

## Allies in Conflict: The Cairo Summit Revisited

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### Abstract

The Cairo Summit of 1943 was a turning point in China's emergence onto the modern world stage. Chinese leader Chiang Kai-shek and two of his wartime allies, President Franklin D. Roosevelt and British Prime Minister Winston Churchill—met to crystallize why they were fighting Imperial Japan and how postwar Asia would be ruled. The Cairo Declaration of December 1, 1943, did more than promise the return to China of all territories Japan had stolen, notably Manchuria and Taiwan. For the first time in more than a century, the leader of China was seen as an equal to the leaders of the West. However, a gap often exists between political image and reality. What did Chiang think about the summit and what was his initial reaction to Roosevelt's invitation? What was Chiang's game plan before he arrived in Cairo, and what topics did he want to bring to the table? What became of Chiang's own priorities during and after Cairo? And ultimately, what impact did the summit have on China's relations with the Allies—was it in the end a triumph for Chiang or a defeat? In retrospect, although the Cairo Summit marked the zenith of Chiang's prestige as a world leader, it also triggered his subsequent downhill slide and that of his regime. In hindsight, whether the Cairo Summit was an asset to Chiang and his government is an unanswered question. How and why the United States was led into intervening in China's domestic quagmire and a battle for the control of Asia—a battle that continued from the Chinese civil war into the Cold War era—deserves further scrutiny.