guomindang and, from 1928 until 1949, of China, Chiang Kai-shek inherited, among other things, the role of defining and strengthening Chinese nationalism, a force that he hoped to use to unify the Chinese people behind him and his government.

The document below is from a speech on national unity delivered by Chiang in January 1939 when China was in a full-scale war with Japan.

Document Excerpts with Questions

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... We are fighting this war [against the Japanese] for our own national existence and for freedom to follow the course of national revolution laid down for us in the Three Principles of the People. ...

... You [high-level Guomindang officials] should instruct our people to take lessons from the annals of the Song and Ming dynasties. The fall of these two dynasties [to the Mongols and the Manchus] was not caused by outside enemies with a superior force, but by a dispirited and cowardly minority within the governing class and society of the time. Today the morale of our people is excellent. ...

... Our resistance is a united effort of government and people. ... Concord between government and people is the first essential to victory.

... The hearts of our people are absolutely united. ...

Questions:

1. In these remarks, made in 1939, how does Chiang Kai-shek portray the relationship between the government and the people?
2. Why does Chiang Kai-shek have the confidence that the Chinese will be victorious? Is his reasoning about the causes of victory and the relationship

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between people and government during wartime applicable in other times and other places, past or present?

3. What government policies do you think might be implied when a national leader (who is leader because he is also a general) makes such remarks during wartime?