DIANA LARY

China's Republic

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China's Republic

Twenty-first century China is emerging from decades of war and revolution into a new era. Yet the past still haunts the present. The ideals of the Chinese Republic, which was founded almost a century ago after 2,000 years of imperial rule, still resonate today as modern China edges toward openness and democracy. In a vivid portrayal of the era of the Republic, Diana Lary traces its history from its beginnings in 1912, through the Nanjing decade, the warlord era and the civil war with the People's Liberation Army, which ended in defeat in 1949. Thereafter, in an unusual excursion from traditional histories of the period, she considers how the Republic has continued to survive in Taiwan, comparing its ongoing prosperity with the economic and social decline of the Communist Mainland in the Mao years. Thus the history of the Republic crosses that of twentieth-century China. The book, which is intended as an introduction to the period for students and general readers, is enhanced with biographies of key protagonists, Chinese proverbs, love stories, poetry and a feast of illustrations.

DIANA LARY is Professor of History, affiliated with the Centre of Chinese Research, Institute of Asian Research, at the University of British Columbia.

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China's Republic

中華民國

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This book is the product of many years of teaching. During those years I have learned a great deal from my undergraduate students, from their observations, their ideas, and their questions. From the graduate students whose MA and PhD dissertations I have been involved with I have learned even more, because I have benefitted from their research and their insights. I list their names in the roughly chronological order of their graduation: Anthony Chan, Philip Calvert, Karen Minden, Robert Perrins, Alvyn Austin, Ng Wing Chung, Yu Li, Chu Shao-kang, William Sewell, James Mitchell, Philip Clart, Joanne Poon, Yang Kai-kan, James Flath, Andre Laliberté, Van Nguyen Marshall, Janet Lai, Allan Cho, Norman Smith, Shelley Chan, Rhea Low, Kingsley Tsang, Chao Shin-i, Colin Green, Jeffrey Alexander, Judy Maxwell, Wang Ning, Victor Zatesepine, Philippe Borbeau, Teo Sinyi, Lau Wing-hong.

Each of them has added to my understanding of China and the Republic, and I dedicate this book to them as a token of my gratitude.

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Introduction

天下為公。

Tianxia weigong.
"The world is for everyone."
Source: *Liji*

The republic is a factory: the President is the manager and the people are the stockholders.

The republic is an automobile: the people are the owners and the officials are the drivers.

Sun Yat-sen: Minzhu zhuyi (The principle of democracy)

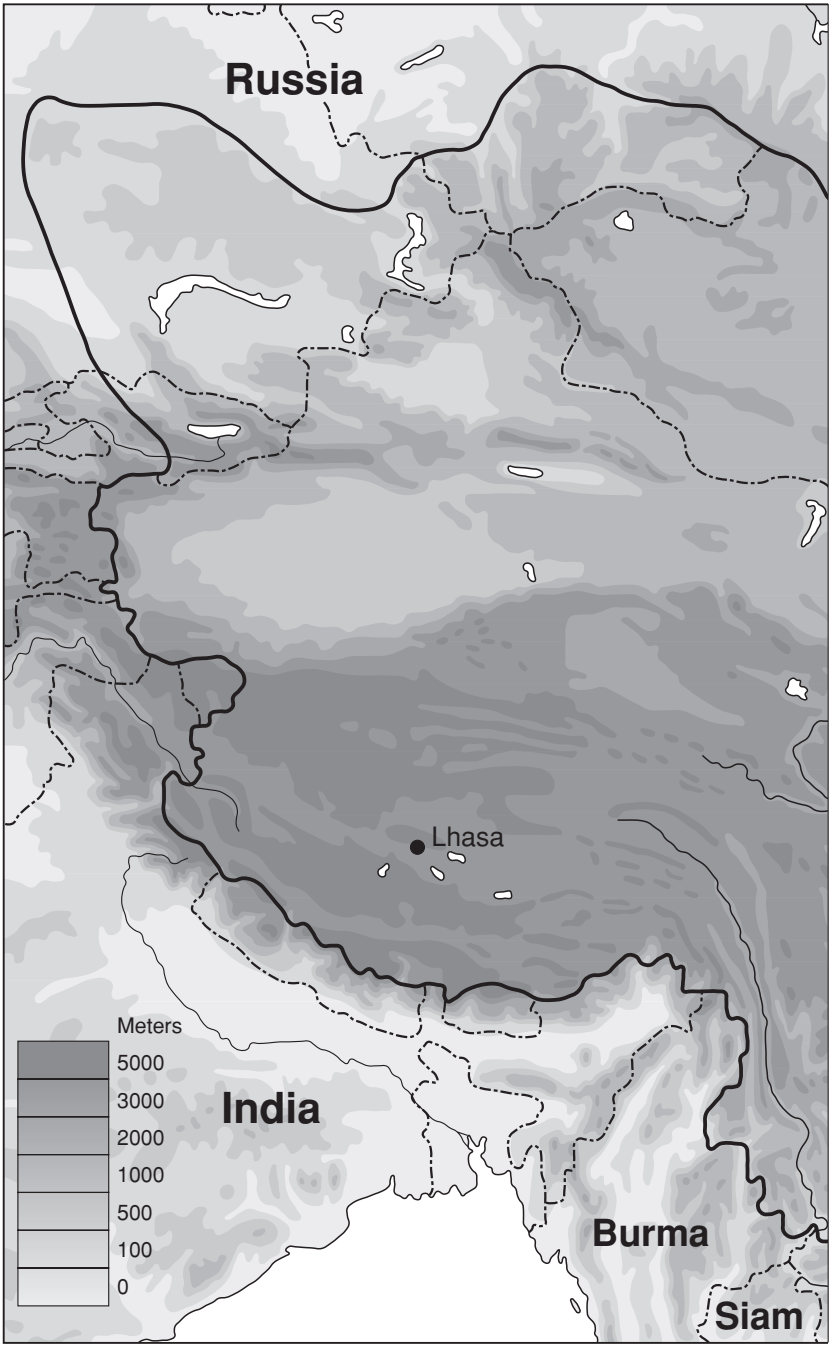
The Republican form of Government is the highest form of government; because of this it requires the highest type of human nature – a type at present nowhere existing.

Herbert Spencer: *The Americans*

On January 1, 1912, in Nanjing, the ancient southern capital of China, Sun Yat-sen took the oath as the first president of the Republic of China. After the ceremony he went to the tombs of the Ming emperors on the Purple Mountain outside the city, and announced to them that the foreign rulers of China, the Manchus, had been overthrown, and that China was once again under Chinese rule. Everything about his actions that day was unprecedented. He swore an oath of office. He swore it on New Year's Day in the Western calendar, a date that had no meaning in the Chinese calendar. He invoked Chinese nationalism in his message to the shades of the Ming emperors. He initiated a republic, and became its father (guofu), a title he still holds today. His Republic survives too, now in its ninety-fifth year.

The republican ideal

The republican dream has gleamed in the eyes of political reformers since the time of Plato, the ideal form of government, in which heredity is outlawed, laws and parliaments rule, and the affairs of the public (*res publicae*)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1 China


Korea
Beijing
Tianjin
Kaifeng
Luoyang
Xi'an
Nanjing
Shanghai
Hankou
Hangzhou
Chengdu
Chongqing
Changsha
Fuzhou
Guangzhou
Hong Kong
Annam

count above all else. The ideal is not alien to Chinese statecraft. The true Confucian state was a just and equitable administration that gave respect to people on the basis of their abilities, not their birth, a society in which each man had his proper place, and lived in harmony with those above and below him. This ideal is reflected in the ancient term "common harmony" (*gonghe* – the word used in modern Chinese for "republic"), first used in the ninth century BC, even before Plato, to describe a government in which able men "assisted," but actually controlled, the figurehead King Cheng of the Zhou dynasty.

A republic is a most difficult form of government to achieve. It must transcend powerful opposition: the desire of rulers for absolute power that they can bequeath as they choose; the tendency of those with power to use it corruptly for their own good; and the inclination of many people to accept autocracy. But the ideal of justice and equity built in to republicanism has animated political action; ever since the French and American Revolutions the vision of republicanism has driven political thinking and actions around the world.

China was the first of the great autocracies that survived into the twentieth century to have a republican revolution, with the founding of the Republic of China in 1912. The first stages of the Republic were exciting, anguished, and tragic, as China struggled to come to terms with her new polity, and deal with internal turmoil and foreign invasion. Whatever the stresses, there was no going back. There were two attempts to restore the imperial system, one by the second president, Yuan Shikai, which did not get off the ground, the second in the form of Japan's client state Manzhouguo, with the former emperor Pu Yi as its figurehead, which lasted from 1932 to 1945.

Sun Yat-sen remains the only modern Chinese leader respected by all Chinese, wherever they live, whatever their age. The future of his Republic is uncertain. For most Chinese the Republic lasted for only thirty-eight years; it ceased to exist on the Mainland in 1949, when the People's Republic of China (PRC) was established. But the Republic was not dead; it has lasted another fifty-seven years on the island of Taiwan, where it has continued to evolve – along a very different trajectory from that on the Mainland. It has achieved two of Sun Yat-sen's goals, democracy (*minzhu*) and economic prosperity (*minsheng*), but departed from the goal of unified nationalism (*minzu*).

The fragment of the Republic that survives on Taiwan faces two major threats to its existence. One is that it will return to the embrace of the motherland, and will be absorbed into the People's Republic. The other is that its own government will decide to wind it up in favor of an independent state of Taiwan, no longer with "China" in the name.

The name of the state

The official name of a country is a fundamental element of national identity. China has had several official names over its recent history. It was known until 1911 as the Great Qing (*Da Qing*), the last of the imperial dynasties that ruled the state from the unification in 221 BC. The people were subjects of the Qing, a few of them the ruling Manchus (*man*), most of the rest known only as "people" (*min*). After 1911 the state's name was the Chinese Republic (*Zhonghua minguo*), a name that incorporated an old term for the state ("central" [*zhong*] and "flowery" [*hua*]) with a neologism for republic (*minguo*, people's country). On the Mainland, the state was renamed in 1949 the People's Republic of China (*Zhonghua renmin gongheguo*), with the addition of a more socialist term for "people's" (*renmin*) and the ancient term for "republic" (*gongheguo*).

None of the successive official names for the state uses the word "China" (*Zhongguo*), the name by which Chinese call their country. The range of official names gives a suggestion of the complexity of Chinese national identity, and of the upheavals involved in China's transition from dynastic autocracy to republic.

Revolutions and transitions

The turmoil of transition has been a recurrent phenomenon in China's long history. Dynasties came and went, often divided by an interregnum, a period of contestation for power after the fall of one dynasty, before a new one was established. Was the Chinese Republic another interregnum, a period of conflict and confusion after which the *real* new rulers, the Communists, came to power? Or was it a more lasting state?

There were other models for the aftermath of dynastic collapse. Sometimes the state was divided, for decades or even centuries. From the beginning of the third to the end of the sixth centuries AD China was divided into several states. After the end of the Tang there was a division lasting seven decades. The Song dynasty signed away parts of northern China to the Liao, by the Chanyan Treaty of 1005. After more than a century of peace the Liao's successors, the Jin, forced the Song to retreat to southern China.

The thousandth anniversary of the Chanyan Peace found China divided again. China now is vastly different from how it was a millennium ago. Huge swathes of land have been incorporated in the last three centuries, including Manchuria, Tibet, Xinjiang – and Taiwan. But disunity is as much an issue as it ever was, one of the contradictions that go with being such a huge state.

Reunification or separation?

Taiwan has been cut off from the Mainland for all but four of the last 111 years. The Mainland is determined to regain the island, as it brought Hong Kong back in 1997. Taiwan itself is divided. The old ruling party, the Guomindang (GMD), is interested in closer relations with the no longer socialist Mainland, but it is out of power. The present ruling party, the Democratic Progressive Party (DPP), is no longer talking about independence, though this has been its *raison d'être* in the past.

The current situation underlines how complex and dynamic the Republic has been – and how much its history has influenced the People's Republic, which grew not out of the last dynasty but out of the four decades of change, upheaval, and warfare that characterized the Republic on the Mainland.

Three contradictions

Modern China has inherited three contradictions from the past: pride in having the largest population in the world versus the pressure of population on limited resources and the poverty that it creates; an ancient culture that admires the civilian and intellectual versus the dominance of the military; and the desire for unity versus the reality of division.

Poverty and prosperity Population growth is tormenting. While the size of China's population is the largest impediment to the alleviation of poverty, two modern leaders, Sun Yat-sen and Mao Zedong, gloried in the number of Chinese. Poverty is itself a stimulus to population growth; poor people have more children, in order to secure their own survival. The only sure way to restrict growth is to move people into the middle class. Other forms of population control (famine, warfare, forced sterilization, abortion) are tragedies or abuses against cultural tradition and human rights. Prosperity is finally in sight for many Chinese, but hundreds of millions are still poor.

Peace and war The civil/military clash, expressed in Chinese in the saying *zhongwen qingwu* ("emphasize the civil, downplay the military"), derives not from a description of Chinese history but from the longing for civil rule of a people who have suffered from warfare. This contradiction has never been more apparent than in modern history, much of which has been dominated by war, and the rule of the military.

Unity and division China has honored the concept of a unified state since 221 BC. The long periods of division have never led to the

creation of new, independent states. Instead, the Chinese state has grown larger over time. The larger the state, the more difficult it has been to govern. The system of bureaucracy was perfected to rule a vast state. It has been backed up by the threat or use of force. China has turned her face against the federalist systems that other large states use for their governance, and insists on a unitary state with tight central control – and has spent a disproportionate amount of effort and money on maintaining it.

China's leaders have been dealing with all three of these contradictions for a very long time. Each has become more acute in the modern period, the underlying issues overlaid with the newer issues of imperialism, colonialism, and revolution. They are the deep structural issues that every government must deal with.

The interpretation of history

Chinese culture has a profound respect for history. The traditional Chinese saying, *guwei jinyong* ("the past is to be used by the present"), sees the past as offering object lessons for the present and the future. This belief is still alive, but its survival is compromised. China is now too much part of the larger world to continue in an entirely self-referential mold. And China herself rejected much of her history, in the rewriting of history in the 1950s and 1960s. The Marxist interpretation of history discarded the Chinese past as feudal and repressive, and rejected scholars in favor of peasant rebels, high culture in favor of folk culture. The PRC showered contempt on its immediate predecessors, the Republic of China, and excoriated its leaders with terms such as "criminals for all the ages," and "running dogs of imperialism."

These excesses of interpretation are now past. Marxist history has been rejected, and another rewriting of history is under way. History excites people. Historical films and TV series are more popular than the rather dreary modern-day soaps. Bookstores are packed with historical texts and biographies. In the rewriting of history there is an enthusiasm for non-communists, and a desire to recognize the complexity and the sadness of modern history, to show how the recent past has shaped the present and will shape the future.

Major historical figures have emerged from disgrace into new respectability. Li Hongzhang, the Qing mandarin who had the dismal task of negotiating several of the most humiliating treaties between China and foreign countries, was once excoriated, but now he is honored. Hu Shi, the self-proclaimed originator of the modern Chinese language, has moved from demonization to hagiography. More distant historical figures have emerged in the context of contemporary disputes. The late Ming

figure Zheng Chenggong is cast as a patriotic unifier for Beijing, as a symbol of Taiwan independence in Taiwan, as a local hero in Minnan, and as a pirate in the West.

The past is very much alive, and influences not only the present but also the future. Perhaps the words of T. S. Eliot are more appropriate now than *guwei jinyong*:

> Time present and time past
> Are both perhaps present in time future
> And time future contained in time past.
> *Burnt Norton*

The past for the present

For modern Chinese, remembering the recent past is a contradictory and often painful experience. There is a feeling of pride, that China's struggle against colonialism and foreign incursion is over. When the Union Jack was lowered for the last time in Hong Kong on July 1, 1997, all Chinese felt some triumph. There is pride too that China is achieving her rightful place in the global economy, and is emerging as a new superpower.

Pride in the recent past is connected to pride in the distant past, the 5,000 years of history[1] to which China's leaders often refer, and to pride in the traditional culture of China, the poetry, painting, calligraphy, and ceramics that are the hallmarks of her traditional culture. This pride is tempered with darker feelings, of regret and shame over the troubled and turbulent periods of Chinese history. The darker feelings start with conflicted views of Qin Shihuang, the first emperor. His brutality was legendary; he killed scholars, burned books and obliterated all humane feelings; every one of the recent films about him is drenched in blood. But without him there would have been no united China.[2] The fascination with Qin Shihuang, who ruled the empire only for eleven years (221–10 BC), is an almost morbid recognition that to be Chinese, and to accept Chinese history, brings both pride and sorrow.

The same uncomfortable blend of feelings is seen in attitudes toward another of China's great rulers, the eighteenth-century emperor Qianlong. It was during his sixty-year rule that China reached its greatest land extent. Many of China's contemporary territorial claims are based

[1] The 5,000-year theory is a current convention that is a mystery to most ancient historians, since this figure takes one back into prehistory, when history becomes myth and legend. It is possible, however, that archeologists will give validity to the theory, since their discoveries keep pushing back the frontiers of history, and showing that dynasties once believed to be mythical, such as the Xia dynasty, may have been real.

[2] These films include *The Emperor's Shadow* (1996), *The Emperor and the Assassin* (2000), and *Hero* (2003). Another blockbluster is in the works.

on Qianlong's expansionism. Pride in these achievements must ignore two uncomfortable facts: that the expansion was achieved by an emperor who was not Chinese but Manchu, and a ruler who ran ferocious witch-hunts against those whom he distrusted, notably intellectuals, mandarins, and religious groups.

These two hegemons (*bawang*) at least presided over periods of glory for China. This is not the case with the painful recent past, the decades of war and turmoil that have marked the last century. The blackest period started with the Japanese invasion in 1937 and ended in 1949 with the Communist victory – twelve years of continuous warfare, twice the length of the Second World War. The revolutionary leaders of modern China, republican and communist, dedicated their lives to eradicating China's national shame (*guochi*), which aroused feelings of fury, anguish, and remorse in politically conscious Chinese as they saw the weakness of China in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

In 1949 the Communist era started, on a note of high optimism. When Mao Zedong announced that "China has stood up," this rather banal phrase carried the message that China had put the shame and humiliation of the past behind her. The Mao era (1949–76) turned out to be an even greater disaster than the previous decades, marked by the terrible excesses of the Land Reform, the Anti-Rightist Movement, the Great Leap Forward, and the Cultural Revolution. The economy, the education system, the social system, the health system were all sacrificed to the wild visions of a megalomaniac.

Thirty years after Mao's death, China has a high standing amongst other nations. After twenty-five years of reform and economic growth China has achieved not the goals of socialist equality and class struggle, the ideas that dominated the Mao era, but the goals set by the leaders of the early and middle Republic: economic security, international recognition, freedom from the fear of invasion – and the restoration of national pride.

One major goal has still not been achieved: the establishment of democracy and, with it, the rule of law. Marxism has been consigned to the scrap heap of history, but the Communist Party still exercises absolute control over China, a control that has not been weakened by economic success. Only in the Republic on Taiwan has democracy been established, and only in Taiwan and Hong Kong is there rule of law.

The role of the "great man"

The revival of past leaders raises the question of the role of the "great man" in modern history. The Republic had no leader of the stature of Qin Shihuang, Qianlong, or Mao Zedong. Sun Yat-sen was a great man,

but he did not hold power long enough to count as a state leader. Chiang Kai-shek never established dominance over China or over his own party; his contributions were overshadowed by his constant need to shore up his own position.

The lack of an outstanding leader need not be a disaster. It counters the assumption that one man should control and manipulate a whole nation, the assumption that colors interpretations of the first three decades of the PRC, now known as the Mao era. Mao Zedong was once praised, and is now increasingly blamed, for everything that happened then.[3] This interpretation is as limiting and as misleading as the assumption that everything that happened in Nazi Germany can be blamed on Hitler. If all the disasters that happened in the Mao era are blamed on Mao himself, then it lets other Chinese, including the tens of millions who adored him, and the millions of cadres who carried out his policies, off the hook. In the case of the Republic, the overwhelming cause of its successes, failures, and disasters cannot be attributed to one man – but can be attributed to the impact of warfare and invasion.

Ideology and/or war

Much of the analysis of modern China has focused on ideology, on the impact of new ideas, the durability of old ideas, and the conflict between old and new thought systems, and between Chinese and Western ones. The focus on ideas has been extended to include social and economic structures. Since Marxism triumphed in China and is still the official state ideology, this focus seems reasonable.

But it overlooks the source of China's humiliation at foreign hands: not ideological weakness but a backwardness in military technology that permitted first the British attacks in the Opium War, then the Japanese victory in 1895. The Japanese assault on China in the 1930s owed almost everything to Japanese superiority in the air, at sea, and in mechanized land warfare.

The focus on ideas and on deep structures treats warfare as a transitory phenomenon, "utterly devastating but ultimately temporary."[4] It downplays the importance of the military and of warfare in modern Chinese history. For most of the duration of the Republic, warfare determined the course of events, first the rule of the warlords, then the GMD unification, then the Japanese invasion and occupation, and finally the Civil

[3] See Jung Chang and Jon Halliday, *Mao: The Unknown Story* (London: Jonathan Cape, 2005).

[4] Prasanjit Duara, *Culture, Power and the State* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1988), p. 249.

War, each accompanied by dislocation and turbulence that precipitated uncontrolled, anarchic change in China's social structures, and crippled her economy.

The past of violence and warfare weighs heavily in China. It is not a bleakly onerous load. China's resistance to Japan remains a source of pride sixty years after the end of the war, the subject of a stream of TV specials, serials, and films. Japan's "refusal" to admit her "guilt" is a constant of political rhetoric, a useful tool to give some voice to a population that is denied political participation. Celebration of the war also allows a discreet return of GMD figures. The winner of the Gold Medal at the 2004 National Exhibition of Arts was a huge painting by Chen Jian of the Japanese surrender in 1945 – starring General He Yingqin, a man whose portrait has not appeared on the Mainland since 1949.

The personal past

China's current success and explosive economic growth do not obscure the past, or compensate for its sorrows. With the exception of a few recent events, such as the Beijing massacre of 1989, there is little desire to cover up the past. The issue is how to interpret a deeply conflicted past, in a way that must accommodate shame over self-inflicted wounds as well as external ones.

There are deeply personal reasons for this. The scars of war and conflict lie not only on the nation but on individuals and families; almost everyone has a personal narrative of loss and suffering – of grief, separation, and pain.[5] The experiences of each generation differ, but are brought together in the history of families and communities.

Chronology and generation

The generation born in the 1890s grew up in a conservative, apparently immutable world, a world that gave a sense of security and clarity. The leaders from this generation, including most of the men who dominated China until the 1970s, came to reject the old world, but carried with them the self-confidence it had given them as young men of talent and intellect.

The generation below them, born in the first decades of the Republic, were not so fortunate. They grew up in a period of upheaval and change,

[5] Stephane Audoin-Rouzeau and Annette Becker's study of the First World War, *14–18: Understanding the Great War* (New York: Farrar Strauss, 2002), has captured, for France, the way in which the grief and pain of that war entered deeply into the soul of that country.

and their lives were dominated by warfare, and the uncertainty it engendered. The vast majority, the peasantry, lived lives marked by poverty and insecurity. Those at the other end of the social spectrum led much easier lives, but still faced constant upheaval.

The generation born during the Anti-Japanese War were the least fortunate of the modern generations. They were born into a society under assault from outside; they spent their childhood in a world at war with itself, and then found themselves either in exile from China, or engulfed by the revolution in China. These experiences were so painful that the people of this generation, now in their sixties, still find it hard to look back on their early lives.

The generation born after 1949 on the Mainland grew up as the devoted children of Mao, and became Red Guards, his children and his victims, their education limited, their future dictated by their class background. Their cousins who grew up in Taiwan or Hong Kong were luckier – better educated, more affluent, freer. The most recent generations are even luckier, wherever they live; they have not known warfare or major turbulence.

Each of these generations has its own views on China's recent past and its own place in it. All are heirs to a history in which the dream of a republic, a just, equitable system of governance in which individuals have equal opportunities, and the government is neither corrupt nor arbitrary, has had a potent influence.

This book is organized chronologically, by historical periods that mirror the generations – and are the recognized stages of modern history in China's conception of her history. Each stage is demarcated by a pivotal event: 1911 was the end of the imperial order; the early Republic lasted until 1927 and the success of the Northern Expedition; the Nanjing decade from 1928 to 1937; the Anti-Japanese War started in 1937 and ended in 1945; the Civil War lasted from 1946 to 1949. The last period of the Republic, 1949 to the present, deals only with Taiwan, not with the new world on the Mainland. This conception assumes major continuities between periods, but accepts the Chinese predilection for precise periodization.

Most of the pivotal events of the Republic have been political and military, a concentration that underlines the heavy weight of revolution and war in modern Chinese history. Sun Yat-sen presides over every period of modern history, as he does over every place in the Chinese world. His picture hangs in the center of Beijing. His mausoleum outside Nanjing is a place of pilgrimage. His successor as the eleventh President of the Republic, Ch'en Shui-pien, bowed to Sun's portrait when he was

inaugurated as president in 2000. The modest, gentle Sun Yat-sen is the only modern Chinese who is universally loved and admired.

Further reading

A detailed general text on Republican China (until 1949) is the *Cambridge History of China*, volume 12, edited by John King Fairbank (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983).

For a guide to primary sources for the study of the Republic, see Endymion Wilkinson, *Chinese History: A Manual*, 2nd edition (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2000), 981–1061.

1 The decline of empire, the dream of a republic: 1890s–1911

China's imperial system lasted for more than two millennia, through twenty or more dynasties, some of which lasted only a few years, others several hundred. Between dynasties the empire was periodically disunited, sometimes for hundreds of years at a time, but – ultimately – strong, centralized rule was always restored under a new dynasty. It seemed inconceivable that the imperial system itself could come to an end. But the processes set in motion by a combination of Western incursion and internal rebellion and decay led to that shocking outcome, in 1911. The Manchu Qing dynasty turned out to be the last Chinese dynasty. The downhill path toward the collapse was painful for those who believed in the status quo, exhilarating for those who wanted to hasten its demise.

The downhill slide

The signs of decline

Foreign invasion, peasant rebellion, religious sectarianism, official corruption, a Yellow River flood – in traditional Chinese statecraft theories these were some of the unmistakable signs of dynastic decline, signs that the Mandate of Heaven was being withdrawn and the dynasty losing the right to rule.

Between the 1850s and the early 1890s the Qing dynasty experienced every one of these inauspicious events. The British, French, and Russians made substantial incursions into China, in a series of wars that ended in unequal treaties. There were rebellions throughout the country, some without obvious religious elements (the Nian), others driven by religious zeal. The largest of them, the Christian-influenced[1] Taiping Rebellion (1851–64), took over almost half of China. Corruption was ingrained

[1] Hong Xiuchuan, the Taiping leader, believed that he had been appointed by God, his father in heaven, to lead China to the true faith. Since God was his father, he believed that he was the younger brother of Jesus Christ, and that both he and Jesus Christ were the sons of God's wife. He believed that he had met his parents and his brother on a brief visit to heaven.

The Mandate of Heaven

A traditional belief that imperial houses ruled at the will of heaven, and that heaven bestowed a mandate to rule on a particular lineage, a mandate that would inevitably be removed – though not at a precise time. According to the mandate theory, each dynasty went through a cycle of flourishing and expansion, which gave way to decline and collapse. Signs that a dynasty was waning included bad government, natural disasters, floods of the Yellow River, official corruption, and strange natural phenomena (a bird with nine heads, for example). Imperial rule in China was never secure, because the omens of decline were so numerous that it was always possible to find predictions that a collapse was on the way. The word for the change in the mandate, *geming*, is the word used for "revolution."

in the Chinese bureaucracy, and had begun to infect the examination system, where cheating was rampant. The Yellow River flooded in 1853.

In the short run the dynasty transcended most of these baleful happenings, made treaties with the foreigners, and put down the rebels, with extreme brutality. But a sense of foreboding had set in. A threat hung over the dynasty, that its time was running out. Though the dynasty had crushed the rebellions, the fear of further rebellion was never far from the minds of the Peking[2] government and its bureaucrats, the mandarins.

The state of the country

On the surface, China seemed to be in quite good shape in the late nineteenth century. The Manchu imperial family and a few million other Manchus occupied hereditary positions of great power and privilege at the pinnacle of the state, but the real administrative talent of the country was the lean bureaucracy (about 20,000 men), the mandarins who ran the government and legal systems, assisted by a much larger number of local gentry members who ran rural China. China's economy was mature and well integrated, internal trade was rich and well regulated, international trade was developing rapidly, and customs revenues were swelling government revenues. There were grounds for complacency – and complacency was widespread.

The mandarins recognized the need for some change if China was to be strengthened. They decided to borrow technology from the West to upgrade their military, under the rubric of *Zhongxue wei ti, xixue wei yong*

[2] The current romanization of China's capital is Beijing (Northern Capital). Until the 1960s non-Chinese always called it Peking, including during the period 1928–49 when it was no longer the capital, but it was known in Chinese as Beiping (Northern Peace).

Imperial Maritime Customs

The Imperial Maritime Customs (IMC) service was an organ of the Peking government, set up in 1861 and staffed at senior levels by foreigners. For decades its chief was the Ulsterman Sir Robert Hart, who regarded himself as a servant of the Chinese, not the British, throne. He recruited a highly competent and professional body of agents, both foreign and Chinese, who manned customs posts in all China's ports, on the coast and the great rivers. The IMC gave young men excellent career prospects, and in return they served China well. Customs revenue increased rapidly, and was used to finance new infrastructure projects in China, and to pay off indemnities to foreign Powers. The IMC Archives, in Nanjing and London, are a very valuable source for modern Chinese history.

Hosea Ballou Morse, *The International Relations of the Chinese Empire*. London: Longmans, 1910.

("Chinese learning is for the essence, Western learning is for utility"). Arsenals and shipyards were built, foreign advisors brought in to staff them. Translators were trained, and students sent abroad.

中學為體,
西學為用。

Zhongxue wei ti, xixue wei yong.
"Chinese learning is for the essence, Western learning is for utility."
Source: *Zhang Zhidong*

By the early 1890s it was clear, however, that these changes had not been enough, that China was in a weakened state. The rural economy was groaning under the burden of too many people. The long-term impact of population growth from the early Qing (in 1700 there were about 150 million Chinese, in 1850 some 430 million) had undermined the traditional economy; there was unemployment, malnutrition, and discontent. The population growth was impelled by what the English sinologist J. O. P. Bland called "procreative recklessness" – early marriage and frequent childbearing for women. The growth in population was uneven, distorted by the huge casualties that parts of the country had suffered in the rebellions of the 1850s and 1860s.

The state scarcely recognized the problem of population growth. There were more urgent issues, including weakness at the top of the government.

In spite of a dedication to polygamy (most emperors had dozens of concubines), the Manchus were unable to sustain the production of capable rulers, after the first four. The last strong Manchu ruler was the Qianlong Emperor; his successors were either weak, incompetent, or infants. Several reigned only briefly, their short rules creating disruptions, with elaborate and time-consuming ceremonies: funerals, mourning rites, and the installation of a new emperor. The only strong "man" was Cixi, the redoubtable Empress Dowager, the power behind three weak men: her husband, the Xianfeng Emperor (1851–61); her son, the Tongzhi Emperor (1862–75); and her nephew, the Guangxu Emperor (1876–1908).

The late nineteenth century was the high point of Western imperialist expansion, in Asia as much as on other continents. China was used to attacks from the terrifying barbarians of inner Asia, who had invaded China so often in the past, and knew how to overwhelm them by absorbing them into Chinese culture, but there was no precedent for dealing with the people who came from the West, the "ocean ghosts" (*yang guizi*) – the strange red-faced, yellow-haired, blue-eyed people from beyond the ocean. But they had to be dealt with. The British were firmly established in Hong Kong and Shanghai, as were the French in Indo-China, and the Americans and Germans were poised to join in. The pressure from the Western Powers was outweighed, for the Manchus, by Russian expansion into the Manchu homeland, Manchuria.[3] The Russians were the only foreign Power that the Manchus had dealt with seriously in the past, in the late seventeenth century. They knew them well; the northeast corner of Peking's walled city was a Russian compound, including the embassy, a church, a lake, and a dairy farm. Russia was expanding her positions in Siberia, and threatening China's western frontiers, as she expanded into central Asia. This expansion brought Russia into conflict with Britain. The two countries were locked in "the Great Game," for control of the high places of central Asia – the Himalayas, the Pamirs, the Karakorams, and China's westernmost province, Xinjiang (the New Dominion).

An even larger foreign threat was looming. The Japanese, for so long a remote, almost invisible neighbor, only occasionally troublesome, had now caught the Western bug of expansion, and were moving into Korea, and had their eyes on southern Manchuria.

The threats suddenly turned into reality with the Sino-Japanese War (1894–5) and unthinkable defeat. China was not only defeated but had to

[3] The Chinese name for this region is the Three Eastern Provinces or the Northeast. There is a convention to use the name Manchuria in English.

An English lady in Chinese Turkestan (xinjiang)

When I first went to Kashgar, very little foreign material had been brought to the bazaar, and everyone, except a very few rich bais, who always went clad in velvet, was dressed in their native red *kham*. Practically no Russian stores were to be found, and sugar was scarce. It was rather wonderful to think that the City, with its streets and bazaars, looked just as it must have done for centuries, and the people were living and dressing in very much the same fashion as did their forefathers. Our mode of travelling, too, was just the same as it had been in the days when Marco Polo passed through these parts on his way to the Court of Kublai Khan in the thirteenth century.

Very soon, however, after I arrived [1898], a great change began to take place. Materials, stores, utensils, household furniture and fittings, sugar and white flour were brought by caravan from Russia and India. The rich merchants began building Europeanized houses, using chairs and tables, and even the common people dressed in gaudy, large-patterned Russian prints, mostly with hideous pink roses scattered about a bright background.

Lady Macartney, *An English Lady in Chinese Turkestan* (London: Ernest Benn, 1931), pp. 73–4. Lady Macartney was the wife of Sir George Macartney, son of Sir Halliday Macartney, secretary to the Chinese Legation in London, and his Chinese wife.

turn to other imperialist Powers for help to regain the southernmost part of Manchuria, the precious Liaodong Peninsula (the Tripartite Intervention, May 1895); this "gain" was paid for with an indemnity to compensate Japan for the cost of the war, and the cession of Taiwan, an island that the Japanese had not sought or occupied in the fighting.[4]

This loss was only the beginning of the nightmare. Over the next four years China had to endure the "scramble for the concessions," as the Powers competed with each other in an undignified race to strip China of her most valuable assets.

The Western Powers were battling not only for material concessions in China but also for the souls of the Chinese people. Missionaries poured in to China, from Europe and North America, and set up missions in every part of the country. The skylines of cities and towns were altered by heaven-pointing Gothic spires, as missions competed with each other to build ever-finer establishments. These were the first churches built in China since the seventeenth century, when the Jesuits had built churches in several cities. By 1900 there were almost 2,000 missionaries in China. They preached every form of Christianity, and set up schools, hospitals,

[4] The trading of the Liaodong Peninsula for Taiwan was the root cause of the conviction of many native Taiwanese today that the island was given away by China – and that China's claim to the island was nullified by this action.

Table 1.1 *The scramble for the concessions: territories/rights ceded to foreign countries, 1895–9*

	Place
Japan	Taiwan
Germany	Qiaozhou (Shandong) lease; right to build Qingdao–Jinan Railway
Russia	Port Arthur, Liaodong Peninsula lease; right to build Chinese Eastern Railway (CER), South Manchurian Railway
Britain	Weihaiwei (Shandong) lease; New Territories (Hong Kong) lease; right to build Shanghai–Nanjing Railway; right to build Tianjin–Pukou Railway
France	Guangzhouwan (Guangdong) lease; rights to build Hanoi–Nanning Railway, Hanoi–Kunming Railway
Belgium	Right to build Peking–Hankou Railway

and universities as ways to get access to potential converts. China was the Holy Grail for missionaries, the most difficult but the most compelling mission field in the world. China attracted energetic, driven, passionate young people, the best of their generation. Some, such as the "Cambridge Seven" who joined the China Inland Mission, were wealthy, privileged young people; others were from more modest backgrounds. Many were married, and the parents of "mish kids," who grew up in China and interpreted China for the West, the most famous being the American novelist Pearl Buck.

Foreign businesses brought a different message, of the power of the market. There were now dozens of foreign enclaves in China: places that had been permanently ceded, such as Macao, Hong Kong; settlements such as the International Settlement in Shanghai; and treaty ports, on the coast and along the great rivers – by 1911 there were almost fifty treaty ports. Foreigners opened factories in the major enclaves, to exploit China's endless supply of cheap labour to produce goods for China's vast market. Then (as now) foreign businessmen were mesmerized by the size of the Chinese market, their minds filled with visions of fabulous wealth if the Chinese market was opened. Goods were also produced for export. Steamer transport made it possible to export low-value, high-volume goods, such as clothing, as well as the traditional luxury export goods (tea, silk, porcelain) that had been able to bear the cost of hazardous voyages under sail.

The foreign merchants drawn to China by the lure of the market made it clear they were in China to stay. In Shanghai, Hong Kong, Tianjin, and other cities they replicated the world they had left in Europe. In Shanghai the Bund was a homage to the Liverpool waterfront, lined with

The real condition of China

Three mutually inconsistent theories are held in regard to reform in China. First, that it is unnecessary. This is no doubt the view of some of the Chinese themselves, though by no means of all Chinese. It is also the opinion adopted by certain foreigners, who look at China and the Chinese through the mirage of distance. Second, that reform is impossible. This pessimistic conclusion is arrived at by many who have had too much occasion to know the tremendous obstacles which any permanent and real reform must encounter, before it can even be tried. To such persons, the thorough reformation of so vast a body as the Chinese people appears to be as hopeless a task as the galvanising into life of an Egyptian. To us, the second of these views appears only less unreasonable than the first. [. . .] To those who are agreed that reform in China is both necessary and possible, the question by what agency that reform is to be brought about is an important one, and it is not surprising that there are several different and inharmonious replies.

Arthur Smith, *Chinese Characteristics* (London: Revell, 1894), pp. 301–2.

the palatial headquarters of banks and shipping companies. In Qingdao the Germans built replicas of German offices, stations, and hotels, in the quaint Black Forest style. The Derby Engine Works was reproduced faithfully in Tangshan (Hebei). Tudor, Georgian, and *beaux arts* villas sprang up to house foreign business families in suburbs on the fringes of the treaty ports.

Seen from abroad, the motives of foreign diplomats, businessmen, and missionaries in China were quite distinct, and relations between the groups were often sour, as were the relations between nationals of the various powers. From within China these differences were imperceptible, however. Chinese who were aware of the foreign presence saw their country at the receiving end of a combined assault, a unified and coordinated battle for power, profit, and souls, all aimed at humiliating and demeaning China.

In the late 1890s many parts of the world came under the spell of *fin de siècle*, the doom-laden mood that took hold as the century came to an end. China was in trouble, but the concept had no meaning there; years were counted on the dynastic system, which restarted counting with the beginning of each emperor's rule and did not recognize decades or centuries. The end of a century or not, in the second half of the 1890s the recognition of the need for sweeping change was gaining hold, however difficult this seemed to accomplish.

Change was so difficult to contemplate that there could be no easy agreement as to what form it should take. As the Qing dynasty declined, different visions for the future emerged.

Solutions

Revolution

In the early 1890s the young Sun Yat-sen started on his lifelong pilgrimage to save China. Sun was a Cantonese, born near Guangzhou (Canton), brought up partly in Hawaii, and educated in the British colony of Hong Kong. He was a medical doctor who gave up the practice of medicine to save his country. His open, outward-looking, modern-minded vision of a new China, of a country run for its people, embodying principles of equality between peoples and between nations, of free trade and business, found its first support in the Overseas Chinese communities that were growing in the late nineteenth century. Sun's vision was later made formal in his *Three Principles of the People* – nationalism (*minzu*), democracy (*minzhu*) and economic security (*minsheng*).

Sun's dream of nationalism, democracy, and equality seemed fantastic when he first started to promote it. But the young man who had spent so much of his life outside China had a profound understanding of China. He attracted support – not within China, but in the overseas communities made up of his fellow Cantonese. This made the government in Peking nervous. China's representatives abroad were ordered to take steps to silence him.

In 1896 Sun's travels took him to London – where he was kidnapped by Chinese agents. He got off an omnibus at Oxford Circus and was walking north when he was surrounded by three men; they carried him into the Chinese Embassy in Portland Place, where he was imprisoned in an attic.[5] Sun's activities within the small Overseas Chinese community in the East End had become known to the embassy; he was regarded as a dangerous terrorist. The embassy's plan was to smuggle him out of England, back to China and a certain death. But Sun was not friendless. His brief medical career in Hong Kong had brought him into contact with a doctor, James Cantlie, now in London. Sun managed to throw a note out of his attic window, which got to Cantlie, who applied to the

[5] The same austere building is the embassy of the People's Republic of China today.

British courts for a writ of habeas corpus. It was granted and won Sun his freedom.

塞翁失马，
焉知非福。

Saiweng shima, yanzhi feifu.
"When the old man at the borders loses his horse, who is to know that this is not a blessing? A blessing in disguise."
Source: *Huainanzi*

Sun became a celebrity. His kidnapping transformed him from a man of limited importance, unknown outside a narrow sphere of Overseas Chinese, into the acknowledged leader in the fight for political change within China. He started a formal campaign to promote a revolution to overthrow the Qing dynasty. His grandiose vision had been given a substance, and the revolutionary movement was under way.

Reform

In the late 1890s the Guangxu Emperor started to feel self-confident, and optimistic about what he could do. He was coming out from under the powerful influence of his formidable aunt, the Empress Dowager Cixi, who had acted as his regent for the first fourteen years of his reign. She had now moved to the lavish new Summer Palace (Yiheyuan), built for a retirement of pleasure and relaxation.[6] Although Guangxu was cocooned in the luxury and protocol of the Forbidden City, his sensitive intelligence told him that things were going very wrong in China, and that the time for change had come. After China's defeat by Japan he was convinced that drastic steps had to be taken if the dynasty was to be saved.

The vague ideas for reform that were percolating in his mind were given clarity when he came under the influence of two brilliant young Cantonese, Kang Youwei and Liang Qichao. In 1895 Kang led a protest by thousands of provincial degree holders, in Peking to sit the capital examinations, calling on the government to reject the terms of the treaty with Japan. He made a name for himself as a radical. With the help of Kang and Liang the emperor devised a sweeping series of reforms,

[6] Cixi has often been accused of using money set aside for the Chinese navy for her palace, though no proof exists that she did this.

Liang Qichao 1873–1929

Liang Qichao was one of most brilliant of minds of modern China. He grew up in the far south of China, near Guangzhou, and passed the provincial examinations at the incredibly young age of sixteen (fifteen by Western counting). He became a devotee of a slightly older Cantonese scholar, Kang Youwei, and in 1895 the two went together to Peking to take the capital examinations. They were the key figures in the reform movement launched by the Guangxu Emperor in 1898. When the reforms failed, Liang fled from China, and settled in Tokyo. For the next two decades his essays on political reform were more influential than any other political writings in Chinese, enough to make him the intellectual conscience of modern China. He traveled widely, and his views on foreign parts became famous. He was under-impressed with American democracy – and leaned increasingly toward a benevolent autocracy for China, modified Confucianism. After 1911 he returned to China, and became the *eminence grise* of China's intellectuals. Liang is famous for his command of the Chinese language; his prose style and his calligraphy are considered amongst the greatest examples of Classical Chinese.

Andrew Nathan, *Chinese Democracy*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1986.

reforms that he believed that he, as emperor, had the power to promulgate and implement. In the early summer of 1898 he acted.

The emperor poured out a series of forty reform edicts, which would have had the effect of transforming China into something close to a constitutional monarchy. The reforms are known as the Hundred Days Reforms, a title that reveals that they were so short-lived that they never happened. The proposed reforms infuriated many of the most powerful mandarins. They managed to get the Empress Dowager to come out of retirement, and resume her control over the government. She was not pleased, and she made her displeasure clear. Guangxu's reforms were revoked, his protégés forced into exile or killed. The emperor was severely punished for his bravado – and for disturbing his aunt's repose. He was forced to spend the rest of his life in her "protective custody," imprisoned on a tiny island in a lake that is part of the palace complex in central Peking. The vision of top-down reform was extinguished; with it disappeared the possibility of gradual political evolution in China.

The military way

One man, in the aftermath of the defeat by Japan, had no doubt about what had to be done. Within weeks of the end of the war a vigorous young soldier, Yuan Shikai, came up with a detailed plan for a reorganization

and expansion of the Chinese forces. He was made commander of the prosaically named Newly Created Army (*Xinjianjun*), at the age of thirty-six. His plan was a simple one: to make China strong enough to resist future foreign attacks. He cared little for ideology, principles, or vague visions of the future; his only interest was a strong, efficient military that could resist outsiders and keep the unruly Chinese in order.

Yuan Shikai was from a poor northern family, adopted into a military family, and brought up in the old army. He was a tough man, physically and mentally. He believed in organization and discipline, and in recruiting good men as soldiers, treating them well, providing them with good training and weapons, and giving them a proper career. Once he had his new position, he demanded the money necessary to train his new army, and he got it. Within a year or two he had over 10,000 men, a military school (Baoding), a collection of talented young officers (the foundation of his "Beiyang Clique"). By the time Yuan was promoted to governor of Shandong, at the end of 1899, his army was an effective fighting force.

Imperialist "improvement"

Some of the ideas for change in China came from outside, the ideologies and religious beliefs of late nineteenth-century Europe. One of the most carefully conceived (and most disastrous) programs was the German vision for a new world in Shandong.

In the 1860s and 1870s Baron Ferdinand von Richthofen made seven long trips through China, out of which came his monumental *Atlas von China*. Von Richthofen embodied many of the impulses that brought Westerners to China. He believed in science, trade, and Christianity rolled together – what he saw happening in his new, modern nation, Germany. He was in the grips of the improving impulse, the overt justification for imperialist expansion: China could only benefit from modeling herself on Germany.

Von Richthofen found the ideal type of Chinese for the German vision in the northern province of Shandong. In the mid-1890s he published a series of books that advocated the acquisition of a German stronghold in China, peopled by virile, hardy "Chinese Germans," physically and morally superior, only lacking German knowledge and leadership to come into their own. In the late 1890s Germany established a foothold in Shandong. The German government acquired a lease to Qiaozhou Bay, and the right to build a railway line across the province. The construction of a grand metropolis at Qingdao began; the railway line from Qingdao to the provincial capital Jinan was surveyed.

The railway craze

Railways were to the late nineteenth century what information technology was to the late twentieth century – the new horizon, the thrilling future. Railways were built across North America, the Trans-Siberian Railway was started in 1891. Governments and private enterprise were gripped by railway fever. Sun Yat-sen was a devotee of railways, and his vision for China connected every place to another in a huge cat's cradle. The powers each had a railway vision for China, the British for a north–south line from Tianjin to Pukov, the Belgians for a more westerly north–south line, the Germans for a rail network in Shandong, and the Japanese and Russians for networks in Manchuria. There were problems with railway construction. Railways have to be built in more or less straight lines, but Chinese graves are often sited in open country, to satisfy the spirits of the wind and water (*fengshui*). Building railways often meant the desecration of graves, and the disturbance of the ancestors buried in them. The terrain is difficult for railway construction in many parts of China. An east–west line along the Yangzi has still not been built, because the land is too marshy in the lower reaches, and the cliffs too steep higher up the river. The railway to Xinjiang was not built until the 1950s, though planned decades earlier, and the line to Tibet is only now completed.

Cheng Lin, *The Chinese Railways: A Historical Survey*. Shanghai: Chinese United Press, 1935.

Zealous German priests arrived to convert the people of the province. A blueprint for the "German province," which included plans for wine and beer production, was drawn up.[7] The vision was implemented with efficiency and determination, but short-run success led rapidly to disaster. The aggressive proselytizing of the priests, who galloped round the villages of Shandong on black horses, wearing black cassocks, did not bring souls to Christ but created a wave of fear. The only "converts" were malefactors who sought the priests' protection from Chinese officials. The fear was reinforced by natural disasters that coincided with the arrival of the missionaries: a flood of the Yellow River in 1898, and a drought that started in the same year. These disasters, signs of heaven's anger, created widespread feelings of insecurity, verging on panic. The surveying of the railway – along straight lines that disturbed the graves of many ancestors – seemed the final proof of impending disaster. In climates of fear transcendental religious movements had always flourished in the Chinese countryside. Men turned to mystical martial arts to protect themselves and their families, and found strength in the belief in

[7] Tsingtao Chinese beer is actually a light German beer, still manufactured in Qingdao (Tsingtao).

Boxer pronouncement, 1900

On account of the Protestant and Catholic religions the Buddhist gods are oppressed, and the sages thrust into the background. The law of Buddha is no longer respected, and the Five Relationships [of Confucian ethics] are disregarded. The anger of Heaven and Earth has been aroused and the timely rain has consequently been withheld from us. But Heaven is now sending down eight million spiritual soldiers to extirpate these foreign religions, and when this has been done there will be timely rain.

A Boxer poster, widely displayed in North China. Quoted in Joseph Esherick, *The Origins of the Boxer Uprising* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1987), p. 282.

magical powers that could make them invulnerable, able even to resist bullets.

The Boxer catastrophe

In the late spring of 1900 Sun Yat-sen was in exile, moving around the world from one Overseas Chinese community to another, always amongst his own Cantonese people. The emperor was a prisoner in Peking, held completely incommunicado; his supporters were in exile. The pressure of events in Shandong boiled over into a terrible catastrophe. Yuan Shikai, the military supremo, helped to precipitate them.

In early 1900 the followers of the sect known as the Righteous Fists or Boxers (*Yihetuan*) were expelled from Shandong by the new governor, Yuan Shikai. They moved north and west, and rampaged through Hebei and Shanxi, provinces to the south and west of Peking, mocking and insulting foreigners. They believed that they had been sent by heaven to rid China of the foreign devils – and they believed that heaven had made them invulnerable to foreign weapons. As their actions grew bolder they attracted official support, and this support convinced them that they could do whatever they wanted. They turned on the foreigners in Shanxi – mainly missionaries – and killed almost 300 of them. In Peking the German ambassador, von Ketteler, was shot dead, and the diplomatic corps was besieged in the Legation Quarter, with about 900 foreigners, businessmen, missionaries, and diplomats, and some 3,000 Chinese Christians.

The Siege of Peking lasted fifty-five days. It inflamed the imaginations of the Western world to fever pitch; this was one of the first crises to occur after the establishment of telegraph links with Asia, and the siege became a headline story across the Western world. There was no contact with the besieged in Peking, but there were lurid accounts from the coast

1.1 **The Empress Dowager, 1903**
Source: J. Bland and E. Backhouse, *China under the Empress Dowager* (Boston: Hill, 1914), frontispiece. By permission of the syndics of Cambridge University Library.

nearby; the "massacre" of all the foreigners in Peking was reported. An international rescue mission was put together, and the siege was lifted by a combined force from the Western Powers and Japan.

The Empress Dowager fled from Peking just ahead of the invading foreigners, dragging the captive emperor with her. The ultimate humiliation for a woman who normally dressed with extreme lavishness was

The Yasakuni Shrine

The spirits of over 2 million Japanese who have died in warfare since 1853 are commemorated in the Yasakuni Shrine in Tokyo. One of the first major groups to be installed there were the dead of the Sino-Japanese War. The shrine is the state war memorial of Japan, and Japanese politicians feel honor-bound to visit the shrine to pay their respects to those who died in the service of their country. The shrine also houses an extensive war museum, dedicated to the heroic exploits of the Japanese military. Since 1978 the shrine has housed the spirits of fourteen Class A war criminals, including the wartime prime minister Tojo Hideki. Official visits to the shrine infuriate Koreans and Chinese, and are taken to mean that Japan has not fully renounced the militarism of the past, or atoned for it. The annual visits of the current Japanese prime minister, Koizumi Junichiro, described as "private," guarantee that the issue of the war comes up regularly.

that she had to disguise herself as a peasant. She left behind officials, who had to sign the humiliating Boxer Protocol. The Chinese government was forced to exterminate the Boxers, to build a monument to von Ketteler,[8] and to pay a massive indemnity to the victors, of over US$450 million, the payments to come from the Imperial Maritime Customs' revenues – which now became a debt servicing agency, to pay China's "debts" to the invaders. The Boxer indemnity condemned China to permanent indebtedness to the Powers; even though some of the money was put toward scholarships for Chinese students to study abroad, the brutal starkness of the demands on China underlined how weak the country now was.

The Boxer period was a seminal moment for foreigners in China. Though the Powers had won, Westerners seldom felt secure after 1900; they lived in states of chronic anxiety, fearing that what they called the "Boxer insanity" might break out again. They lived in guarded enclaves, such as Shamian (Shameen) Island in Guangzhou, or the International Settlement in Shanghai. Their fear, combined with the mutually exclusive feelings of superiority that Chinese and foreigners each felt, and the fact that most foreigners lived in China cut off from the local populations, made it almost impossible for there to be any meeting of minds between Chinese and foreigners.

[8] The monument was dismantled after Germany's defeat in the First World War and the stones used to build a memorial to the victory of right over might in Central Park (later Zhongshan Park) in Peking. Juliet Bredon, *Peking* (Shanghai: Kelly and Walsh, 1922), pp. 56–7.

Another baleful outcome of the Boxer debacle was that the Russians used the confusion further south to strengthen their position in northern Manchuria, where the city of Harbin was emerging as the hub of the Chinese Eastern Railway system. In southern Manchuria the Russians started to develop the city of Dalian (Dalny in Russian, Dairen in Japanese) – an expansion that was an invitation to the Japanese to protest, and to claim their own rights to Manchuria. Within five years Russia and Japan were at war, in a ferocious conflict that was a major stage on the road to ruin for the Romanovs, and an equally important step for the Japanese in their imperial expansion. The dead heroes of the Russo-Japanese War were amongst the first to be commemorated at the Yasakuni Shrine, the home of ultra-nationalism in Toyko.

The new in the old

In retrospect the Boxer Rising was a nail in the coffin for China's old imperial system, for the Manchus as imperial rulers, and for the educated mandarin elite. In the immediate aftermath, however, the crestfallen dynasty tried to pick itself up. There was a general recognition now that change had to come, though no real idea of how to go about it. The dynasty acted with a mixture of defensiveness (training a new army), cautious adventure (the moves toward limited democracy), and recklessness (the slashing of old institutions, notably the examination system).

The abolition of the examination system was supposed to bring a new and Westernized education system to China, but first it brought to an abrupt end the Confucian education system, without putting anything in its place. With the announcement in 1905 that the Imperial Examinations would no longer be held, the government destroyed the hopes of legions of people involved in the examination system: the candidates, boys and men studying for the examinations, and their families whose hopes were placed in them; the teachers and the people who supplied texts to the students; and the people who ran the examination industry – hostel keepers, examiners. With one shocking blow all these people were told that the government had washed its hands of them. The government had destroyed a large part of its natural constituency, the people whose vested interests had until then been tightly linked with the ruling system.

The fiasco of the abolition of the examination system seemed proof that the Manchu elite had been infected by a sense of impending doom, and was helping to destroy the dynasty. Over the previous four decades the dynasty had been rescued from its weakness by the steely Empress Dowager; now, in her last years, she was exhausted, and incapable of the tough-mindedness she had shown before. She and her advisors were

The traditional examination system

For much of its imperial history the Chinese government was a bureaucracy, run by men of talent (mandarins) recruited through the examination system. China was a meritocracy, in which success in the examination system was virtually the only way to make a career. The system attained its final shape in the Song dynasty and functioned unchanged until 1905 – for over 500 years. Passing the exams was very difficult. The Confucian classics were the texts for study. A boy studying for the exams had to learn almost 500,000 characters by heart. There were three levels of examination (county, province, capital). At the first level the pass rate could be as high as 50 percent, but at the provincial level it declined to 1 percent. Examinations were taken in special halls, where candidates were locked into small cells for up to three days – and two nights. Some candidates collapsed, either physically or psychologically. Penalties for cheating were severe and included execution. The men who did pass the exams were brilliant, physically and emotionally strong, self-confident, and arrogant. They were held in the highest esteem by the whole country, and ruled, as officials, on the basis of deference. The esteem given to learning was noted in the West in the eighteenth century, and led to the introduction into Western countries of bureaucratic government, staffed by men who had passed competitive examinations.

Ichisada Miyazaki, *China's Examination Hell*. New York: Weatherhill, 1976. Translated by Conrad Schirokauer.

now desperately trying to hold on to power, making any concessions they could – and all the time weakening themselves further.

The dynasty did come up with some progressive moves in what turned out to be the last years of their rule. One example was the establishment of provincial assemblies. A second was the introduction of some control over opium.[9] Another was the successful campaign against bubonic plague in Manchuria, entrusted to Wu Liande (Lien-te), a Cambridge-educated doctor. But these and other reforms were peripheral to the real agenda, and not nearly enough to stave off the inevitable, the end of some 250 years of Manchu rule.

Forces beyond the Manchus were at work. Some were Chinese, others were global. The rise of modern transport, the rapid spread of new political ideas, and the growth of international trade – all these were forces that the Manchus, like other rulers, were encountering for the first time. The most powerful force was the rise of the nation state, and the new passion that went with it: nationalism.

[9] Opium was now a home-grown product, cultivated in the cool hills of southwestern China. Imports from abroad had virtually ceased.

The mind of the masses

In considering the actual conditions. and forecasting the future of China, it would be unwise to overlook the effect which, spreading inwardly from the sea-board, has gradually been, and is being, produced on the slow-moving masses by the impact of Western civilisation. In the more isolated and remote parts of the country, this effect may still be almost imperceptible; there, to all appearances, the deep current of Chinese traditions and sage-taught philosophy flows unbroken, as it flowed in the golden age of the Tang dynasty. *Eppur si muove*; even in regions to which no newspaper penetrates, there have been repeated tales of barbarian invaders and rumours of the desecration of the capital; the Boxer movement cast its ripples of superstitious chauvinism and unrest far beyond the provinces affected; and everywhere the tax gatherer and the likin collector have made the foreigners' indemnities a pretext for new and heavy exactions.

J. O. P. Bland, *Recent Events and Present Policies in China* (London: Heinemann, 1912), p. 42.

Han nationalism

China had been under foreign rule (the Manchus) for 250 years. The foreignness of the Manchus was marked in the physical appearance of the two races: Han Chinese were clearly distinguished from Manchus. Han males were forced to wear their hair in queues (colloquially called pigtails), Han women of even modest social status had their feet bound, while Manchu women had natural feet. These marks of differentiation had been accepted for a long time, but at the end of the dynasty they came to be resented as signs of subservience, as feelings of nationalism started to grow in many Chinese. One stimulus for this nascent nationalism was the racism that both Han and Manchu encountered at the hands of Westerners, the kind of anti-Chinese paranoia captured in the German Kaiser Wilhelm's term *die gelbe Gefahr* ("yellow peril"). The insults and discrimination that Han had to endure at home and abroad turned them against their rulers, the Manchus, who had allowed China to become so vulnerable to insult.

These feelings of nationalism were limited in their geographical spread. It was in the coastal areas, where the foreign presence had made the greatest inroads, that nationalist organizations began to appear first, amongst Han living beyond the control of the Manchus. With the organizations came protest, including physical acts. Han men cut off their queues, and identified themselves as anti-Manchu, as revolutionaries – men who were throwing off the past. (Han women could not make similar statements.

The injuries of foot binding were permanent; bound feet could not be released.)

The coastal enclaves under foreign control where the first signs of nationalism emerged were also beginning to come into their own as trading ports – the reason the imperialist Powers had taken them from China. A new economy was emerging, and Chinese merchants were growing wealthy. Some of them used their wealth to support the nationalist movement.

The new economy

The new economy was grafted onto the traditional economy, and often blended with it. The treaty ports were the gateways to the vast internal economy, sophisticated and well organized. The government played a light but ultimately controlling role in the economy. Its demands were limited: tax revenue, well-managed markets and the efficient distribution of goods, a discreet transfer of "customary fees" to supplement the meager incomes of officials and their staff. If these demands were met, the government was prepared to leave the merchant world to manage the economy itself. This was done largely by mercantile guilds, some craft-based, others regional. The regional organizations involved people from the same province, city, or county living away from home. There is no good translation into English for the Chinese term *huiguan*, and so the word often used is a German one, *Landsmannschaft*, the organization of people from the same region.

These organizations were central to trade and finance in China. Merchants met at the *huiguan* buildings, they stayed in attached hostels, they ate in the restaurants, they took part in religious rituals and entertainments. They used their local connections to make business deals. Some provinces and counties had branches all over China, and even outside China, all of them part of the highly personal, localized nature of China's commercial world – a pattern that continues up to the present.

The traditional economy was both land-based and water-borne. Trade moved along the vast system of inland waterways, the most famous being the Grand Canal, and along the land trade routes, the longest extending into central Asia. For centuries this trading world had functioned smoothly; in the first decade of the twentieth century it was faced with fundamental transformations. The patterns by which goods and people moved were changing. The railway craze had borne fruit. It was now possible to travel by train from Peking to Moscow in eight days, on the Trans-Siberian Express, and then on to Berlin and Paris. Even the smallest inland city was now served by the telegraph. Transoceanic liners arrived

The provincial club

The prime characteristic of the provincial club is that its membership consists entirely of officials and merchants foreign to the province in which it is situated, and to which they have been called by their official duties or their business . . .

All reputable natives of the home province are eligible for membership. [. . .] In the clubs of Peking the official element predominates; in those in the provinces the greater number are merchants, since they stand most in need of mutual support. The clubs at Peking assist needy students, co-provincials who come up for the capital examinations.

Hosea Ballou Morse, *The Guilds of China* (London: Longmans, 1909), pp. 41–3.

daily in Shanghai and Hong Kong from Europe and North America. Passengers could cross the oceans rapidly, in comfort and safety. These changes in communication integrated China into the world economy, while banks transformed the way business was financed, and moved their customers away from traditional systems that relied on personal connections. The banks were the lubricators of economic development.

In the coastal areas of China new factories sprang up, many of them with foreign investment, others under Chinese ownership. Adept mandarins used their considerable political and economic influence to establish their own businesses. Zhang Jian, an accomplished scholar official, did equally well in business. He started the Great Life (*Dasheng*) complex of industries in 1895 in Nantong, near the mouth of the Yangzi; it included textile mills, flour mills, and other light industrial plants. The Rong family from Ningbo was an example of the cautious response to the new world; some members of the family went into business, others stayed in the official world. The success of entrepreneurs with official connections was a foretaste of what came to be the rule in GMD China and in post-Mao Communist China: a close involvement between government and business, with government ultimately having the upper hand. The model was set for private enterprise, controlled tightly, but at a distance, by the state; a system in which one function of business was to enrich officials.

The rapid development of the coastal regions led to dislocation within the Chinese economy and within society. The old systems of trade atrophied; the Grand Canal, the traditional trade route between north and south, literally dried up in many places. The new world brought the development of factories, mines, railways, commercial agriculture, stock markets, banking. All these institutions of the modern world helped to create a gulf between the rich, who owned the enterprises, and the poor,

The Hongkong and Shanghai Bank

The Hongkong and Shanghai (Huifeng) Bank, founded in 1864, was the central financial institution in the foreign trading world on the China Coast. Its position was so dominant that it was often known as "The Bank." Its buildings dominated the commercial districts of the major centres of China; its massive classical structure in Shanghai was as prominent on the Bund as its headquarters in Hong Kong (compared to the back of a refrigerator) is today. Though Hong Kong comes first in its name, its centre of operations was until 1941 in Shanghai. The Bank operated in many areas – business services and loans, loans to governments in China, personal banking services, bank note issue. Though a commercial operation, the Bank has always been close to the British government, and its senior officers in Shanghai and Hong Kong were amongst the leaders of the British community. Though the Bank had Chinese customers, it did not admit Chinese into its senior management; this omission stimulated the growth of Chinese-owned banks such as the Bank of East Asia and the Hang Seng Bank.

F. H. H. King, *The History of the Hongkong and Shanghai Banking Corporation.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987.

the former peasants who worked for them. The great bulk of peasants still on the land were stuck in a time warp, farming as their forebears had centuries before, but seeing their incomes decline as handicraft products gave way to factory-made products. The manufactured products were superior to the old ones – matches instead of a flint, mineral oil lamps instead of vegetable oil ones.

A miniature agricultural revolution took place in some parts of China, as land was turned over to cash crops. New crops were cultivated: tobacco for China's growing armies of smokers, soybeans to fuel what was to be a huge export market. One author went so far as to write an effusion called "The romance of the soya bean," predicting huge fortunes to be made through the labor of the peasant settlers in Manchuria.

The soy boom did not materialize. The soya bean as a foodstuff did not move out of Chinese cuisine until vegetarianism became a major trend in the West in the 1980s, though soya was widely used as animal fodder. Other new crops were more successful. Sweet potatoes, introduced from the New World, became a major food crop, because they grew so easily. In the cool hills of the southwest opium was the new crop, grown in large enough quantities to supply great numbers of addicts, and to supplant imports.

Meanwhile, the old export industries were in decline. The commodities that had first brought Europeans to China were no longer in demand. The export of porcelain had gradually collapsed; European porcelain

Soya beans

[The soya bean is] the driving force that sent thousands of sturdy Chinese pioneers trekking northwards to live in sod and adobe huts while they broke with their shaggy ponies the vast areas that have gone under the plough in Northern Manchuria during recent years. I have often met them on the road with their families, their chickens, their tools, their iron cooking pans, and their bags of grain, all laden on one farm cart, as their total equipment with which to battle against the forces of nature and the demands of hunger. Of course there are other crops for which they labor, but the soya bean is the one great staple which they can turn into immediate cash.

L. S. Palen, "The romance of the soya bean," *Asia*, January 1919.

factories learnt the secrets of porcelain production in the late eighteenth century.[10] Tea exports also declined dramatically, as the British switched from drinking green China tea to darker Indian and Ceylonese teas; only the effete continued to drink China tea. The Russians did drink red tea from China, but no new markets evolved to replace the lost British market. Americans had already shifted their preference to coffee, which did not grow in China. Silk continued to be in demand, but Chinese silk was now in competition with French, Italian, and Japanese silks.

As the old export industries declined new export industries emerged, industries that relied on highly skilled, poorly paid workers, who produced the labor-intensive manufactures that became the mainstay of China's exports. Tientsin (Tianjin) carpets captured a large market in the West. The carpets were woven in vivid colors, in Aubusson and other floral designs that had no connection to traditional Chinese carpets. Tientsin carpets were a modern version of the eighteenth-century export porcelain, manufactured in China to Western designs.

Cheap labor was also the source of another major export: labor itself. China supplied the labor, for what was known as the coolie trade. Men went around the world to work on huge infrastructure projects, the transcontinental railways in North America, the Trans-Siberian Railway, the Panama Canal. Contract laborers, usually called coolies (*kuli* – "bitter strength") were recruited by labor bosses, who signed contracts with employers to supply and manage a certain quantity of labor. This was an exploitative system, but one that gave security to its participants – and one that had almost limitless potential for growth, given the size of China's population.

[10] For a vivid description of this process of discovery, see Janet Gleeson, *The Arcanum* (New York: Warner, 1998), which tells the story of the Meissen factory.

Most of the coolies stayed abroad for only a short period, unlike the emigrants from Guangdong and Fujian who moved to America and to the Nanyang (Southeast Asia) to settle permanently; many of them stayed for long periods, even though they encountered hostility and racism. The only country barred to Chinese by their government was Cuba, where the abuse of Chinese labor in the sugar cane fields (after the abolition of slavery) was so bad that the government closed off further emigration to Cuba.[11]

China's economy was in flux, a mixture of traditional and modern, failing and successful. As the economy changed, so too did the political geography of China, with the regions dominated by the new economy gaining ground.

The shift of power: the rise of the South

The late Qing saw seismic shifts in China's political and economic worlds, with the emergence of new economic powerhouses and dissident politics in the foreign-controlled enclaves of the South. The South came to be more and more powerful, controlling money, new ideas, and new talent, and having a monopoly of foreign contacts. The North slipped backward, became almost moribund, sunk in conservatism and lethargy. The shifts were most obvious in Hong Kong and Shanghai, where Chinese lived under foreign colonial or semi-colonial rule, but went ahead economically, educationally, and politically more rapidly than people in other parts of China.

Southerners came in several distinct regional groupings. The Cantonese were vigorous, talented, and outward-looking. The Shanghai people were sharp, sophisticated, and cosmopolitan, the epitome of modernity. The people of southern Fujian (Minnan) were bold, creative, and not given to listening to anyone in authority. All three of these groups started to move ahead strongly in the new economy.

In Peking's eyes the South was compromised, because so much of its rise had to do with working with imperialists, and adapting their thought systems – everything from capitalism to Christianity and, eventually, Marxism. The same complaints were leveled against Overseas Chinese, people working in often racist, foreign-controlled worlds. But, given that the Qing remained committed to putting down dissidence and opposition, those Chinese living under foreign control played increasingly important political roles. They gave money and support to the

[11] The Cuban cubist Wifredo Lam was the descendant of one of the earliest Chinese settlers in Cuba, who arrived before the prohibition came into force.

Chinatowns

Chinatowns were enclaves of Chinese living in emigration in Southeast Asia and North America. They were enclosed worlds in which people could live, work, and eat in Chinese surroundings. The isolation of Chinatowns from the host societies stemmed from several factors. One was the rampant racism of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. A second was that many of the Chinatown residents were contract laborers, filling the demand for cheap labor; these were single men, sojourners (*qiao*), working abroad only to save money, and in need of a place where they could live cheaply, and send money home to their families through the Chinatown merchants who had recruited the laborers in the first place. The Chinatowns were known in Chinese as *Tangrenjie* (Streets of the Cantonese), reflecting the origins of the inhabitants. Chinatown communities were strong supporters of the revolutionary cause; many of the revolutionaries were also Cantonese.

Wing Chung Ng, *Vancouver's Chinatown*. Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1999.

revolutionary cause, at the same time that their remittances, financial support for their families at home, helped to fuel domestic economic growth.

The religion of the West, Christianity, played an equivocal role in the ending of the old era, both overseas and in China. In China, the religion was the handmaiden of Western imperialism, but also the bearer of new forms of education, schools and universities. Its missionaries brought

St. John's University

St. John's College was set up 1879 under the aegis of the Episcopal (Anglican) Church. It was a bilingual, bicultural (English and Chinese) school that attracted boys from the top of Shanghai society. It was a Christian school, and prayers were compulsory, but it made a point of including non-Christian students. The school was transformed into a university in 1905, housed in buildings built in a blend of Chinese and Western architecture. The university was lavishly funded from the United States, and this funding, with the contributions of its alumni, made it one of the wealthiest universities in China – but also one whose students participated in the student movements that started in 1919 (see May 4, below). The university was closed after the Communist takeover in 1949, but continues as St. John's College, University of British Columbia.

Mary Lamberton, *St. John's University, Shanghai, 1879–1947*. Hong Kong: St. John's Alumni Association, 1948.

Western medicine to China, and they espoused, indirectly, women's emancipation, through the example of women missionaries, who made up over 50 percent of many missions; mission work was one of the few acceptable careers for unmarried women (the dreaded word was "spinster") in the West at the time. Meanwhile, in the overseas communities, Christian converts, the most notable Sun Yat-sen, played important roles in the revolutionary movement. In higher education, missionary-founded universities such as Yen-ching (Yanjing) in Peking, Chin-ling (Jinling) in Nanjing and St. John's in Shanghai became the flag-bearers of scientific education.

The new forces

The idea of a republic

The idea of revolution was in the air at the beginning of the new century. France and the United States had long since turned against autocracy. The other old autocracies that survived into the twentieth century, Russia, Austro-Hungary and China, were tottering. In Europe revolutionary movements were growing in strength, as the pessimism of the *fin de siècle* gave way to the confidence of a new age.

China still seemed years away from a progressive revolution. Under the wilting Manchus, the country was still traditional and conservative, though weak, and divided. Western ideas of revolution were beginning to filter into the coastal and Overseas Chinese communities, but they were quite unknown to the mass of the population. Sun Yat-sen's *Tongmenghui* (Alliance Party) was the largest of several revolutionary organizations, all quite small; their existence gave a glimmer of hope that there might be a change in the Mandate of Heaven (*geming*). The term was borrowed by the people who were calling for fundamental change – revolution. It remains the term used in Chinese for "revolution."

In what turned out to be the last decade of the dynasty, disparate but potentially influential elements of Chinese society became committed to change. The new business class, in the treaty ports, dealt with foreigners in the course of their business activity, but always at a disadvantage. These people wanted a strong government that could look after their commercial interests. The brightest members of the new army were keenly aware of the humiliating defeats inflicted on China by foreign Powers; among the junior officers there was a slow-simmering desire for self-respect and revenge, linked to a disdain for their own masters, the Manchus, whose contributions to these defeats had been so significant. The Overseas Chinese, living abroad in Southeast Asia and in North America, were the

victims of racism and discrimination; they longed for a government that would afford them protection. And a small number of Chinese students studying abroad, in North America, Europe, and Japan, were exposed to ideas of democracy, revolution, nationalism, science, and technology. They brought what they learned abroad back to China.

The growing groups of dissatisfied people did not constitute a united movement, but they did add up to a significant pool of dissatisfaction. And one of the groups had the capacity to act.

The military

The most portentous change in late Qing China was the growth of the military, and the arrival in China of a universal process of the early twentieth century: the upgrading and professionalization of the military. In the West this process contributed to the First World War. In China the new military was a key part of the downfall of the old world.

The Qing's modern military was designed to replace the old Manchu troops, the Banners, and the Green Standard Chinese armies. The new military and its commanders were disciplined, competent, and self-consciously modern-minded. Its members saw themselves as part of a distinct military culture, which had pride in itself, and believed in its own competence. They saw how the military model had transformed Japan, and before that Prussia, into effective, disciplined states. They believed that the same could be done for China.

The military had to fight against the traditional contempt for the soldier in Chinese society, and the belief that no worthwhile man would ever serve in the military.

好鐵不打釘，
好男不當兵。

Haotie bu dading, haonan bu dangbing.
"Good iron does not make nails, good men do not make soldiers."
Source: traditional

This struggle was made easier by the fact that the military was so strongly favored by the dynasty. Money was poured into military facilities and training, young men were sent off to Japan to go to military school, and delegations were sent abroad to buy new equipment. The new

military was costly to the Qing government. It had to be recruited, trained, and equipped with weapons; military installations had to be built – barracks, arsenals, fortresses. The Qing also had to maintain the Manchu forces; most of them were pensioned off, no longer able to fight except amongst each other. But the Qing government believed that a strong military was essential to hold off future attacks by foreigners. Those attacks did not come – the war with Japan turned out to be the last for a long while. The dynasty seems not to have calculated that the new military could play a domestic role: to bring down its own masters.

The last days of the Manchus

The Empress Dowager Cixi died in late 1908, the day after the sudden and mysterious death of her nephew, the Guangxu Emperor. His death, like many other deaths in the course of modern Chinese history, at once became the subject of lurid rumors, as to how (not if) he had been murdered, the most fancied being that his aunt, knowing she was on her deathbed, had had him poisoned so that he would not survive her. After these deaths the infant Xuantong Emperor (Aisin Gioro Pu Yi) came to the throne. The affairs of the government were managed by several senior Manchu regents, none of whom came close to matching Cixi in ability.

The conventional wisdom is that the dynasty was beyond salvation – indeed, from the Boxer debacle on had followed a straight, downward trajectory that tipped it into oblivion. The inevitability of the Qing collapse may be exaggerated, an *ex post facto* analysis to explain what actually

The Manchurian plague

Northern Manchuria has a plague pool, where bubonic plague is endemic, transmitted by rodents. In the autumn of 1910 the bacillus broke out of this remote area. It was transferred from rodents to humans by fleas. The first humans infected were fur traders, who quickly took the infection south along the new railway system, toward the cities of Manchuria and China proper. The Chinese authorities introduced quarantine controls, which restricted the spread of the disease, but at least 50,000 people died, almost 100 percent of those infected. During the Japanese occupation of Manchuria (1931–45) experiments on the use of the plague bacillus as a biological weapon were carried out at Unit 731 near Harbin. Up to 10,000 human guinea pigs died there.

Carl Nathan, *Plague Prevention and Politics in Manchuria, 1910–1931*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1967.

1.2 **The infant emperor, 1909**
Source: J. Bland and E. Backhouse, *China under the Empress Dowager* (Boston: Hill, 1914), p. 4. By permission of the syndics of Cambridge University Library.

happened. Even as it came close to the end, the dynasty still commanded enormous resources and manpower: a rich treasury, constantly replenished through tax revenue; a large, competent bureaucracy; huge armies, some of them already modernized; international recognition. It did not look like a regime teetering on the edge of collapse. It was quite competent in dealing with some crises.

Xinhai

Traditional China had two ways of denoting the passage of years. One system was based on imperial reigns. Whenever a new emperor came to the throne, the counting of years started again. 1875 was Guangxu 1, the first year of the reign of the Guangxu Emperor. The second way of counting years used the ancient system of stems and branches (*ganzhi*), which in combinations produced a sixty-year cycle, sometimes called a Cycle of Cathay. Xinhai years were 1851, 1911, 1971. There was no system of continuous counting of years. The Western system of dating from the birth of Christ (*anno Domini*) was adopted by the Communist government in 1949, but in Taiwan years are still counted from 1911, the first year of the Republic of China. 2005 was Republic 94.

Endymion Wilkinson, *Chinese History: A Manual*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2002 (revised edition), pp. 181–3.

There was no obvious reason why it should not have continued, gradually changing itself, except for the critical lack of an effective emperor. The weakness at the top was deeply worrying, since it could not be resolved until the emperor came of age, at least a decade ahead. When it came, the end was as much a failure of Manchu nerve, based on the lack of real leadership, and the inability to escape from the sense of doom derived from the mandate theory of dynastic decline, as it was the victory of the revolutionaries.

The form that the final collapse of the dynasty took was almost accidental. On October 10, 1911, a bomb exploded in a secret arms factory in Wuchang, run by radical young military cadets. The explosion sparked off confusion, and ignited the fear in the local garrison that a country-wide coup was in progress. The garrison commander decided to join the mystery coup, declared his independence of Peking, and sparked off a cascade of defections of military units throughout the country over the next weeks. This was the start of the Xinhai Revolution.

The 1911 revolution is sometimes described as bloodless. It was not. Soon after the Wuchang uprising, a wave of killings of Manchu soldiers, officials, and civilians started. The worst violence occurred in late October, when more than 10,000 Manchus were massacred in Xian, half the Manchu population of the city.

Real, deep revolution still seemed far away. Sun Yat-sen, who was in Denver (Colorado) in October, did not hurry home but continued his planned trip to Europe – a very long route back to China. He got back to China only at the end of December, just after the Manchu leaders had started to negotiate the emperor's abdication with Yuan Shikai.

1.3 **Dr. Sun Yat-sen, circa 1910.**
Photo by Central Press/Getty Images.

The reasons for the collapse of the dynasty remain a mystery. No senior Manchu ever gave an explication of the abdication. The weakness at the top of the imperial system did not amount to total weakness. The Qing government still controlled vast financial and economic resources, and it had the loyalty of most of the bureaucracy; its major weakness was in the military field. The republican forces, on the other hand, were poorly organized, scattered, and leaderless. The Manchus, who had survived so many rebellions and foreign onslaughts, simply seemed to have lost the will to rule. To say that the revolutionaries were shocked by their success would be an understatement.

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2 The early Republic – chaos and creativity: 1912–28

1912 began with the end of the imperial system. China was proclaimed a republic. The first of the great autocracies to survive into the twentieth century had fallen – before the Russian and Austro-Hungarian Empires. The new Republic was unformed. It lacked an articulated ideology, a political program, a clear leader, a sense of direction – even a constituency. It remained to be seen whether the revolution was the prelude to a real transformation of the state – or another stage in the decline of a once great empire. In the short run the revolution led China along a route she had often followed before during dynastic change: military domination, at first unified, then disseminated under regional warlords. The civil gave way to the military; social issues of poverty and overpopulation disappeared as concerns of government. The turbulence was met with resignation, in the spirit of the first phrase of the Romance of the Three Kingdoms, *that division was inevitable:*

天下大事，
分久必合，
合久必分。

Tianxia dashi fenjiu bihe, hejiu bifen.
"When the world has been divided for a long time, it must be united; when it has been united for a long time, it will be divided."
Source: *Sanguo yanyi*

*Warlord rule is generally considered the worst thing that can happen in the Chinese polity. The belief is based on the Confucian fear of chaos (*luan*), a fear that exerts heavy pressure on the state, the community, and the family. Warlordism in the early Republic did create instability, anxiety, tension, and*

The five-barred flag

The first flag of the Chinese Republic, and the first Chinese national flag, was the five-barred flag. It flew until the GMD government was established in 1928. The flag had bars of five colors, for the five races of China: Han (red), Manchu (yellow), Mongol (blue), Islamic (white), and Tibetan (black). The flag promoted an early vision of a multicultural society. It was magnanimous in that the defeated Manchu were incorporated into the flag. The only problem was – there was no united nation.

Modern China has had difficulty in finding an appropriate national flag. The Guomindang flag is a white sun on a blue sky, an insipid design with no obvious symbolism in Chinese culture The PRC uses the red flag of socialism, borrowed from the Soviet Union, with five gold stars substituted for the hammer and sickle.

uncertainty, but it also freed China from the bonds of the past; the warlord period was a time of creativity, of innovation, and of greater personal freedom than China knew before or afterwards. This creativity has colored accounts of the period, which focus on nationalism, the search for modernity, and political revolution. These were powerful trends, which existed against a backdrop of constant, bitter warfare. The old unity, led from the North, crumbled, and its disappearance stimulated a fundamental shift in China's geopolitics: the rise of the South.

The new political order

In 1912 China changed her government and political system for the first time since the third century BC, turned her back on the imperial system, and entered the new world of republicanism.

China's first president

Sun Yat-sen returned to China at the end of December 1911, more than two months after the October revolution. He was installed as the first president of the new Chinese Republic on January 1, 1912. A provisional government was set up in Nanjing, the capital of the early Ming dynasty – and of the Taipings in the mid-nineteenth century. Sun's vision was to reestablish a Chinese capital, after the long alien rule of the Manchus. It was a vain hope. Nanjing could not become the capital of China at the stroke of a pen. Political events were unfolding in Peking, where the military strongman Yuan Shikai was negotiating the abdication of the Qing dynasty. The day after that was achieved he

forced Sun to resign, and succeeded him as the second president, on February 14.

Sun had been president for just over six weeks, and his summary departure seemed humiliating. But one of Sun's great strengths was his ability to bounce back from adversity, even to thrive on it. He did not allow himself to be sidelined by what others regarded as defeat. He presented himself as the champion of change and revolution. He continued his political career in the South. He was still a national figure. His portrait head appeared on Chinese postage stamps at the end of 1912, as one half of a set, the other half graced by Yuan Shikai's head. Sun's head has remained on stamps to this day, in the Republic of China, and also appears on coins.

Sun was given a position that seemed purely nominal: director-general of the National Railways. The position reflected the passion that Sun and many others had for railways; they were the symbols of modernity, they held the promise of national unity, they would be the sinews that tied the vast country together. Sun developed a program of railway construction of breathtaking audacity, linking almost all major points of China together, and opening up the vast western regions. Almost 100 years later, the present government of China is in the process of implementing part of Sun's scheme, a railway to Tibet.

The second president and the demise of the Manchus

Once Yuan Shikai had become president he quickly consolidated his position. China was under military government, and the balance between the civil and military had shifted in favor of the military. Politics were outlawed, in favor of military discipline.

Yuan was magnanimous to the Manchus. The transfer of power from the Manchus to his government was smooth. He gave the imperial family members a deal that went beyond their expectations in late 1911, as their world was crumbling away. The imperial family was allowed, under the Articles of Favorable Treatment, to remain in the Forbidden City, and to enjoy a life of great luxury – and immense tedium; the enervating isolation of the life of the young emperor Pu Yi was captured in a film made in the palace, Bernardo Bertolucci's *The Last Emperor* (1987). This life lasted until 1924, when Pu Yi was unceremoniously kicked out of the palace by the warlord Feng Yuxiang.

Yuan's courtesies extended to the dead as well as to the living. The remains of the Guangxu Emperor and of the Empress Dowager Cixi were given proper imperial treatment. Cixi was buried in the lavish Dingdong Tomb. Work on her tomb had started long before her death, but Yuan's willingness to carry the disposal of her remains to fulfillment was a sign of

2.1 **Stamps of the new Republic, 1912**
Source: Zhonghua youpiao mu lu (Taipei: Jiaotong bu, 1996), p. 16.

Pu Yi's wedding

I hardly thought about marriage and my family. It was only when the empress came into my field of vision with a crimson satin cloth embroidered with a dragon and a phoenix over her head that I felt at all curious about what she looked like. According to tradition, the emperor and empress spent their wedding night in a bridal chamber some ten meters square in the Palace of Earthly Peace. This was a rather peculiar room: it was unfurnished except for the bed-platform which filled a quarter of it, and everything except the floor was red. When we had drunk the nuptial cup and eaten sons-and-grandsons cakes and entered the dark red room I felt stifled. The bride sat on the bed, her head bent down. I looked around me and saw that everything was red: red bed-curtains, red pillows, a red dress, a red skirt, red flowers and a red face . . . it all looked like a melted red candle. I did not know whether to stand or sit, decided that I preferred the Mind Nurture Palace [where a Western-style reception was taking place] and went back there.

Aisin Gioro Pu Yi, *From Emperor to Citizen* (Beijing: Foreign Languages Press, 1964), p. 121.

his respect for the imperial tradition. A republic might have been declared, but the former rulers had to be treated with propriety. Cixi was interred with a vast array of treasures, and with a supply of Passing Cloud cigarettes to last for all eternity.

The Manchu princes hoped to live the same life of luxury as the former emperor, but they had no further source of income, and as they worked their way through their fortunes they lost their estates and their palaces (*wangfu*), and were reduced to poverty. Ordinary Manchus were well treated by Yuan's government. Many were given pensions; this meant that they did not have to break with tradition and actually work. Financial security did not give them real security. They had no protection from the hostility of the Han Chinese population, conscious now of how much the Han had suffered over 250 years of Manchu rule. In a climate of growing Han nationalism, the Manchus were hated. Many went underground, changed their family names, and tried to hide their race. In 1912 there were 600,000 Manchus in Peking, by 1949 only 31,000. The Manchus disappeared, until the policy of one child per family was launched in the 1980s. Peking imposed this policy on Han families, but allowed non-Han couples to have more than one child. One unintended consequence was that Manchu descendants came out of the ethnic closet, and claimed their right, as an ethnic minority, to have more than one child.

The new government

The Chinese administrative tradition was that, at the fall of one dynasty, mandarins would stay on to serve the successor government. Their loyalty was to the system, not to a particular dynasty. In the early Republic this tradition was observed, at the capital level; the majority of officials stayed at their posts. There was a countertradition, of loyalty to the death, and at the end of the Ming dynasty some officials did take their lives rather than serve the Manchus; but after 1912 only one high official, Liang Ji, killed himself. His death was interpreted as a protest against the new Republic, but the interpretation loses force when the timing is taken into account: he resigned his last official post in 1908, and did not drown himself until 1918, in the seventh year of the Republic.[1]

The structure of government changed very little. A phrase often used at the time was that all that had changed with the revolution was the signboards, the ornate boards that hung beside the doors of shops, restaurants, or government offices; they had changed (*huan zhaopai*), but nothing of substance had. Foreign residents in China poured scorn on the "so-called" revolution, claiming that this was just another "Cycle of Cathay."[2]

But there *were* fundamental changes in progress. The first was the localization of power, which changed the nature of the state and of political power in China. Beyond the capital there was no nostalgia for the imperial system. In the provinces local men started to take over civil authority, men of education and culture, members of the rural gentry class, men accustomed to the exercise of authority. The law of avoidance, which had decreed that officials might not serve in their native province, fell into disuse – and with it went one of the strongest centralizing features of Chinese government. The regions of China were now run by local people, civilians, and soldiers. The provinces started to retain tax income for themselves. They were no longer willing either to remit money to the capital, or (in the case of the wealthier provinces) to send money to poorer provinces. The transfer system, under which wealthier regions sent money directly to poorer ones, had functioned as a system of fiscal equalization; now it fell into abeyance.

The rearrangement of civilian and fiscal authority led some political figures, notably in the southern province of Hunan, to think of a new political system for China: federalism. One of the early proponents of

[1] Liang was celebrated later on not only for his suicide but as the father of the important reformer Liang Shuming, the man who was the last person, in the early 1950s, to criticize Mao Zedong in public.

[2] "Cathay" was once a popular term amongst foreigners for China. It lingers on in the name of the airline Cathay Pacific. It has no meaning in Chinese.

federalism (before he discovered communism) was Mao Zedong. The federalists drew on the long tradition of regional distinctions within China to advocate a federal system, a common means of ruling a large state (the United States, Canada, Germany).

A second fundamental change was that civilian power had given way to military power. The military now dominated government and politics, put civilian administration in the shade, and vitiated the tentative moves toward political change. Yuan Shikai swept aside the nascent party political system and the national parliament, and replaced them with military government under his personal control. Civilian officials bowed to the new military masters.

The military ascendancy

The new military men were self-confident. Though many of them had poor reputations, and were called warlords, they saw themselves as important figures, efficient, competent, and ready to exercise authority, unlike the vacillating, uncertain civilians who quarreled amongst themselves, or the querulous mandarins still adjusting to the loss of the old order. In the North the generals were directly subordinate to Yuan, but elsewhere his control was weaker. Local military figures emerged who owed little loyalty to anyone beyond their locality. Some of these military men had modern military training; a few had even passed one of the levels of the traditional examination system; most had risen from the ranks, or even started life as bandits. They all had access to weapons, which were now manufactured widely in China as well as being imported from abroad; they had the means to instill fear in civilians. They also had priority access to income from taxation. Within four years of the revolution, China was teetering on the edge of total military domination.

The man responsible for the growth of militarism in China was, ironically, uncomfortable with military rule as a long-term system of government. Yuan Shikai was still attached to the tradition of imperial rule, to the subordination of the military to the civil. He determined to do what other military conquerors had done before in Chinese history: make himself emperor. But 1911 had changed China. Yuan misjudged the situation; the imperial system really was dead. When he tried in 1916 to have himself installed as emperor of a new dynasty he was reviled for his efforts, and attacked even by his own military subordinates, who one after another declared their independence of him. Yuan went into a decline, and died, it was said, of a broken heart. His last, enigmatic words were "the constitution" – perhaps regret for his mistake in not taking the constitution seriously enough, or recognition that this would be China's future.

Yuan had a magnificent funeral, his last moment of glory. Soon after his death he became an official pariah, and has remained one, universally blamed for ushering in full-scale regional devolution and warlordism; he has been an anathema to all political points of view. At the time many Chinese missed him; the last semblance of stability and reliability died with him. This feeling was bolstered by his life after death; his bull head graced the most stable currency in circulation in China in the period of disunity between 1916 and 1927.

China and the world

The last years of the Qing were dominated by fear of foreign invasion, and by reactive efforts to strengthen the country. The nationalist movement that helped to bring down the dynasty had grown from the sense of international humiliation (*guochi*) at China's weakness. In the early Republic the Western menace suddenly evaporated.

The First World War

The First World War turned out to be an unexpected bonus for China. For the first time for more than seventy years China was not subjected to any Western pressure; all the Western countries were engrossed in the war in Europe. Western armed forces in Asia were withdrawn to strengthen the home forces. Young Western men living in China returned to Europe in droves, to fight in the war of civilizations. China supported the Allies in the war, as a sign that she was now an equal to other nations. She did not

The Chinese Labor Corps

The Chinese Labor Corps, known at the time as the Coolie Corps, was a body of some 200,000 Chinese men, who worked in France during the last two years of the First World War. They were recruited by missionaries in Shandong province and shipped across the Pacific to British Columbia, after which they traveled by train across Canada and then went by ship from Halifax to France. The men dug trenches, carried supplies and ammunition, and made roads – and stayed on after the end of the fighting to clean up the battlefields. Some of the workers died in France in the influenza epidemic that followed the war, and were buried in war cemeteries, their headstones carved in Chinese. Some commentators gave great influence to the laborers; Harold Macmillan suggested that their experience of seeing white men fighting each other undermined Western superiority in China, and changed Chinese attitudes to the West. There is not much evidence to prove this supposition.

2.2 **Chinese labor battalions**
Source: W. K. Wheeler, *China and the World War* (New York: Macmillan, 1919), p. 158.

send soldiers; her contribution was to send about 200,000 laborers (the "Coolie Corps") to the battlegrounds in France, to dig trenches, move supplies and ammunition – and watch white men slaughter each other.

The new imperialists

The Western vacuum in China had one profoundly inauspicious aspect: it allowed in a Power that was to be the most threatening of any Power to China – Japan. No sooner was war declared than the Japanese government acted; as an ally of Britain and France, Japan asserted the right to the German concessions in Shandong. The next step was to make secret demands of Yuan Shikai (in return for major financial support) that were designed to sew up Japan's future position in China, the Twenty-One Demands. Like Germany, Japan dreamed of a special position in Shandong; she wanted the sacred province, the birthplace of three of China's cultural heroes – Confucius, Mencius, and Zhuge Liang.[3] Japan took control of the German concession in Qiaozhou (the area around the port

[3] Mencius was Confucius' key disciple; both lived in the Warring States Period. Zhuge Liang was China's most famous strategist and creative thinker; he lived in the Three Kingdoms.

of Qingdao), and started on long-range plans to link the province to northeast China (Manchuria) by encouraging the large-scale migration there of Shandong people.

As the homeland of the Manchus, Manchuria had been closed to legal Han Chinese settlement until almost the end of the Qing dynasty, and, although there were many squatter settlements in the wilder parts of the vast region, it was considered an "empty" place, much as the American West was "empty" at the same time. Manchuria's agricultural lands, mineral resources, timber, and fur-bearing animals seemed to be asking for someone to exploit them. The Japanese believed that they were the chosen exploiters. They entered into a complex patron–client relationship with the Manchurian warlord Zhang Zuolin, to develop resources, build railways and factories, and settle Chinese, Japanese, and Korean farmers on the virgin land. Japanese government agencies and private businesses made large investments of capital and know-how, aimed at turning Manchuria into an economic powerhouse and a model of modernity. Migrants poured in, in some years as many as half a million a year from Shandong alone. Many were "swallows," young men who went north for eight months of the year, and then went home to avoid the brutal Manchurian winter; others settled permanently.

The early Japanese enterprise in Manchuria was not full-scale imperialism. The Japanese government was committed to informal empire, with much of the Japanese activity in Manchuria entrusted to the South Manchurian Railway Company. The SMRC was Japan's flagship in Manchuria, operating from a series of Greek classical buildings in the port city of Dalian. In Manchuria as in Taiwan, the Japanese favored Western styles of architecture, the symbols of modernity. There was an internal contradiction: Japan used Western forms and symbols for what was a profoundly nationalist, *Japanese* expansion.

The postwar world and nationalism

The true nature of Japan's enterprise was revealed in 1919, at Versailles. Those Chinese who were aware of political events within and beyond China, the people who read the newspapers that were beginning to circulate in China's major cities, had a horrible shock. At the Versailles Peace Conference, details of Japan's intrigues with Yuan Shikai emerged.

The news from Paris sparked the first street demonstrations in China's history; they erupted in Peking on May 4, 1919, when the news arrived. The demonstrators were university students, children of the elite, suddenly committed to a cause beyond themselves, the cause of their country. The May 4th generation, as the young people came to be known, went

Gu Weijun (Wellington Koo), 1888–1985

Wellington Koo was the most celebrated diplomat of Republican China. He grew up in a wealthy Shanghai family, went to St. John's College and then Columbia University (New York), where he studied international law. He emerged from his education with the classic Shanghai combination of cosmopolitanism tinged with resentment at the way Chinese in Shanghai were treated by foreigners. He joined the government of Yuan Shikai in 1912, as a diplomat. He came to fame in 1919, at the Versailles Conference, where he led China's refusal to sign the treaty in protest over Japanese attempts to take over the German concessions in Shandong. He achieved another kind of fame when he made his house in Peking available to the dying Sun Yat-sen in 1925. He later served as foreign minister, and ambassador to London and to Washington. Through all the twists and turns of China's internal and international politics, he managed to maintain his independence and his commitment to improving China's international status – until 1949, when he was forced to Taiwan, and eventually the United States.

Stephen Craft, *V. K. Wellington Koo and the Emergence of Modern China*. Lexington: University of Kentucky Press, 2004.

on to take leading, radical roles in China's new intelligentsia and in the literary movement that drew its name from the protests.

Their outrage stemmed from the casual indifference with which China was treated at Versailles. Many new sovereign states, such as Latvia, Lithuania, and Estonia, were created under the doctrine of national self-determination, but the principle was not extended to China, where Japan's demands on Chinese soil were accepted by the conference delegates without comment or protest. Embedded in the student outrage over Versailles was China's relationship to the modern world. China had had a revolution, and had thrown off the traditional political system, but was not given any credit for these progressive changes by the West, where China was still seen as a backward, "oriental" country. The insult implicit in this attitude stirred a generation of young Chinese to action.

Their actions were personal as well as political. These were young men (and a few women) in revolt against the strict social conventions of Confucianism as well as against imperialism. In a society where the family reigned supreme, young people were married in their late teens, to partners chosen by their parents whom they met only after the wedding ceremony. This ancient system was as durable as it was oppressive. The new generation who wanted the right to chose their own partners, to marry for love, had to take on the whole social system. The longing for love was later captured in the melodramatic novel *Jia* (Family) by Ba Jin,

which described the anguish of arranged marriage, and the sacrifice of youth to the demands of conservative family elders.[4]

The May 4th iconoclasts attacked the Chinese past and embraced nationalism and individualism, Western ideas. They did not address the question that had haunted China for the past fifty years: how to use Western techniques to preserve the essence of China (*Zhong weiti, xi weiyong*). The young intellectuals also ignored an aspect of the West, modern armies and armaments. At the end of the war in Europe there were vast stockpiles of surplus weapons. Though the victorious Powers tried to impose an embargo on arms shipments to China, great quantities of weapons got through, some supplied by quixotic arms dealers such as "Two-Gun" Cohen, "One-armed" Sutton and Ignatius Trebitsch-Lincoln.[5] The weapons that these men and others peddled into China helped to fuel China's descent into full-blown warlordism.

The decline of the West

After the war the citizens of the Western Powers did not return to China in anything like the pre-war numbers. One of the most aggressive Powers, Germany, had been defeated; Russia was plunged into revolution; France and Britain were traumatized by the scale of the losses they had suffered. These losses made for opportunities at home for young men who had survived the war – the pre-war necessity for young men to go out to the colonies to "make something of themselves" had disappeared. The United States suffered less in the war than other Western countries, because it came in only toward the end of the conflict, but it showed little appetite for profiting from the war, or for replacing the other Western Powers in China. The unthinking self-confidence and arrogance manifested by the Powers before the war never resurfaced in China. The ebbing of Western forcefulness showed itself across the board, in the business world, in the missionary world, and in the expatriate social world. The West was in decline in China.

This decline was underlined by the arrival, for the first time in the history of Europeans and North Americans in Asia, of poor white people, the flood of refugees from the Russian Revolution, who started to arrive in China from late 1917 on, at the end of their flight across Siberia.

[4] Ba Jin expressed his own revulsion against the old system in his pen-name, which used the first syllables of the surnames of the two great Russian anarchists, Ba for Bakunin and Jin for Kropotkin.

[5] China has always attracted adventurers, romantics, and rogues from the West, from Marco Polo to Aurel Stein to Edmund Backhouse. They seemed to find there a freedom to live out their fantasies.

White Russians

After the October Revolution in Russia in 1917 hundreds of thousands of supporters of the Tsarist regime fled. They were called White Russians to distinguish them from the Red Russians, who supported the Bolsheviks. Many fled east across Siberia, ending up in China; they could not flee to the West while the First World War was still going on. When they reached China they were stateless, often destitute, and desperate; they were given informal asylum in China, and treated with greater generosity than other White Russians encountered in Europe. Most stayed in Manchuria, though some moved on to the cities of northern China and to Shanghai. They worked in every kind of occupation; the most striking – because it was so novel to see poor white people in China – as soldiers, bodyguards, and prostitutes. When the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) came to power in 1949 the remnants of the White Russian community either returned to the Soviet Union or reemigrated to North America or Australia.

Boris Pasternak's *Dr. Zhivago* (and the film of the novel) gives a vivid description of the flight across Siberia.

The plight of the White Russians was one symptom of the new terror that had come upon the world, the Red peril. The nascent Soviet Union proclaimed that world revolution, fomented by the Comintern (Communist International), would sweep the world. Fear of communism gripped the West and Japan, a fear that approached hysteria, and cost the rich and comfortable their peace of mind; they feared that they would be murdered in their beds, by their own servants, or assaulted in the streets by Bolsheviks. It was a fear at least as potent as the early twenty-first-century fear of terrorism. Action was called for. From 1918 to 1922 the former Allies launched a series of military interventions to try and stem the tide of Red revolution. These interventions, in European Russia, in the Caucasus and in Siberia, were preemptive strikes to block the spread of communism.

The fear of communism led to distortions and distractions in international relations. The Western Powers were so obsessed with communism that they mistook Japan's intentions in northern China and Manchuria, and assumed, even hoped, that Japan was preparing to take on the Red menace. The threat that Japan herself, with her new imperial ambitions, posed to China was not recognized. In China, where the fear of the Red peril blended with the fear of the yellow peril, the Powers supported anti-communist regional warlords, however venal they might be. Japan supported Zhang Zuolin in Manchuria, and the British gave aid to the Cantonese warlord Chen Jiongming. Imperialism seemed to be

supporting those standing in the way of China's national unity, and supporting the advance of disseminated militarism in China.

The anti-Red stance of the Powers encouraged support for revolution in China. The combination of the Powers' military failure against the Soviet Union and their identification with regional leaders who could only be described as reactionary pushed more and more young people toward revolution – Soviet-style revolution. Most joined the Guomindang, Sun Yat-sen's now flourishing political party and the standard-bearer of revolution. The CCP was founded in 1921, at a secret meeting in the most innocuous place imaginable, a girls' school in Shanghai. The party was tiny, and most of its members were simultaneously members of the GMD.

Warlords, regionalism, and national unity

Regional devolution

After the death of Yuan Shikai in 1916 unified military rule from Peking gave way to disseminated military rule. Within a few months the country was divided into a great number of what were known then as satraps, none of them stable or lasting, all based on regional ties, all dominated by warlords. China had become, as Sun Yat-sen had predicted it would, a sheet of shifting sand. Though there continued to be national governments in Peking they wielded very little power, and came and went with bewildering frequency.

China is a vast and diverse country. The regional diversity is expressed in dialects, often mutually unintelligible, in cuisine, in traditions and customs – and in identity. Before there was an empire there were many independent states, whose names survive in the alternative names of provinces (QiLu/Shandong, ShuBa/Sichuan, Yue/Guangdong).

In the many periods of disunity since the founding of the first state in the third century BC, regional power holding always emerged to fill the void left by a collapse at the center. The process of devolution and fragmentation was one that China knew well. The most famous period of disunity came after the end of the Han dynasty, when China was divided into three. *The Romance of the Three Kingdoms* (*Sanguo yanyi*), an immensely popular novel written more than 1,000 years after the events it described (and almost certainly apocryphal), told of the anguish of division and civil war through a string of stories of courage, treachery, and intrigue. The stories were known to every Chinese, whether educated or not; they appeared as opera plots, as oral stories, and in cartoons. Disunity was as inevitable as unity, said the *Three Kingdoms* stories. Some people

Regional characteristics

Every Chinese province has its own recognized regional characteristics, which cover cuisine, temperament, dialect, culture, abilities, and special products. No province has more pronounced characteristics than the vast western province of Sichuan, an isolated world cut off from the rest of China by the Yangzi gorges. Sichuanese food is fiery, so hot that the diet is said to influence behavior (volatility, a tendency to fly off the handle) and health (susceptibility to stomach cancer and other gastrointestinal conditions). It has its own dialect, and a rich cultural legacy – the beautiful bronzes of the pre-imperial kingdoms of Shu and Ba, the stories of the *Three Kingdoms*, the poetry of Du Fu. Its people are said to be clever though stubborn. Deng Xiaoping is the most famous contemporary son of Sichuan.

behaved badly in times of troubles, others came into their own – but the evil men often won; the most evil of all, Cao Cao, triumphed over the greatest strategist, Zhuge Liang, a man of brilliance and humanity.

It may seem a stretch to use a novel as a guide to understanding reactions to disunity and uncertainity – but the mentality portrayed in *The Romance of the Three Kingdoms* had a formative influence on young men of the early Republic, men such as Mao Zedong, who had all read the novel as boys. Theirs was a *Three Kingdoms* reaction to disunity: think things through carefully, devise stratagems, and know that the solutions will require force as well as intelligence. The answer was to combine Zhuge Liang's brilliance with Cao Cao's ruthlessness.[6]

Warlords and their armies

The rise of regionalism and regional identities had been encouraged by the disappearance of universal examinations in 1905, and by the loss of the law of avoidance. After 1916 the center's ability to make appointments at the provincial level disappeared, and regional rulers came to power, often soldiers, who called themselves military administrators (*dujun*); other people called them warlords.

These men saw disunity as opportunity for their particular regions. The negative reactions to warlordism in the civilian world reflected the fear of chaos, of the country falling apart – the fear that had haunted China's rulers since the beginning of the empire. This fear lived in the metropolitan world of the emperors and the bureaucrats. It was not shared

[6] *The Romance of the Three Kingdoms* is now used as a text for entrepreneurs, as an ideal model for business success in highly competitive markets.

Feng Yuxiang (Yu-hsiang), 1882–1948

Feng Yuxiang was the most colorful of the Chinese warlords. He was enormously tall and stout, with a commanding personality and a capacity for survival that made him a legend. He was the son of opium addicts, his father a soldier, and from these distressing origins he made a career first as an officer in the Qing armies and then, after 1911, with his own army. He allied himself with – and betrayed – most of the major military leaders in modern China, from Wu Peifu to Chiang Kai-shek. His notoriety came from the widespread belief that he had had his army baptized in a mass baptism. He was known as the "Christian General," and he did use Christian hymns in the training of his troops; his favorites were *Onward Christian Soldiers* and *Stand up, stand up for Jesus, ye soldiers of the Cross.* Feng's luck ran out, as a soldier, in 1930, when his own subordinates betrayed him. His life ended mysteriously in 1948, in a fire while crossing the Black Sea, on an inexplicable (because of the route) journey from the United States to China.

James Sheridan, *Chinese Warlord: The Career of Feng Yu-hsiang*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1966.

by warlords, men who focused on one region only, nor by many of the people whose lives they controlled, whose horizons did not extend beyond a region and its culture.

In the civilian elite's stereotype, a warlord was a deceitful, devious, illiterate man, sunk in backward patterns of behaviour, uncouth and filthy. Zhang Zongchang, the "Dog-Meat General," who ruled Shandong for many years, fitted the stereotype. He was uneducated, a bandit by origin, loud-mouthed, cruel. His proudest "possession" was his large harem, in which there were women from China, Japan, Russia, and western Europe. He lived by violence, he lost his power by violence, and he died violently (after he had lost power), shot at the station of his former capital, Jinan.

Few warlords were as awful as Zhang. Some were progressive figures, complex men who blended self-interest with a genuine interest in the future of China. The most famous of this type was Feng Yuxiang, a mass of contradictions, blunt and devious, a personal power seeker and devout nationalist.

Other warlords were local strongmen who looked after their own regions, and in some cases gave them the most secure and stable periods of rule they were to know in many decades. In Shanxi, Yan Xishan, who ruled the province for more than three decades, is remembered as a model ruler; in Guangdong, Chen Jitang, who controlled the province for most of the 1930s, is considered a local hero; in Guangxi, the rulers of the province from 1925 to 1949, the "Guangxi Clique," are revered for their martial spirit, which gave the province the name of "China's Sparta."

Warlord finances

The foreign banks, like the concessions, contribute largely to the amenity of Chinese civil war and political strife. Once loot is turned into money and deposited with them by the looter, it is sacred and beyond public recovery. Cases have been known in which generals, far from expecting interest on their deposits, have been eager to pay the banks a small percentage for the privilege of being allowed thus to cache their gain. At a town up the Yangtze [Yangzi], a Chinese military commander visited the American-Oriental Bank and said that he wished to deposit with them, instead of in his own headquarters, what he politely called his records, and left thirty large trunks with the bank. He was presently defeated, and the bank manager was a little disturbed as to what he should do if the incoming conqueror were to demand that these records be handed over. But the in-coming conqueror felt equally insecure, and was more concerned to get his own records safely in to the bank than to obtain those of his enemy. Another huge batch of trunks was brought in, and the bank manager, much relieved, had both sets of trunks piled one beside the other.

Arthur Ransome, *The Chinese Puzzle* (London: Allen and Unwin, 1927), pp. 123–4.

兔子不吃窩邊草。

Tuzi buchi wobian cao.

"The rabbit doesn't eat the grass beside its nest."

Source: traditional

The better warlords understood the old proverb about a rabbit not eating the grass beside its own burrow, and they tended to show concern for the people of the region they controlled. They provided stable government, which, even though it came with tax swindling and rampant corruption, was preferable to chaos or anarchy. Tax income stayed in the region – except for the amounts that warlords salted away in Tianjin, Shanghai, or Hong Kong (cities under foreign control) – for the time when their rule came to an end.

The men referred to as "petty warlords" did the most damage to Chinese society. They really were bandits, uncouth and crude. They exploited and vandalized the regions they controlled. Their rule was often short. When they were overthrown by other warlords they went back to banditry or joined local militias.

The number of men under arms expanded dramatically in the early Republic. By the early 1920s there were at least 1.5 million soldiers, and an equally large number of armed men not serving in formal military

Table 2.1 *Regional migration patterns in the Republic*

Origin	Destination
Guangdong, Pearl River delta	North America
Southern Fujian (Minnan)	Southeast Asia
Shandong and Hebei	Manchuria
Zhejiang	France

units – irregulars, militiamen, bodyguards, and bandits. There was a two-way traffic between the organized and the informal armed worlds.

兵匪不分。

Bingfei bufen.

"There are no differences between soldiers and bandits."

Source: traditional

Warlordism had a strongly inhibiting effect on one aspect of Chinese society where there might otherwise have been change. The emancipation of women, which had just begun in China's cities, was impossible in areas under indifferent or bad warlord control. Girls had to be protected by their families from the unthinkable – rape – and so many of them lived cloistered lives at home.

The warlord system provided immense numbers of jobs – either directly, as soldiers, or indirectly, in the manufacturing and service industries that catered to the military. The continuing growth of China's population facilitated the expansion of the military. As the population grew, employment opportunities did not. Most of the jobs in the new factories were for young women. There were more and more young men in the rural areas for whom there was no work. A few could emigrate – to Manchuria, Southeast Asia or North America – but the closed nature of migration flows limited this solution to a few regions of China, all of them coastal.

Young men from regions with no established migration chains had only a few opportunities for off-farm employment – peddling, moving to the city, or going into the military.

The politicized military

The descent into the warlord system seemed irreversible, but turned out to be self-limiting, because it did not appeal to many of the men

Jiang Baili, 1882–1938

Jiang Baili was one of the leading proponents of Western military training in China. He was trained in military schools in Japan and Germany, and then became head of the Baoding Academy, China's premier military school, after the 1911 revolution. When he was unable to get the funding he wanted for the school he assembled the cadets, told them that he had let them down, and then shot himself. His suicide attempt was not successful; he survived, with a reputation as a man of such high principle that he was willing to lay down his life for his beliefs. After a long recovery Jiang went on to occupy a role as China's chief military thinker, and a major influence on the Baoding cadets who came to hold some of the most senior positions in the GMD military. Jiang was also famous for his mastery of high culture, especially poetry and calligraphy, making him the model of the cultured soldier.

Stephen MacKinnon, *Jiang Baili: Military Intellectual* (unpublished manuscript).

within it. A new type of soldier emerged during the early warlord period – young men who believed in a modern, national military system. The Chinese military was fast-growing. Its demand for officers as well as men was insatiable. With the decline of civilian careers after the end of the Examination System, there were tens of thousands of bright young men who were keen to embark on a military career. In the late Qing and early Republic military schools sprang up all over China, usually based on a Prussian/Japanese model, designed to produce a new breed of competent officers. The most famous of these schools was the Baoding Academy in Zhili (Hebei); there were other academies in every provincial capital.

The students at these schools were destined, in the short run, for careers with local military units – i.e. with warlords – but they saw their careers in different lights, as modern-minded, professionals. Many of them foresaw careers that would have national as well as regional components. They were drawn to the new ideas percolating in the intellectual and civilian worlds, to the dream of a strong new nation. They were in a contradictory position: while they served under local warlords, they were contributing to the weakness of China, however much they might see themselves as nationalists. This was quite apparent to the people who stood to benefit from China's division: the Japanese.

Nationalism

The vision of national unity

The loss of a unified state in the first decade of the Republic had little impact on people whose lives revolved around a single region of China; for

them, China was an abstract, remote concept. But disunity was a disgrace and a shame to well-educated young people. For them nationalism was the only solution – nationalism led by the GMD. The nationalists had a vision of China as a state like others: strong, able to defend herself, free of imperialist oppression, and modern. This vision found support in the cities of China, and in the overseas communities. It produced not only political activism but also an enthusiasm for modernity, for the emancipation of women, for a free press, for a legal system, for all the major aspects of democracy apart from the franchise. The reason that the franchise could not be included is that modernity flourished first in cities such as Shanghai and Hong Kong, places controlled by foreigners, who showed little interest in how Chinese lived their lives, and tolerated all kinds of new ideas – except political freedom.

The loss of national unity inspired another powerful reaction. Work on understanding China's society and culture was carried out by an exceptional generation of men who were schooled as boys in the Confucian tradition, and trained as young men in Chinese and Western universities. They were multilingual, often bicultural, deeply committed to China's land and culture and to Western scientific method. Ding Wenjiang (V. K. Ting), trained in Scotland, was China's first geologist and geographer. He Lian (Franklin Ho), trained in the United States, was China's first economist. Dr. Wu Liande, born in Southeast Asia and trained in Scotland, led the fight against bubonic plague.

The new scholars worked in Western-style universities, set up before and after the Xinhai Revolution, some with foreign aid, others Chinese-endowed, and at the new research centers, such as the Academia Sinica and the Geological Survey. The scholars were activists, committed and energetic; they held out a hope for a modern, sophisticated society that could only be engineered once the old society was understood.

Another group of men with identical backgrounds were committed to an academic endeavor that was culturalist, with nationalist overtones. They searched for the origins of Chinese civilization, using the Western science of archeology to reveal the antiquity of China, and to reject the then dominant Western diffusion theories that saw all culture as derived from sources in the Middle East. Their work was devoted to giving reality to China's mythological progenitors, and to restoring pride to a wounded nation.

Commitment, confusion, and survival

The early Republic was a dramatic period, full of possibilities for the young and adventurous, but also a time of deep uncertainty and

confusion. The old security of the Confucian system had disappeared. Some conservatives – generals and old officials – still longed to revert to past systems of rule. Even after Yuan Shikai's failure to become emperor there was another, abortive, effort at imperial revival, in 1917, to put the former emperor Pu Yi back on the throne.

The searching intellectuals and the hidebound conservatives were at opposite ends of a continuum. In between was the mass of the Chinese population. Most were unable to take advantage of the opportunities that a fluid, fast-changing climate provided. They either lived in the wrong parts of China, cut off from the ferment in the southern coastal cities, or they were too old to change. They were bewildered. They could only react to situations, not create them.

寧作太平狗，
莫作逆亂人。

Ningzuo taiping gou, mozuo niluan ren.
"Better to be a dog in peace than a human being in troubled times."
Source: traditional

A standard reaction to turbulence was to hunker down, to accept that events were in progress that could not be controlled; the wise course was to sit out the hard times, to withdraw from any activities that could draw the attention of those in power. This pattern of thinking was a default position from national unity; it reflected the long Chinese experience of dissolution and fragmentation. It was called by foreigners at the time "the Chinese mentality," a pragmatic cast of mind that appeared in various guises, from accommodation to avoidance to withdrawal. When the new nationalists called for activism, many refused to participate. Their refusal attracted searing criticism from the man who saw himself as the spiritual physician of China, Lu Xun, a medical student who, like Sun Yat-sen, gave up medicine for a more effective way of saving his country. In an essay written in 1918, he used his biting pen to attack those who would not join in the fight to change China.

Language reform

Lu Xun's writings were a commentary on those he despised, and a key element of the new literary world, of which he came to be the shining

Lu Xun on patriotism

The attitude of this self-conceited patriot takes several slightly different forms, though its underlying motive is the same. We may roughly list four types:

A says: "China has vast territory and enormous material wealth." This is self-conceit pure and simple.

B says: "Although the material civilization of foreign countries is superior, the Chinese spiritual civilization is much better."

C says: "The discoveries and inventions of foreign countries are nothing new. China once had them all. This branch of science, for example, can be exactly traced back to the writings of that particular philosopher." These two opinions have all flowed from the "ancient vs. modern and Chinese vs. foreign" school of thought; they subscribe to the maxim of Chang Chih-tung [Zhang Zhidong]: "Chinese learning for the fundamental principles, Western learning for practical application."

D says: "Foreign countries also have beggars, slums, prostitutes, bedbugs." This is negative protest.

E says: "Chinese are barbarians, so what?" And he adds: "You claim Chinese thought is muddled, but this is precisely the achievement of our nation. Our ancestors have muddled through and so will our descendants . . ."

C. T. Hsia, *A History of Modern Chinese Fiction* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1961), p. 47.

star. He saw one of the root causes of China's problems in her traditional language, which trapped China in the past. He came to believe that it was necessary to get rid of the beautiful but unwieldy classical language, a language that could not accommodate modern political and scientific ideas, and to replace it with an easier, more modern language. He wanted to substitute for the classical language a written form of the spoken vernacular already used in commerce and in fiction. The vernacular would express in writing the way people lived their spoken lives, and it would rapidly increase the number of literate people.

Lu Xun was not the founder of the literary movement that drew its origin from the May 4th nationalist movement, nor was he the first person to suggest the use of the vernacular (that was Hu Shih), but he was the greatest writer in the vernacular, and his essays and stories are the most beloved of all modern Chinese writings. His stories, such as *The Diary of a Madman (Kuangren riji)*, *Ah Q*, and *Kong Yiji*, convey a melancholy bitterness that has moved Chinese since they first appeared in the 1920s. His elegant, spare Chinese is the model of modern writing – just as his unflinching message of the imperative of change has been the call to action.

Table 2.2 *Language differences, classical and modern*

Classical Chinese 古文 English	Modern Chinese 白話 English
救死扶傷 JiuSi fushang	救護乘死的人照顧受傷的人 Jiuhu chengsi de ren zhaogu shoushang de ren To help the dying and care for the wounded
安家落戶 Anjia luohu	指到一個新地方安家 長期居住下來 Zhi dao yige xin difang anjia changqi juzhu xialai To move to another place and settle permanently
流離失所 Liuli shisuo	親人離散 流落 他鄉失去安生的地方 Qinren lisan liuluo taxiang shiqu ansheng de difang A family scattered, losing a peaceful place to live
不打自招 Buda zizhao	沒有經過拷打自己就已經招供 Meiyou jingguo kaoda, ziji jiu yijing zhaogong To confess without being tortured first
衣錦還鄉 Yijin huanxiang	穿錦繡衣裝回故鄉 Chuan jinxiu yizhuang hui guxiang To return home wearing brocade clothes
骨肉相連 Gurou xianglian	像骨頭和肉 一樣互相連接 Xiang gutou he rou yiyang huxiang lianjie Tied together as tightly as flesh and bones
因小失大 Yinxiao shida	因爲一些小事耽誤大事 Yinwei yixie xiaoshi danwu dashi To lose the big battle because of small matters

Hu Shi, 1891–1962

Hu Shi was one of the early Republic's most creative minds, an establishment intellectual. He was the son of a concubine in an official family left impoverished by his father's early death. After a Western-style education in China, he went to study at Cornell University. He was convinced that the Chinese language was the greatest barrier to China's modernization, and in 1917 published proposals for the transformation of the written language by replacing the dense, difficult classical language (*guwen*) with a written form of the oral vernacular language (*baihua*). Hu's energy and vitality were typical of many young intellectuals at the time, full of enthusiasm for change. Hu was in the forefront of Chinese intellectual life, and also in government. From 1938 to 1942 he was the Chinese ambassador to Washington.

Jerome Grieder, *Hu Shih and the Chinese Renaissance*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1970.

The changes in the most fundamental part of Chinese civilization, the language, were one of the rapid evolutionary changes going on in the second decade of the Republic. The economy was changing too, as China was drawn into a global economy through the growth of foreign activity in China, and through the trading success of Overseas Chinese entrepreneurs in many parts of the world.

Economic opportunity and instability

Economic benefits flowed to China from the postwar withdrawal of the West. The volume of imports declined, while internal markets grew. There was a surge in industrial employment, especially in the light industrial sector.

Chinese professionals – lawyers, bankers, doctors – began to appear in the treaty ports. Chinese-run businesses emerged to challenge Western-owned ones, while the old compradore class, men who worked as intermediaries for foreigners, declined. Foreign dominance was still strong, but, within the foreign world, the balance of influence was slipping, from the West toward Japan. More and more of the new industrial jobs were created in Manchuria, where the Japanese, unscathed by the war, were rapidly developing their economic might. In the 1920s Britain was still the largest investor in China, with about 38 percent of all foreign investment, but Japan was only a little behind, with 36 percent.

The new manufacturing industries in the treaty ports were designed as much to satisfy domestic demand as to produce exports. They were staffed by contract labor, overwhelmingly young women, brought in to work in the factories for short terms while still in their teens, before they were married. These workers were cheap, docile, and temporary. Contract labor fueled the manufacturing boom of the first two decades of the Republic, just as it now fuels the economic boom in contemporary China.

One of the most successful new industries was the cigarette industry, which fed China's newly discovered passion for cigarettes. Cigarette consumption went from being negligible in the late Qing to nearly 90 billion in the late 1920s.

This was a level very close to the United States' consumption. China became – and is now again, after a gap of several decades – the great white hope of international tobacco companies. Cigarettes had another function besides satisfying tobacco craving: they made an unexpected vehicle for nationalist sentiments. Chinese tobacco companies gave brands patriotic names. Alongside predictable brands – Camel, Tiger – were brands

Table 2.3 *Chinese cigarette consumption (millions)*

1900	300
1902	1,250
1910	7,500
1913	13,000
1920	25,000
1924	40,000
1928	87,000

Source: Sherman Cochrane, *Big Business in China* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1980), p. 234.

named for national sites (Great Wall) and national heroes – Sun Wen (Sun Yat-sen), Cai Tingkai.[7]

The boom in the light industrial sector was a bright spot in the overall economic picture. There was still a dearth of heavy industry. China had only a tiny steel industry, and only rudimentary arsenals. The lack of a serious armaments industry meant that China would not be able to defend herself in the event of war. Other industries were alive but struggling.

China's handicraft industries were in decline, hit by local changes – the displacement of homespun cotton by factory-spun yarn – or by developments thousands of miles away. The postwar fashion for bobbed hair in Europe and North America meant that women there cut their long hair – and no longer needed the fine hairnets manufactured in China. And the invention of artificial silk, rayon, and nylon put paid to a vast handicraft industry, handmade and embroidered silk blouses and lingerie, the mainstay of many Chinese peasant women.

The decline of handicraft exports was one symptom of a growing agricultural crisis in China. The rural economy had already been severely strained by population growth. Now warlord rule intensified the difficulties peasants had to live with. They had to cope with tax swindling, physical insecurity, depredations, and natural disasters, all without any government intervention. The lack of economic oversight put peasants and urban residents at the mercy of warlords, landlords, and merchants,

[7] Cai Tingkai led the defence of Shanghai against Japanese attack in early 1932. The Cai Tingkai brand of cigarettes was launched within days of his victory.

Artificial silk

Technological advances often have devastating effects on handicraft industries. In the world of textiles, the wool, cotton, linen, and silk industries were all brought to their knees by the invention of manmade fibres in the late nineteenth century. The Chinese silk industry, from cocoon raising to spinning, weaving, and the manufacture and export of garments (blouses, hosiery, lingerie), was undermined by artificial silk (rayon). Japanese production of artificial silk went from 100 tons in 1922 to 16,000 tons in 1930. The process of decline accelerated with the worldwide Great Depression, which put luxury fabrics beyond most people's pockets. Not until the 1980s did silk again become fashionable and affordable.

L. G. Fauquet, *Histoire de la rayonne et des textiles synthetiques*. Brussels: Armand Colin, 1960.

in a context of chronic financial insecurity created by high rents and rates of interest, and by a chaotic currency situation.

China's banking system was still in its infancy. There were multiple paper currencies in circulation, as well as copper and silver currencies; none of China's currencies, except the Yuan Shikai dollar, commanded respect, and those who could used foreign currencies, such as the Mexican silver dollar. The final burden for peasants was taxation, which by the 1920s had become extortionate. There was a great range of taxes, plus surtaxes and advance taxes, sometimes paid decades in advance. The list of taxes and fees in force at Xiamen, a major treaty port in Fujian, in 1924 gives some indication of how rapacious the tax regimes in China were.

Xiamen had another, more positive, economic personality. It was the hometown of many successful Overseas Chinese entrepreneurs in Southeast Asia, men who made fortunes in natural resource industries such as rubber, timber, and tin, and brought their money home, to build temples in their home villages and villas on the idyllic island of Gulangyu just off Xiamen, and to invest in their home region. The most famous of these men was Tan Kha Kee (Chen Jiageng), the "Rubber King" of Malaya.

Very few people put money into industry or infrastructure beyond the foreign-controlled parts of China. In the climate of political and economic instability affluent Chinese focused on protecting their resources. This meant either investing in land, which was difficult to steal or destroy, or putting resources outside Chinese administration, by investing them in one of the foreign settlements along the coast. This meant a shortage of investment capital for most of China, a sign of a lack of confidence in the future.

Taxes levied in Xiamen, Fujian, in 1924

Pork tax, sea protection tax, pig tax, fishing boat employee tax, pig slaughtering tax, superstition tax [on candles etc.], pig rearing tax, trade tax, pig inspection tax, household protection tax, surtax on pork for education, tax on opium lamps, fish tax, license fee for opium smoking, tax on fish companies, milk tax, fish shop tax, tax on passengers for water police, cockle, crab, prawn tax, tax on pig sellers, sea products tax, tax on opium cultivation, tax on night soil [human waste], shoe tax, fruit tax, tax on gambling houses, bamboo shoot tax, fuel and rice tax, tobacco and wine tax, water boat tax, local wine tax, cow and horse sanitation tax, onion and garlic tax, vegetable tax, oyster shell tax, shop tax, lime tax, theater tax, narcissus bulb tax, paper tax, chicken and duck tax, tea tax, sanitation tax, tinfoil tax, brothel license fee, sugar malt tax, brothel tax, firecracker tax, brick and tile tax, deed inspection fee, lumber tax, deed stamping fee, prostitute tax, land tax, street lamp tax, field tax, electric lamp surtax, tax on goods in transit, police tax, bean curd tax, cotton tax, proprietary medicine fee, cotton yarn tax, landing tax, flour tax, piece goods tax, bean, sugar, and oil tax, vermicelli tax.

Adapted from James Sheridan, *Chinese Warlord* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1966), p. 25.

Tan Kha Kee, 1874–1961

Tan Kha Kee (Chen Jiageng), the "Rubber King" of Malaya,was born in Jimei, near Xiamen (Fujian). He joined his father in Malaya, and as a young man made fortunes in tinned pineapple and in rubber. He made enormous profits in rubber during the First World War, and used the profits to promote education in Xiamen. He founded Xiamen University, one of China's foremost universities, in 1919, and funded it for many years, and he built a whole town devoted to the education of Overseas Chinese children in Jimei. His fortune collapsed in 1934, and he then turned to politics, leading parts of the overseas community in the war against Japan. He was one of the few Overseas Chinese to support the Chinese Communists, and moved to Jimei in 1950, leaving his entire family (four wives and seventeen children) behind in Southeast Asia.

C. F. Yong, *Tan Kha Kee: The Making of an Overseas Chinese Legend.* Singapore: Oxford University Press, 1977.

The rising power in the South

One part of China did not share the prevailing gloom – the far South. The North–South division that had marked the early Republic became more intense in the 1920s. The North, ruled by a series of short-lived,

The Song (Soong) sisters

China's most famous trio of sisters was the Song sisters: Song Ailing, Song Qingling and Song Meiling. They were the daughters of a Christian convert Charles Jones Song, one of the first Chinese to live in America. Born and educated in China, the sisters went to college in the United States. All were beautiful and accomplished, and all made exceptional marriages. Ailing married Kong Xiangxi (H. H. Kung), a banker and senior politician – and a putative descendent of Confucius. Qingling married Sun Yat-sen, and Meiling Chiang Kai-shek. The three women exercised a greater influence on politics than any other group of sisters anywhere else in the world. Their relations with each other were not harmonious; the infighting between the sisters is the stuff of several lurid biographies and films. After 1949 they were parted for ever. Qingling stayed on the Mainland and became the queen mother of the revolution. Her sisters went to Taiwan, and ultimately the United States. Meiling, the last to die, lived to the age of 105.

Emily Hahn, *The Soong Sisters*. New York: Doubleday, 1943.

rotating government regimes in Peking, was sinking deeper and deeper into the quagmire of instability. The South was beginning to show signs of moving out of the mess. From a base in Guangzhou the revolutionary movement began to take shape.

Guangdong was the first part of China affected by imperialism. It was the locus of the Opium War (1842) and it was the home province of most Overseas Chinese in North America. Guangdong's people, the Cantonese, came to play the vanguard role in China's revolutionary movement, as pioneers of modernization, and as the leaders of the anti-imperialist movement. In the first decade and a half of the Republic Sun Yat-sen emerged as the unquestioned leader of the great push to change China. He was a political revolutionary and a social revolutionary, in theory and in his own life. In 1915 he married Song Qingling, an American-educated young woman from a Christian family. She became his closest supporter, and secretary. She even appeared with him in public – the first time that a leader's wife had ever done so in China.

Sun was a nationalist who recognized the importance of international connections. In his search for help in establishing a base for his movement of national regeneration and revival, Sun could not expect any cooperation from Britain or France, who with their colonies in Hong Kong and Indo-China were hostile to a Chinese nationalist movement. The United States and Japan were less hostile, and Sun had supporters in both countries, especially Japan, but no formal help was forthcoming. Finally, in 1923, Sun formed an alliance with the Soviet Union's international

2.3 **a. Sun Yat-sen and Song Qingling, 1916**
Source: Zhang Lei, *Sun Zhongshan yu Song Qingling* (Guangzhou: Guangdong renmin chubanshe, 1997), p. 137.

DR. SUN YAT-SEN AND WIFE, WITH OFFICERS OF THE PRESIDENT'S ARMY ON THEIR NORTHERN CAMPAIGN

2.3 **b. Sun Yat-sen and Song Qingling, 1916**
Source: Emily Hahn, *The Soong Sisters* (New York: Doubleday, 1943), p. 120. By permission of the syndics of Cambridge University Library.

Michael Borodin, 1884–1949

Michael Borodin was a formidable example of the agents of international communism who played major roles after the establishment of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics. He was born in the Pale of Settlement, in Russia, and was a youthful revolutionary, both in Russia and in Chicago. He was sent to China by the Comintern in 1922, as chief advisor to Sun Yat-sen's revolutionary enterprise in Guangzhou. He helped Sun to reorganize the GMD along Leninist lines. After Sun's death in 1925 Borodin's position weakened. In 1926 he fled from China, making a dramatic trip across the desert to the Soviet Union by car. His activities in China were seen as a failure, though he was remarkably successful as an organizer; the man who did not speak Chinese or know the country brought the revolutionary discipline and toughness that helped the GMD to victory. He died in the Soviet Gulag.

Dan Jacobs, *Borodin: Stalin's Man in China*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1981.

arm, the Comintern. The Comintern provided financial help and military and organizational training for the GMD's forces. Between 1923 and 1927 several hundred Soviet advisors and Comintern representatives from other countries worked in China, most of them in the revolutionary base, Guangzhou.

The Soviet connection was the proof that Westerners and conservative Chinese needed that Sun and his colleagues were dangerous revolutionaries. The young and the idealistic in China, and in the Overseas Chinese communities, took the opposite view and saw Sun as the hope for a new China. Money and help poured into Guangzhou. Young men and women came there to play their own part in the revolution. From 1923 to 1925 the city basked in the kind of intoxicating excitement that occasionally comes over a city – Madrid in the mid-1930s, London in the early 1960s. There was a feeling of tumultuous change in the air. Almost all the men who would be important in the next fifty years of Chinese political and military life were there: Chiang Kai-shek, Chen Duxiu, Wang Jingwei, Mao Zedong, Zhou Enlai, Lin Biao, most of them still in their twenties. Some were involved in politics, some at the new Whampao (Huangpu) Military Academy. They were all convinced that the future of the Chinese revolution would be a military one. At the hub of this whirl of excitement was Sun Yat-sen. He came to embody the revolution.

The death of Sun Yat-sen

In March 1925 the mood of Guangzhou suddenly turned somber, and the early exuberance was lost. Before his vision of a military campaign,

a northern expedition to reunite China, could be realized, Sun died. He died in Peking, where he had gone to try and broker a peaceful reunification of the nation with the northern warlords. His early death set off waves of grief and mourning. His body was placed in a crystal coffin, and laid in the Temple of the Azure Clouds (*Biyunsi*), in the Western Hills outside Peking, to await permanent burial after the country was finally reunified.[8]

The mourning at his death was the first stage of a long process of honoring a man who has been commemorated like no other Chinese. He is honored in every part of the Chinese world, usually under his formal name, Zhongshan. Every city and town in China has at least one major site named for him – a park, a street, a university, an airport, a museum, a meeting hall. His birthplace, Xiangshan County, was renamed Zhongshan County for him, the only county ever renamed in honor of one man. His political legacy was enormous. His political testament became the sacred text of the GMD revolution, read aloud on all formal occasions, and his *Three Principles of the People* (*Sanmin zhuyi*) became the formal ideology of the GMD. His real legacy was the affection and admiration that Chinese have felt for a man who died without having achieved his dream – but who had the courage and the vision to see a positive future for his country.

Sun's death left a vacuum at the head of the revolutionary movement. No one could replace him, and no one dared try to do so. Sun had played too many roles, as the inspiration of the revolutionary movement, as negotiator, as fund-raiser, as day-to-day manager of the movement. Most of these were roles that only he could play. The revolutionary movement needed an interim leader. The obvious successor to this position was Wang Jingwei, a brilliant, handsome Cantonese, with a romantic revolutionary reputation, based on his brief incarceration in Peking at the very end of the Qing, after he tried (unsuccessfully) to blow up a Manchu prince. He had been close to Sun for years, and assumed he would succeed him.

The leadership was denied him. The new leader turned out to be Chiang Kai-shek, an outsider in Guangdong (he was from Zhejiang, and could not speak Cantonese), a stiff man with only a short career in the revolutionary movement. Chiang was a soldier, the head of the Whampao Military Academy – and a prime example of the soldiers who

[8] Sun's remains were reburied in Nanjing in 1929, after the new national government was established there. Leaving his coffin unburied for a while set a precedent for the future post-mortem treatment of China's modern leaders. Chiang Kai-shek's coffin rested for years in a lakeside pavilion in Taiwan, waiting for burial on the Mainland. Mao's embalmed body lies in a mausoleum in Tiananmen Square in Peking, a Soviet practice considered unlucky in China, where custom demands that bodies be buried outside cities.

Sun Yat-sen's political testament

For forty years I have devoted myself to the cause of the national revolution, the objective of which is to restore to China its liberty and a rank equal [to that of other nations]. The experience of those forty years has convinced me that if we wish to attain that objective, we must rouse the popular masses and unite with the peoples of the world that treat us on an equal footing, so as to pursue the common fight. Today the revolution has not yet triumphed. May all our comrades, guided by my writings, *The Plan for National Reconstruction*, *The Fundamentals of National Reconstruction*, *The Three People's Principles* and *The Congress Manifesto*, continue the struggle for this victory. And, above all, it is also necessary as soon as possible to implement the plans that I have recently proposed for setting up a national convention and for abrogating the unequal treaties. These are my instructions.

Marie-Claire Bergere, *Sun Yat-sen* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1998), p. 406.

were to lead the next stage of China's move toward revolution. He was in his late thirties, and his senior officers were still in their twenties, already in positions of command.

Military reunification

Sun's vision *did* become a reality, and within quite a short time of his death. It was brought about by military action, from the South. Elsewhere in China the economic and cultural changes had not brought changes in the political world. The industrial labor force was mute, as was the bulk of China's population, the peasantry. There were signs of peasant activism in the South: Mao Zedong was running the GMD peasant training institute in Canton, and Peng Pai, the radical son of a rich family, was organizing his family's tenants. The vast bulk of the peasants were quiescent. Political demonstrations, when they occurred, were nationalist ones led by students and urbanites. They were aimed against foreigners (especially the British). The most famous were the demonstrations known collectively as the May 30th Movement (1925).

None of these actions could change the status quo, but a military campaign could. In the spring of 1926 GMD forces started attacking northward; the Northern Expedition was under way, just as the northern warlords were falling out among themselves. The GMD's progress was speeded by the defection of warlord armies in each province they reached, led to the revolutionary force by the sense that this was now the winning side. There was serious fighting, but, to the astonishment of both the

Xie Bingying: youthful revolution

The spring wind is soft and warm and intoxicating, and the Goddess of Spring brings sweet seeds of love with her which she spreads in the heart of young men and women. But in the meantime there was the god who came to spread hot blood over the brave soldiers, male and female. With him came the harsh sound of the bugle, which wakened them from their dreams and told them to kill their enemies. We came out from rosy palaces and went towards the Socialist battleground, where many skeletons were laid. In this place were discarded our narrow ideas of life, which widened out to become a universal love for the oppressed people of the whole world, a life of comradeship.

Hsieh Ping-ying (Xie Bingying), *Autobiography of a Chinese* Girl (London: Allen and Unwin, 1943), p. 110. Translated by Cui Ji.

northern warlords and the revolutionary soldiers, by the early autumn the GMD forces had taken Wuhan and were poised to move east down the Yangzi.

The expedition aroused wild enthusiasm throughout China. Finally China seemed to be close to a complete revolution – oppression, poverty, the old family system would all be destroyed. The expedition was a heady, thrilling period for the young people who joined it, and a baptism of fire. For the first time young women played a role. Like young men, they left the comfort and security of their often privileged backgrounds to work with passion and idealism for their nation and for the future. Xie Bingying, a nineteen-year-old girl on the verge of an arranged marriage, ran away from home and became a soldier. She represented the intense, romantic spirit of the time.

The sudden military advances, and the spread of revolutionary ideas, worried the foreign powers deeply, and their anxiety increased when they tried to negotiate with the GMD leaders in their temporary capital in Wuhan, and found that the GMD was not interested in dealing with them, but was out to recover territories lost to the Powers. Westerners became convinced that *Red* revolution had arrived in China. Those who could fled to Shanghai and Hong Kong.

In the spring of 1927 the expedition continued, this time attacking down the Yangzi to Nanjing and Shanghai, both of which fell to the revolutionary forces in the late spring. Again, the movement of the revolutionary forces was accompanied by mass defections. By the end of the first stage of the Northern Expedition the revolutionary armies had quadrupled in size, to about 250,000 soldiers, almost all of them armies of recently converted warlords.

Eugene Ch'en, 1878–1944

Eugene Ch'en headed the Chinese team that negotiated the first abrogation of special foreign rights in China. He was, briefly, the foreign minister of China, a rare distinction for someone who could not speak Chinese. Ch'en was born in Trinidad, to an Overseas Chinese family of small merchants. He was a brilliant boy, and at the age of twenty-one became the first Chinese to qualify as a solicitor in Trinidad. In 1911, inspired by the revolution, he left his prosperous legal practice and went to China, to work with Sun Yat-sen. In early 1927, as foreign minister of the Wuhan government, he negotiated the return of the British concessions in Wuhan and Jiujiang to China. The return owed much to Chen's command of English law, far greater than that of the British representative Owen O'Malley. Ch'en never returned to Trinidad; he spent the rest of his life in Hong Kong and Shanghai.

Percy Chen, *China Called Me*. Boston: Little, Brown, 1979.

In the midst of success, the revolutionary zeal suddenly eroded, from the top down. While the GMD was acquiring military allies, its politics were increasingly fractured. In the spring of 1927 a dramatic split took place. Chiang Kai-shek and his (largely military) supporters decided to get rid of key parts of the revolutionary movement, the Soviet advisors, the left wing of the GMD, and the Communists. They won the day, and China's revolution turned in a militarist, authoritarian direction. The Soviet advisors fled back to the Soviet Union, the CCP was decimated in a savage purge that started in April and continued for much of the year – the white terror. The great promise of radical revolution was dead.

The internal fragmentation of the revolution did not stop the northward advance. The GMD armies reached Peking in the spring of 1928. The battle for reunification seemed to have been won. In June Chiang Kai-shek and the other commanders of the victorious GMD forces made a solemn pilgrimage to the Temple of the Azure Clouds in the Western Hills, where Sun Yat-sen's body lay in a crystal sarcophagus, to announce to Sun's spirit that his dream of a unified China had been fulfilled. In a dramatic gesture Chiang threw himself, sobbing, onto the sarcophagus, and gasped out the news of the completion of the Northern Expedition. The news was premature.

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Films

Instantaneous Transfiguration Xiao Caiweng, 1925
A warlord is transformed by his conversion to Buddhism, sends away his soldiers and his wives, and becomes a hermit.

Regret for the Past (*Houhui*) Shi Hua, 1981
Story of a young couple who break conventions, with fatal consequences. Based on Lu Xun's short story. Beautiful recreation of old Peking.

The Sand Pebbles Robert Wise, 1966
An American gunboat rescues missionaries caught up in the revolutionary fighting in 1926. Atmospheric. Stars Steve McQueen, Richard Attenborough, and Candice Bergen (as a missionary).

Shanghai Express Josef von Sternberg, 1932
A dramatic *film noir*, with Marlene Dietrich in one of the roles of her life as a Shanghai madam, traveling on a train hijacked by warlord troops.

3 The Nanjing decade – a new beginning? 1928–37

The era that started in 1928 was to be the long-awaited new age, with the reunification of the country, a new government, a new ideology, new leaders, a modern military elite, and Western-educated technocrats. The self-confidence of the regime, shown in its new capital, was mirrored in rapid, exciting change in many areas – education, culture, and the position of women. All these signs of renewal and modernity seemed to mark the start of a new age, of revival and recovery from a long decline. But the new age was stillborn. The central government became mired in conflict with the military allies that the GMD had recently acquired, and with the Communists. The pace of Japanese incursions increased and the pressure became so intense that, when war finally came in 1937, it seemed a foregone conclusion. The economic revolution that many had expected, and the emergence of an export economy, were stymied by the Depression and the collapse of world trade. The decade that started with such high hopes ended in despair, with the full-scale Japanese invasion of China. The military remained in the ascendancy, dedicated to the maintenance of a unity that had officially already been achieved. The huge problems of poverty and population growth were barely addressed, though the scale of the problems was more clearly recognized than ever before.

As they completed their march north, the GMD leaders could believe that they were about to fulfill their mission to lay to rest modern China's ghosts. The old warlord system no longer existed; the GMD armies had defeated or incorporated most of the warlord armies. The heyday of Western imperialism was over; Westerners no longer felt secure in China, terrified by the Nanjing Incident (March 1927), when foreigners living in the city were attacked and some killed, probably by defeated warlord troops. A modern economy was emerging, and China was on the threshold of entering the global economy. China's renaissance had started.

The fallen Qing dynasty was humiliated one last time, posthumously. In July 1928 the tomb of the Empress Dowager Cixi was desecrated. The motive of the men who entered the tombs was robbery, but rumors of revenge against the rulers of the last dynasty were fueled by the fact that the robbers were in military uniform.

China's renaissance

The Renaissance of China is very far from complete. But the modifications in the life of the Chinese people and the transformation of Chinese institutions that are implied in industrialization have already taken so deep a root that it a merely a question of time for the new order of society to be firmly established . . .

[T]he new China, moulded by contact with the West, will be essentially based on its own foundations, transformed to suit the new situation.

That concern for society as a whole rather than competitive individualism will guide relations in the new China in the same way as it actuated, however imperfectly, those of the Celestial Empire, while at the same time leading to a modern industrial system, is not an unwarranted conclusion.

T'ang Leang-li (Tang Liangli), *The Foundations of Modern China* (London: Noel Douglas, 1928), pp. 256–8.

The new government

The GMD government was the first to claim to rule all of China since 1916. It also boasted of being the first *Chinese* government for nearly 300 years (Yuan Shikai's brief rule was forgotten). One of its first acts was to move the capital to Nanjing, the southern capital. Peking was renamed Beiping (Northern Peace).

Old Nanjing

Nanjing is the southernmost of the four historic capitals (Changan/Xian, Luoyang, Beijing, Nanjing). It was the capital of the early Ming dynasty, a city of splendid buildings, which included the massive thirty-three kilometer city wall, thirteen gates, an imperial palace, temples, and tombs. The first emperor's reign was followed by a succession crisis. He had twenty-four sons, but nominated his grandson as the new emperor. The furious uncles of the new emperor refused to accept this choice, and there was a bloodbath. One of the uncles emerged as the Yongle Emperor. In 1420 he moved the capital to Peking, perhaps for strategic reasons or to escape the ghosts of those he had killed. He built the Forbidden City on the model of the Nanjing Palace; Peking's city walls were also modeled on Nanjing. Nanjing was again the capital under the Christian-inspired Taiping movement (1851–64); there was another bloodbath there in 1864, when the Taipings were defeated by the Qing armies. In 1912 Nanjing was briefly the capital for Sun Yat-sen's provisional government.

Barry Till and Paula Swart, *In Search of Old Nanjing*. Hong Kong: Joint Publications, 1984.

3.1 **New flag of the Chinese Republic**
Source: Zhonghua minguo kangri zhanzheng tumu (Taipei: Jindai Zhongguo chubanshe, 1995), frontispiece.

The move was a nationalist statement, taking government away from the northern capital, so long under the thumb of the barbarian invaders. It fitted the composition of the new government and its armies, largely southerners. The definition of "southern" had expanded. It no longer meant only the Cantonese, who had dominated the early stages of the revolution,[1] but now included men from the lower Yangzi region, especially Shanghai and Jiangsu, and from Zhejiang, slightly further south. The Cantonese were actually being phased out of leading positions in the revolution, their contributions to the early stages almost forgotten – except for those of Sun Yat-sen.

The symbols of the new state were uplifting. China had a national anthem (the first) and a new flag, the white sun on a blue field. Blue stood for equality and justice, white for fraternity and frankness.[2] China was taking on the appearance of a modern state.

Nanjing was transformed into a modern city. A massive rebuilding programme started in 1928, to make the old city a new one, complete with government ministries, universities and colleges, and residential districts of Western-style houses. All this was accommodated within the great Ming walls. Something had to go; the residents of the inner city made way for the new buildings and for the broad new boulevards, which were carved across the city and met at a huge circle, the focal point of the new

[1] The GMD government continued to refer to itself as a revolutionary party, a view shared by representatives of Western interests in China. The 1927 attacks on the Chinese Communists led to the CCP calling the GMD *counterrevolutionary,* reactionary, and feudal.

[2] The GMD's flag has little symbolic weight in Chinese culture. The CCP was more fortunate, in that red, the color of communism, has the strongest positive symbolism of any color – for good fortune, happiness, and celebration. Brides wear red dresses, gifts are wrapped in red paper, and baby boys are wrapped in red robes.

3.2 **Sun Yat-sen mausoleum, Nanjing**
Source: Yao Qian and Gu Bing, *Zhongshan ling* (Beijing: Wenwu chubanshe, 1981), p. 6.

city, *Xinjiekou*. The boulevards were lined with shady plane trees, and public parks were created – urban amenities almost unknown in China before. On the Purple Mountain, to the east of the city, a great mausoleum for Sun Yat-sen was built. In June 1929 his remains were removed from the north, and interred in the mausoleum. His spirit, looming over the city, gave the ultimate legitimacy to the new regime.

China in the world

The relationships between the new government and much of the outside world were refreshing. China seemed to have emerged from the long decades of foreign humiliation. The government embarked on a process of treaty revision and tariff reform, designed to establish China's equality with other countries. A number of foreign concessions were returned to Chinese control – for instance, the British leasehold in Shandong, Weihaiwei. The Chinese government enjoyed a limited but real degree of respect from the West. Relations with the former arch-enemy, Britain, were cordial and supportive. Britain had lost a great deal of influence along the Yangzi in the aftermath of the Northern Expedition, and was at pains to hang on to her remaining influence in Shanghai and Hong Kong.

Relations with the United States were weakened by the rise of isolationism there, but they were still friendly. There were powerful personal connections. In the United States there was an informal pro-China lobby of missionaries and their families – Henry Luce, founder of *Time* magazine, was the son of a missionary, and Pearl Buck, coming into her own as a novelist, was the daughter of a missionary. Visiting American celebrities brought China in to the US news. The 1931 flight of Charles and Ann Lindbergh to China, which coincided with a terrible flood of the Yangzi, had a huge impact in the United States.

Relations with the Soviet Union were conflicted, veering between neutral and hostile. The Soviet Union feared then, as Russia still does, that China would ask for action on the Karakhan Declaration (1919), in which the Soviet foreign minister had offered to return to China vast territories annexed by the tsars. The GMD did not push the issue. There was a strange angle to the China–USSR relationship: Chiang Kai-shek's son, Chiang Ching-kuo, lived in the Soviet Union from 1925 to 1937, in a mysterious exile that seems to have started as the impulsive act of a young man caught up in the passion for revolution, and turned into a hostage-taking, the Soviets holding Chiang's son hostage against the father's compliance with Soviet wishes.[3]

[3] Chiang Ching-kuo was twenty-eight when he returned to China, having married a Russian woman. His name is spelled here in the received spelling, not in the unfamiliar "Jiang Jingguo" format.

The Yangzi flood, September 1931

Our first survey we did alone [the Lindberghs had been asked to use their long-range plane to chart the extent of the floodwaters], I doing the flying and Charles the mapping. The first day was terribly shocking: the area east of the Grand Canal from Nanking to Peking flooded by both the river and the canal – you just can't believe the extent. Looking as far as you can see on all sides, nothing but water and the tops of trees, collapsed thatched roofs and here and there a smear of brown near the surface, where a mud village or house was, or a road.

They estimated that the square miles we covered that day would equal the state of Massachusetts – as though you put Lake Superior down on top of Massachusetts. And there is no higher ground, therefore no large collections of refugees easily reached and helped. We passed thousands of small groups, two or three mud huts, pathetic little mud dikes frantically built around them to keep the water out.

Anne Morrow Lindbergh, *Hours of Gold, Hours of Lead* (New York: Harcourt, 1973), p. 197.

There was little sign of compliance. The GMD's virulent anti-communism continued; the Big Brother of communism did nothing to help the CCP. And the GMD tolerated the hundreds of thousands of White Russian refugees in China. New refugees arrived in the far west of China from the Soviet Union, from the central Asian republics, fleeing the extremes of collectivization. On one occasion the Soviets were actively hostile to China. The sale of the Soviet interest in the Chinese Eastern Railway to the Japanese in 1929, which gave a major boost to a country that was already a threat to China, strained China's relations with the Soviet Union, but did not destroy them completely.

The Chinese Eastern Railway

This railway line runs across northern Manchuria; it was built to cut off a huge loop of the Trans-Siberian Railway on its way to Vladivostok. Russia won the right to build the railway in return for her aid against Japan in 1895. The CER connected to the north–south line to Dalian. At the crossing of the two lines the fabulous city of Harbin came into being, one of the most Russian cities, in spite of its largely Chinese population. Its architecture has made it a UNESCO world heritage site. After 1917 the CER brought hundreds of thousands of Russian refugees to China. Until 1929 the line was jointly administered by China and Russia (succeeded by the Soviet Union). The Soviet Union then sold its interest to Japan, helping to precipitate the political crisis in Manchuria.

The Nanjing decade saw China as an established part of the international world, but with few real allies, and no friendly neighbors. To the south and west European imperialists held power, to the north the Soviets threatened further expansion, while to the east the Japanese already held Korea and were planning further incursions on Chinese soil.

The republican consciousness

According to Sun Yat-sen's blueprint for the future of China, the nation should now have been moving out of the stage of military control and into the stage of political tutelage, under which the GMD would gradually establish a new political system and train China's people for the ultimate goal: full democracy. This did not happen. Instead, the government leaders liked the idea of strong state control, an idea not at odds with the fascist beliefs taking hold in Italy and Germany. The GMD evolved a concept of enhanced central control, without Sun's democracy – a pattern that the CCP was to follow fifty years later, after the failure of Maoism.

Modernity

The new government was new not only as a recently established regime but also in its self-image, which was modern, militarist, and focused on managerial and technological sophistication. Though this was a nationalist government, it was also self-consciously Westernized. Many of the officials of the new government were young, foreign-educated technocrats. They busied themselves designing a new society, making blueprints for new citizens, a new army, new schools, new universities, a new economy. These changes were to start in China's coastal cities and spread into the interior. The self-confident forms of urban growth in Shanghai, Nanjing, and other centers of the lower Yangzi Valley would send out ripples to the rest of the Chinese population – i.e. the peasants and the people living in the cities of the interior, who would be dragged along in the wake of a transformed, urban, modern China.

The Nanjing period started on a high note, a pride of newness, and excitement over the introduction of new systems, a feeling that China really had begun a period of revolutionary change. Even the most recalcitrant areas of society, such as the treatment of women, were changing. Women began to leave their homes to work, and to mix openly with men – something unthinkable only a short time beforehand. Bold young women chose their own husbands. Boldest of all, some professional women, such as Dr. Lin Chaozhi, the first woman gynecologist in China, refused to marry at all.

3.3 **Qipao old and new**
Source: Bao Mingxia, *Zhongguo qipao* (Shanghai: Wenhua shuju, 1998), p. 76.

The new look

In keeping with the stress on the modern, urban Chinese began to look different. Chinese men had lost their pigtails after 1911, but, in the newness of "long hair," there had been a period of uncertainty about male coiffure. Now men in the modern centers took their lead from the military and shaved their heads or wore their hair very short; only intellectuals wore their hair long and flowing. There was a revolution in dress, led by the members of the government elite. The new men's clothing was drabber than their fathers' or grandfathers' had been. The elegant, swishing long gowns that Chinese men had worn for centuries disappeared from the new capital. The gorgeous robes of officials, prescribed by precise sumptuary rules, had been casualties of the demise of the dynasty. Now it was the turn of everyday gowns – silk for the elite, cotton for the less wealthy – to disappear. Chinese men moved toward sober Western suits, severe Zhongshan jackets (based on a Japanese military uniform), or military uniforms. Students started to appear in uniform, as did schoolchildren – another influence from Japan. Even footwear changed; leather shoes and boots replaced the thick-soled cotton shoes worn before.

Cheongsam or *qipao*

Traditional costume for Han women was a skirt or trousers and a long jacket. Manchu women wore long gowns. In the early Republic a new costume emerged, the *qipao*, a close-fitting, high-collared gown, usually with long sleeves. It could be made up in any fabric from plain cotton to heavy silks; it could be decorated with embroidery, piping, interfacing, or frogging. The *qipao* came into its own in the 1930s, and has had a recent revival as designers try to create an authentic Chinese costume, slightly ironic since the term means "Manchu gown."

The *qipao* is also known by a Cantonese name, the *cheongsam* (*changshan*), or long gown. In 1997, on the return of Hong Kong to the embrace of the motherland, the *cheongsam* was widely worn, as a nationalist statement. In a nostalgic mood, Maggie Cheung's stunning repertoire of *cheongsam* were the stars of Wong Kar-wai's film set in late 1950s Hong Kong, *In the Mood for Love*.

Bao Mingxin, *Zhongguo qipao* (China's Qipao). Shanghai: Shanghai wenhua chubanshe, 1998.

Urban women also moved away from traditional clothing. Long skirts and side-fastening jackets, which Han women had worn in the past, were gradually replaced by a new style of dress, the *cheongsam* or *qipao*.

Young women cut their long hair, and wore it bobbed. They even started to wear Western-style high-heeled shoes, though bound feet made it impossible for many women to change their footwear. The binding of girls' feet by their own families was outlawed early in the new regime, though it took another generation before the practice disappeared completely. Elderly ladies with bound feet were still seen occasionally up to the 1960s.

Judging from the pictures and advertisements that appeared in the magazines published in Shanghai and Nanjing, China had changed completely, had become modern almost overnight. The impression was true – but localized.

Change and its limits

The new styles of clothing did not penetrate beyond the major cities and schools. Peasants continued to wear homespun cotton jackets and trousers, usually blue, and wealthier people in the rural areas continued to wear long gowns and traditional jackets. In the old capital, Peking, which had gone into hibernation after the departure of the government, it was possible to imagine that no real changes had taken place.

The same pattern of localized effect was true of the New Life Movement, which started with the highest backing of the GMD government in the early 1930s as an attempt to get Chinese to change their behavior, to stop spitting, pushing, belching, farting, and talking loudly in public. The movement was often interpreted as an attempt to bring Protestant prudery into China, under the influence of the devout Christian Madame Chiang, and it was mocked for its insistence, for example, on men wearing shirts in public – difficult for workers in the heat of summer. This movement was traditional as well as modern. It has been a recurrent impulse of Chinese elites to impose restraint on the unbridled lower orders. Confucians put great stress on neatness and refinement. One of the first movements of the post-Mao era was the *wujiang simei* (five polite and four beautiful behaviors). Mao had despised genteelness, and went out of his way to show an earthy side, by scratching himself and spitting in public.

The republican optimism about China's future in 1928 and 1929 was as much an act of faith as a real promise of change to come. There were major problems. The country was only partially unified. Though warlordism was gone, many regions were still under warlord control, even though the warlords now flew the flag of the GMD; they refused to obey orders from Nanjing, or to remit tax revenue. Other regions were still under foreign control, and they too ignored Nanjing. The world economic climate changed dramatically in 1929, killing China's hopes for trade development. And, although pressure from European imperialists had disappeared, a far more potent enemy was threatening China: Japan.

These were major impediments to change, but there *was* change, and there was much space for ideas, criticism, and commentary. The early 1930s was the most open period that Mainland China has ever experienced, with the kind of freedom only seen now in Hong Kong and Taiwan. Intellectuals took full advantage of the new freedom.

The nationalist intelligentsia

The Nanjing decade saw the emergence of a new intellectual elite, the nationalist intelligentsia – the writers, academics, and artists who appointed themselves as the conscience of the new China. This generation of brilliant, often bicultural, scholars (many had studied abroad) tended to oppose the policies of the GMD, though they seldom associated with the CCP. They published their views in a torrent of newspapers, journals, and books, many published in Shanghai. This was the great age of the free Chinese press. Publications (news, reportage, and fiction) were circulated widely, and for the first time brought a national consciousness to almost all parts of the country. The problem for the intellectuals and

their passionate output was that they had almost no influence on the government. They were based in Shanghai and Peking, not in the capital, where the new bureaucratic and military elites held sway and paid very little attention to the nationalist intellectuals.

Their lack of influence meant a tragic waste of their talents. The nationalist intellectuals were at the forefront of the swirling currents of patriotism, and rising anti-Japanese feelings. They expressed rage at the racism that Chinese had experienced in the West, and in the treaty ports, but they could not influence the one part of China that they most needed to influence: the government. They depended, in a fundamental irony, on the freedom that the parts of China under foreign control, especially Shanghai, gave them to launch their increasingly bitter attacks on the Nanjing government. Shanghai's anomalous position as a semi-colony was essential for their writing. They could publish in Shanghai, in Chinese, what could not be published on Chinese soil.

The restoration of a proud past

Nationalist intellectuals spoke as the voice of the nation. They detested China's imperial past, and focused on the nation's future. There was a group of contemporaries, no less nationalist, whose focus was on the past, not the future. These were young scholars who were searching for the origins of Chinese culture. They were educated first in the Chinese classics at home, and then in foreign universities. They had mastered the modern science that would allow them to explore China's ancient past archeology. The key discovery was the excavation of the fossil remains of *Sinanthropus pekinensis*, which confirmed that the Chinese world had been inhabited since the dawn of time, by hominids who might be the ancestors of the present-day Chinese.

For Chinese scholars the discovery of the ancient past was the key to unlocking the greatness of Chinese culture, and the proof that the stories recorded in chronicles and legends were true. Their work was grounded in the present; in the turmoil of republican China the archeologists had to struggle against bandits, soldiers, officials, lack of funding, robbers, and forgers to do their research. The work at Anyang, capital of the Yin/Xia Dynasty, where the oracle bones, the most ancient form of written Chinese, were discovered, went on in a spirit of excitement, drama – and national pride.

Non-Chinese scholars also worked on the discovery of the past. The 1930s was the great age of erudition in sinology, a field remote from China itself. In England Arthur Waley worked on traditional culture, and introduced the riches of China's classical poetry and philosophy to the West – the first breakthrough in the popular appreciation of Chinese

Peking Man: *Sinanthropus pekinensis*

In the 1920s the search for the origins of man gripped much of the scientific world. One of the great discoveries was Peking Man, whose fossil remains were found just outside Peking, at Zhoukoudian. The first signs of *Sinanthropus* – some teeth – were found in 1926. Further excavations were organised by the geologists Ding Wenjiang and J. G. Andersson, and the paleontologists Teilhard de Chardin and Pei Wenzhong. In Peking the anatomist Davidson Black set up a laboratory at the Rockefeller Hospital. Late in 1929 Pei discovered a fossil skull. He rode back twenty-five miles into Peking on his bicycle, with the skull in his bicycle basket, wrapped in cotton wadding and paper. The work on Peking Man depended on intense, dedicated collaboration, focused on the importance of their discoveries for the history of man – and of China.

The fossils of Peking Man have continued to haunt China. In 1937 the Japanese took Peking and work stopped on the fossils. Eventually they were moved in to the US embassy for safe keeping. In late 1941 it was decided to ship them to the United States, but before they could be taken out of China the marines guarding the two-foot lockers in which the fossils were packed were taken prisoner – on the day of Pearl Harbor. The fossils have never been seen again. There are many theories about their location: in the United States, in Japan, in China, in Taiwan, lost for ever.

Dora Hood, *Davidson Black: A Biography.* Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1964.

Anyang

In myth and in the *Records of the Grand Historian* (Sima Qian) one of China's earliest dynasties was the Shang. Astounding discoveries of bronzes, oracle bones, and pottery at Anyang (Henan Province), in the Waste of Yin (*Yinxu*), the capital of the Shang, gave material confirmation of the legends.

Systematic excavation at Anyang started in 1928, under the aegis of China's new government-funded agency of academic research, the Academia Sinica. Until 1937 there were regular excavations, which brought to light great quantities of oracle bones, ritual bronzes, and painted pottery. They established the existence of an ancient society of great sophistication and technical skill, which had agriculture, sericulture, water control systems, and metallurgy. The excavation work was directed by the Harvard-educated Li Ji (Li Chi), who took on bandits, robbers, fakers, and bureaucrats in his dedication to the work. The only enemy he could not fight was the Japanese. When they occupied Anyang in 1937 work stopped, not resuming until the 1950s. By then the artefacts, in 300 packing cases, had been moved, first to the interior and then to Taiwan. Extensive post-1949 excavations at Anyang, and at other sites, have added to the knowledge of ancient China.

Li Chi, *Anyang*. Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1977.

culture. He never went to China and never spoke Chinese, but all the same was less removed from the present than the fictional Peter Kien, in Elias Canetti's *Auto da Fe*, so absorbed in his study of the Chinese classics in Berlin that he failed to notice the rise of Nazism.

The transformation of traditional culture

While parts of China's elite were gripped by the search for modernity, elsewhere a revival and transformation of the Chinese tradition in art was under way. The world of painting went in two directions. Foreign-trained painters such as Xu Beihong painted in Western styles, and in oils (*youhua*), when they returned to China; others, such as Zhao Wuji (Zao Wou-ki), never came home. Other painters reinterpreted the classical tradition, using traditional materials but painting unfamiliar subjects. Their inspiration was the seventeenth-century painter Bada Shanren, a man who had also lived in difficult times – the transition from the Ming to the Qing – and had developed from his own turbulent life (he was a junior member of the Ming imperial family) a wild creativity that suited the new *Zeitgeist*. The most famous Republican painter was Qi Baishi; his paintings of fish, crabs, shrimps, birds, fruit, flowers, and insects symbolized the evolution of the Chinese tradition.

Another art form that went through a transformation of the tradition was the opera in all its forms – Peking Opera (*jingju*), Shanghai Opera (*kunju*), and Cantonese Opera *(yueju)*. With the opening of large theaters, and the advent of rapid travel by train and air, it became possible for opera to reach wider audiences, and allowed the emergence of the star system in China. The greatest star was Mei Lanfang. Mei and other stars made opera the most popular of performance arts. They traveled constantly to perform in China and overseas. Opera is still adored by huge numbers of fans. The efforts of Jiang Qing (Madame Mao) to produce revolutionary operas during the Cultural Revolution, by developing new operas with titles such as *On the Docks* and *The Red Detachment of Women*, almost killed the art form, but in the last two decades it has revived strongly.

The floating world

The committed nationalist modern culture and the transformed traditional culture coexisted with other more self-centered cultures. Shanghai was the sin city of Asia, famous for its louche, shady characters, Chinese and foreign – Russian aristocrats, Hungarian "traders," British wide boys, American gangsters, people who lived mysterious lives off obscure sources of money. These were the people portrayed in films such as

Mei Lanfang, 1894–1961

Mei Lanfang was the most famous performing artist in China for more than fifty years. He was born into an opera family and started his professional career at the age of twelve, after four years of training. Mei quickly became famous for his playing of female roles (the *dan* roles), roles that he performed from his early teens to his sixties, with a long break during the Resistance War, when he refused to perform under Japanese occupation. In full make-up and costume, Mei's liquid eyes, his high-pitched voice, and his sinuous movements made him the epitome of the feminine; he was more than a female impersonator – he became a woman. In the 1930s he performed in the United States and the Soviet Union, and brought the art of Peking Opera outside China for the first time. Mei's legacy has been continued by one of his sons, Mei Baoju.

Chen Kaige's film *Farewell my Concubine* (1993), which covers seven decades of modern Chinese history, shows the life of Peking Opera artists from their childhood in training school to their survival through the Japanese occupation and the Maoist period.

It stars the Mainland actors Gong Li and Zhang Fengyi, and the Hong Kong Cantopop star Leslie Cheung, who trained for several years for his role. His performance was the high point of a career that ended tragically in 2003 when he committed suicide.

Shanghai Express and *Shanghai Triad*. The seamy side of Shanghai has had an enduring fascination, to its own inhabitants and to outsiders; one that has been romanticized – as has its polar opposite, the stodgy world of the British and American businessmen who managed Shanghai and its economy. The villas and clubs of the "expat" (expatriate) world have been lovingly restored, slices of outer London suburbia on the coast of China.

A more respectable part of the Shanghai world was the cosmopolitan Chinese one, made up of young people so strongly influenced by the West that they came to despise China. They were the children of Chinese who had moved into the city as it grew in wealth and influence, living in the foreign concessions and in the Chinese parts of the city. They were portrayed as superficial and obsessed with money and fashion. The shallowness and self-centeredness of these privileged young people is captured in a biting critique, Qian Zhongshu's *Fortress Besieged (Weicheng)*.

Shanghai was also where the most dynamic of new art forms developed, one that had a powerful capacity to unite China. The silent film industry was established there in the early years of the Republic. By the late 1920s there were fifty film-makers in Shanghai, most of them producing *wuxia* (knight errant) films, the forerunners of *gongfu* films. These

Mr. Jimmy Chi-min Chang

Mr. Chang was from the coastal area of Chekiang (Zhejiang). His given name was Chi-min, but he preferred people to call him Jimmy. For over twenty years he had worked for an American firm, the Stars and Stripes Company, rising from a clerk to become a comprador . . .

Mr. Chang was used to dealing with foreigners and his speech had a special characteristic – perhaps in a foreign firm, the YMCA, the Rotary Club, or other such places, this was nothing unusual – he liked to sprinkle his Chinese with English expressions. [. . .]

He imitated the American accent down to the slightest inflection, though maybe the nasal sound was a little overdone, sounding more like a Chinese with a cold and a stuffy nose, rather than an American speaking.

Ch'ien Chong-shu (Qian Zhongshu), *Fortress Besieged* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1979), pp. 41, 43.

Butterfly Wu, 1907–89

Butterfly Wu, or Hu Die, was the first Chinese film star. She started her career in 1925, and starred in the first of dozens of silent films that made her famous throughout the Chinese world. In most of her films she played beautiful, unhappy women, put upon in the old society – *Singsong Girl Red Peony*, *Wild Torrents*, *Rouge and Powder*, and *Twin Sisters* were the most popular of her films. She made a successful transition to sound films in the 1930s, but her career ended with the Japanese occupation of Shanghai in 1937. She fled, first to Hong Kong and later to Chongqing.

Jay Leyda. *Dianying*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1972.

studios brought out more than 100 films a year. Sample titles convey the style of the genre: *Iron Blood Hero, Wrest Life from Tiger's Mouth, Flying Bandit, Burning of Sword Peak Fortress*.[4] When the talkies arrived they became the first art form that forced audiences across China to listen to a single national language; for the first time an art form explicitly transcended regional differences. The stars of this world presented a sentimental, almost saccharine view of China, embodied in the famous actress Butterfly Wu.

There was a different "new" culture in Nanjing, a hedonistic, self-involved, glittering one, detached from the darkness of the moment and from China's problems. In Nanjing the Qinhuaihe pleasure district

[4] The most recent versions of this genre have crossed over to Western audiences – *Crouching Tiger, Flying Dragon* (2000), *Hero* (2004), and *House of the Flying Daggers* (2005).

was peopled by beautiful ladies and soulful poets, absorbed in rarified emotions.

The traditional world

For all the changes in some parts of her society, most of China was still steeped in tradition. In the rural areas, there was almost no social change. Popular religious beliefs (referred to by scornful modernists as "superstition") dominated the peasant world. People still prayed to their ancestors for help and guidance, they started on their journeys on auspicious days (any date with a three in it), they consulted fortune-tellers before buying property, or arranging a marriage. They observed the rituals of ancestor worship, and celebrated the old festivals. The rural year was divided not by months and weeks but by festivals, such as the Lunar New Year or the Mid-Autumn Festival, the only holidays peasants were ever able to take. The concept of a day of rest was unknown. Peasant communities were dominated by family and clan connections, the individual tightly bound into a demanding, cohesive entity. They felt almost nothing of the pressure of nationalism, nor were they aware of the national need for population reduction. Their concerns centered round the immediate survival of their own families.

The foreign threat

The Chinese revolutionary movement had been fueled by nationalist desires, first to eject the alien Qing dynasty, then to rid China of the pressure of Western imperialism, especially the British. The new government seemed to have achieved equality with other nations. But the equality was illusory. The new government failed to reassert Chinese authority over many territories that had fallen to colonial powers. Hong Kong remained under British control, Macao under Portuguese. Most of Shanghai remained under foreign administration, the International Settlement and the French Concession. Taiwan stayed firmly in the hands of Japan.

Japan's imperial expansion was on the upswing. Japan was increasing her hold on Manchuria, developing the informal empire there. Government and private enterprise had poured money into developing infrastructure (especially railways), building factories, opening mines, and exploiting natural resources. Millions of Chinese had migrated to Manchuria from Shandong and Hebei, to work in the Japanese factories and mines, and to settle on the land.

Zhang Xueliang, 1898–2001

The "Young Marshall" succeeded to his father's domain after his father's death. He cast off his previously dissolute way of life, and became an inspirational leader to the people of Manchuria. This role ended in 1931, with the Japanese takeover. In 1936 he was instrumental in the kidnapping of Chiang Kai-shek near Xian, as a (successful) effort to get him to commit to resistance to Japanese encroachment. Zhang paid a heavy penalty for his boldness. He was put under house arrest, and remained under arrest until the end of martial law in Taiwan; his captors took him with them to Chongqing during the Resistance War, and then to Taiwan at the end of the Civil War. He may have served longer under arrest than any other human being – more than fifty years. He still lived to a venerable 102, apparently unscathed by his incarceration.

Manchuria was booming, but the Japanese did not fully control it. The Kwantung[5] Army garrisoned the railway lands in most of Manchuria. The leaders of this army were unhappy about the emergence of a new, strong China, and even more so about the possible defection to the new government of the Manchurian warlord whose complicity had made Japan's economic development possible. To prevent him from jumping ship, Zhang Zuolin was assassinated in June 1928, the train in which he was traveling being blown up as it passed over a bridge.

This was the second Japanese intervention in the politics of the new China. The first had come two months earlier, when Japanese forces in Jinan (Shandong), stationed there to guard the railway to the coast, forbade Chinese troops from entering the city – and murdered the Chinese envoys sent to sort out the matter. GMD forces had to make a huge detour around the city.

China found herself alone in facing Japanese incursions. Other countries were absorbed in their own affairs, or suspicious that China was still "Red." Japan, meanwhile, was held in general favor, a nation whose people were sober, hard-working, disciplined, and no threat to the West – but instead to the evil empire, the Soviet Union.

In 1931 the Japanese threat moved to a new level, with the takeover of Manchuria, after a staged incident in Shenyang (Mukden). *Jiuyiba* (September 18th) came to symbolize humiliation, oppression, and loss. It was as momentous a day in Chinese history as December 7th was to be in US history.

[5] "Kwantung" refers to the area east of the main pass through the Great Wall – i.e. southern Manchuria. Not to be confused with the province of Kwangtung (Guangdong), on China's far southern coast.

Table 3.1 *Japanese encroachment on China*

1895	Cession of Taiwan
1905	Cession of the Liaodong Peninsula
1914	Annexation of German concessions in Shandong
1928	Jinan incident; assassination of Zhang Zuolin
1931	9.18 Mukden (Shenyang) incident
1932	Attack on Shanghai; Manzhouguo established
1933	Jehe put under pro-Japanese rule
1935	North China demilitarized
1937	Full-scale war in north and central China

Jiuyiba

My home is in the Northeast, on the banks of the Songhua River,
A land of dense forests and deep coal mines,
Of high mountains and endless bean and sorghum fields.
My home is in the Northeast, on the banks of the Songhua River.
My fellow countrymen live there,
My old and feeble parents live there too.
On the tragic day of September 18th
I left my native place,
Gave up the boundless hidden treasures,
To rove, to rove, all day long to rove south of the Pass.
When, oh when, can I
Return to my beloved native land?
When, oh when, can I
Recover the boundless hidden treasures?
Oh, my compatriots, my compatriots
When, oh when, can we recover our native land?

Zhang Hanhui, *My First Sixty Years in China* (Beijing: Xinshijie, 1982), p. 69. Translated by Sam Ginsburg.

Chinese troops in Manchuria were forced to leave the region, go over to the Japanese, or disband; Zhang Xueliang led his own armies into northwest China, where they waited to return to their homeland. This should have been the moment to resist Japan, but Nanjing did not do so. The GMD was too heavily involved with its internal enemies to contemplate fighting the superbly trained and equipped Japanese troops. China lodged a formal complaint with the League of Nations. Japan was censured, but did not withdraw from Manchuria; instead, Japan left the League. This was a body blow to China, and to the League. In China the loss of Manchuria was followed by an amphibious attack on Shanghai,

which Chinese troops *did* fight off. The commander of the resistance in Shanghai in early 1932, Cai Tingkai, became a national hero.[6]

The setback at Shanghai did not deter the Japanese authorities. In 1932 they set up a client state in Manchuria, Manzhouguo, and put the former emperor Pu Yi, now a vapid, drug-addicted young man, on the throne. He was provided with a mini-palace in Changchun, now renamed Xinjing (New Capital). Japanese agents started the systematic cultivation of the enemies of the Chinese government – the Mongols under De Wang, the Manchus in north China and Manchuria and Chinese who were unhappy with the government, businessmen under pressure from Nanjing to give financial support to the new government, defeated politicians, and military regionalists. Further encroachment was inevitable.

Chiang Kai-shek appeared to be unnerved by the relentless Japanese pressure. He was not temperamentally opposed to Japan; he had done his military studies in Japan. As a young man, he had admired and respected the Japanese. Now he felt unable to resist their pressure. He evolved a strategy, summed up in the phrase "the interior must be settled before the exterior can be resisted" (*annei rangwai*).

攘外必先安內。

Rangwai bi xian annei.
"The interior must be settled before the exterior can be resisted."
"First set your own house in order."
Source: *Zhao Gou*

This strategy brought Chiang major criticism, at the time and in retrospect, as someone who did not have the courage to resist Japan, so obsessed with the Communists that he would rather fight them than the Japanese. The reality was actually quite stark. Chiang could not take on the Japanese armies. He had many internal enemies, of whom the Communists were one of the least threatening. He had enough troops to eradicate gradually all his internal enemies, but no air force, almost no navy, and few modern weapons – all things that the Japanese had in abundance. And he shared the general assumption at the time, in China and abroad, that the Japanese were focused on an attack on the Soviet Union; their huge infrastructure expenditures in Manchuria were explained by their intention to attack the Soviet Union on its weak Far Eastern front.

[6] In this attack the Commercial Press, China's foremost publishing house, was burned down. The Press recovered, and still publishes today. The damage it suffered in 1932 was seen as an attack on freedom of expression.

Table 3.2 *Internal military actions of the GMD, Nanjing decade*

	Target and outcome
1929	Guangxi Clique – temporarily defeated
1930	Feng Yuxiang and Yan Xishan – Feng defeated, Yan retreated
1931	1st encirclement of Communists – failure
1932	2nd and 3rd encirclements – failure
1933	Fujian rebellion – put down; 4th encirclement – failure
1934	5th encirclement – success
1936	Southwest rebellion – aborted

Disunity in unity

The failure to resist Japan was a sad confirmation that the political unity established in 1928 was illusory. Few of the provincial power holders were ready to give up their independence. They were soldiers (many warlords until they threw in the lot with the GMD), and they had little respect for Chiang Kai-shek as a soldier. Chiang had little experience as a field commander, and had no major victories to his credit. He was treated with disrespect verging on contempt by the generals who did: Feng Yuxiang, Li Zongren, Bai Chongxi, Zhang Fakuei, Cai Tingkai – China's best military minds.

Unable to command their loyalty and respect, Chiang went to war on one regional satrap after another – the Guangxi Clique, Feng Yuxiang, Yan Xishan. He was able to undermine most of them, as much by stealth and political deal-making as through actual fighting. But there *was* considerable fighting, and it greatly reduced the sense of national unity.

The CCP was another major irritant to the GMD. Though the CCP was much reduced after the anti-Communist purges of 1927, when it came close to being destroyed, it refused to give up. This was not simply because the Communists were dedicated people; a more important stimulus to keep fighting was that surrender would mean death. Chiang had made clear his intention to emulate the scourge of the Taipings, Zeng Guofan, to eradicate Communism in China by "cutting out the cancer" – i.e. killing any Communists who fell into GMD hands.

Chiang's hatred of Communism was rooted in his conviction that Chinese society was built on family and on harmony – the antithesis of the CCP's belief in class warfare and struggle. In rural China, society was dominated by family and clan structures. The word *jia* ("family") often appears in village names. Class warfare would mean that families and clans would turn against each other, a poor peasant attacking his cousin

Mao Zedong's family

Revolutionaries put their cause above all else, including their families. Mao's family paid a terrible price for his political convictions. He never lived with his first wife, a woman named Luo, whose marriage to him was arranged by his parents. His marriage in 1920 to his beautiful second wife, Yang Kaihui, was a love match. She was the daughter of Mao's mentor, Yang Zhangqi. He left her and their three sons in Changsha while he made revolution. She was put to death in 1930 by the local warlord. Their sons were secretly sent to Shanghai, and eventually to Moscow. Mao's third wife, He Zizhen, whom he married in 1928, made the Long March with him. She had six children with Mao, five of whom died as infants or were abandoned. She was sent off to Moscow in 1937, ousted by his fourth wife, Jiang Qing, at the time known as Lan Ping (Blue Apple). Of his four surviving children, one was killed in the Korean War, while the other three suffered from various forms of mental illness.

Jung Chang and Jon Halliday, *Mao: The Unknown Story.* London: Cape, 2005.

the landlord. The threat was real; it had almost been realized in the mid-1920s, during the peasant movement that accompanied the Northern Expedition. Chiang and other GMD leaders from rural backgrounds could envisage their own families threatened by extermination if class warfare broke out again.

In the first years of GMD rule in Nanjing the threat seemed remote. After 1928 the Communists were confined to a number of remote areas, known as soviets, usually on the borders between provinces. The largest was the Central Soviet, in Jiangxi, where a ragtag band of political and military figures lived in poverty and isolation. There they clung to survival and fought amongst themselves. Many of them had suffered terrible personal losses in the purges – family, friends, comrades – and these losses haunted them.

In the early 1930s Nanjing launched a series of encirclement campaigns (five in all) against the CCP's Central Soviet, aided in planning their campaigns by German military advisors who were working in China, escaping from the unemployment that faced German officers before the German army was reborn.[7] Large armies were committed against the Central Soviet, in a series of encirclement campaigns that involved blockades round the whole Communist-controlled region. The first four campaigns failed, but in late 1934 the Communists were forced to abandon

[7] The last commander of the German advisory group was Alexander von Falkenhausen, later the gauleiter of Belgium. The German advisors were withdrawn to Berlin in the early summer of 1938, as Nazi Germany entered into a closer alliance with Japan.

The Long March

In 1934 the GMD encirclement of the Jiangxi Soviet became so tight that the CCP forces had no choice but to break out, and move away to the southwest. Their force was almost destroyed at the Battle of the Xiang River, but rallied and plunged on over some of the most difficult terrain in China until they reached Yan'an, in the northwest, in 1935. Along the way, at the Cunyi Meeting, Mao Zedong was formally recognized as the leader of the CCP, a position he held for the next forty-two years. The Ten Thousand Li Long March (*Wanli changzheng*) was mythologized into an epic of human endurance, and became the symbol of the courage and boldness of the Chinese Communists in surmounting all obstacles, human and natural. It stood for voluntarism, the belief that anything can be done if one tries hard enough.

Edgar Snow, *Red Star over China.* London: Gollancz, 1937.

the Central Soviet. They set off on the epic Long March, a march that took them from central southern China into the northwest, where they found their permanent base in Yan'an (Yenan).

The victory over the Communists was heavily circumscribed. It was only a partial victory; in spite of the huge effort and expense that had been put into wiping them out, the Communists had survived. And this expenditure and the focus on a rather marginal enemy disgusted many nationalist Chinese, who felt that China's best soldiers should have been in quite a different place, resisting Japanese incursions in the north. The wars with former allies, and the encirclement campaigns, reduced Chiang's overall authority rather than enhancing it.

Victory in internal war did not solve Nanjing's problems with regionalism. The 1930s was a time of strong regional identities. These identities were crafted with a self-conscious stress on the positive characteristics of a region (usually a province), and a parallel denigration of the centre. Nowhere was this more true than in the southern province of Guangxi, whose leaders created a disciplined, martial society in the 1930s, and assessed their own contribution to the revolution highly.

Guangxi was not an isolated example. Guangdong, Fujian, Shandong, Shanxi, and Sichuan had all equally evolved provincial identities, and were equally contemptuous of Nanjing. These were some of the largest provinces in China, and three (Guangdong, Fujian, and Shandong) were strategic coastal provinces. All these provinces were independent of the center until 1936. Most of the local regimes were popular, none more so that the regime run by the former GMD general Chen Jitang in Guangzhou. He was a cheerful, generous man, and he practiced a kind of

Regionalist spirit – Guangxi

In the fall of 1926, the 7th Group Army of Kwangsi [Guangxi] launched the Northern Expedition and fought in the provinces of Hunan, Hupeh [Hubei], Kwangsi, Kiangsu [Jiangsu], Anhwei [Anhui], Chekiang [Zhejiang], Hepeh [Hebei], Honan [Henan], Shantung [Shandong] etc. They swept away the Northern militarists and made the expedition a success. In 1927, they aided in the purge of communists in Shanghai, and fought the communist leaders Yehting [Ye Ting] and Holung [He Long]. In 1929, they drove away the communists from Kwangsi and in 1932, sent troops against them in Kwangsi. In 1934, they attacked Hsiao Ke [Xiao Ke], the communist on his way to the west, killed over 20,000 communist bandits, and captured over 1,000 rifles. In the winter of the same year, they attacked Chu Teh [Zhu De] and Mao Tse Tung [Mao Zedong], killed nearly 9,000 communist bandits, captured 7,000 prisoners and 5,000 rifles. The success of all these campaigns has been due to the fact that the Kwangsi people are courageous and warlike. The reputation as "Ironsides", their revolutionary ardour, and their spirit of sacrifice make the most glorious pages in the annuals [annals] of the Chinese Revolution.

Lai Yen-yu (Lai Yanyu), *Glimpse of Guangxi* (Nanning: Kwangsi Provincial Government Press, 1935), "Kwangsi in Brief," p. 3.

Madame Mok

Madame Mok (Mo Xiuying) was to Guangdong what Evita Peron was to Argentina. A beautiful, accomplished girl, she had to run away from home after her mother died and her father's new wife persecuted her. The only way out at the time for a young girl without family was to become a prostitute, and she was forced to follow this path. One of her clients was Chen Jitang, a major military figure in Guangdong, and eventually the governor of the province. He fell in love with her, and moved her into his home. She had a greater and greater influence on him, and is credited with getting him interested in education, infrastructure development, and social welfare. The love the two shared also made them famous in a world where romantic love was rare – but much longed for.

Li Huaping, *Chen Jitang zhuan* (A Biography of Chen Jitang). Taipei: Tan Chengying, 1996.

corruption and cronyism that allowed large numbers of people to benefit. Those who are old enough to remember him still see the 1930s as the best period of modern Guangdong's history.

Other provinces were more discreet in their opposition to the center. Their rulers did not oppose Nanjing openly, but gave the capital no loyalty – or revenue transfers – either. The government had to rely on

revenue from only five provinces (Jiangsu, Zhejiang, Anhui, Hunan, and Hubei), and on income from government monopolies such as customs revenue and the salt tax; the last two sources contributed over 70 percent of government revenue in 1933. Meanwhile, the military ate up over 50 percent of expenditures – a reflection as much of the constant internal warfare as of the need to prepare to resist the Japanese. And still there was a weakness at the top.

A national leader?

Chiang Kai-shek was not a charismatic leader. He did not have a forceful, tough persona, like the emperor Qianlong or Mao Zedong. He did not command easy respect; he was a rather stiff, severe man. He had to establish himself as leader at a time when there was no accepted model of leadership. The old, aloof imperial model that Qianlong had filled to perfection was dead. The alternative traditional role of populist leader, which Mao came to fill, was out of character for Chiang. He relied instead on a military model. He was every inch a soldier, and he was dedicated to the military way.

Chiang was unable to make full use of the new tools available to national leaders in the 1930s – the radio, the loudspeaker, the newsreel. He did try to speak to his people, but he was almost incomprehensible; his heavy Zhejiang accent was too strange to most ears. China in any case had only a rudimentary radio system, only available in the cities. In 1934 there were as few as 60,000 wireless sets in the whole country. Chiang could not use posters or statues of himself (as his successor Mao Zedong did), since such portrayals of the leader were reserved for the symbolic national leader Sun Yat-sen.

Chiang's leadership relied on skills that the public seldom saw – at secret deal-making, and the forming and breaking of coalitions. His inability to inspire a large public gave the impression that he lacked a clear vision for the nation, and was defeatist. This impression was strengthened by his fondness for a gloomy saying from Mencius, the great pre-imperial philosopher, which implied that individuals and countries can be respected only if they learn to respect themselves – a long and difficult process.

人必自侮
而後人侮之。

Ren bi ziwu erhou ren wu zhi.
"A man must insult himself before others can insult him."
Source: *Mencius*

The saying gave a sense of inevitability to the future, a feeling that China was bound to be attacked. He also used a physical metaphor, that China was suffering from two diseases: a disease of the skin (i.e. coming from outside, the foreign world), which could easily be cured, and a disease of the innards (China's own internal problems), which had to be excised. In the early 1930s the disease of the "innards" took precedence over the "skin" disease. A rather pessimistic Chiang saw China as having to solve a great range of problems, problems that seemed to get worse, not better, year by year.

Chiang's lack of a positive vision was accompanied by another grim characteristic: his inability to tolerate disagreement. He spent inordinate amounts of time and effort trying to get rid of his enemies and rivals – time taken away from the national struggle. When China most needed unity, the leader seemed to be trying to undermine it. But he cannot be blamed for a new disaster, an economic one.

Economic predicaments

Those optimistic capitalists, Chinese and Western, who believed in the inevitability of China's economic growth expected it to be export-led, with products made by cheap, efficient labor (labor-intensive manufactures), particularly clothing, textiles, carpets, toys, ceramics, and foodstuffs, destined mainly for Western and Japanese markets. The factories and the infrastructure of trading had been developing rapidly in Shanghai and in other coastal cities, sometimes with Chinese investment and control, sometimes with foreign control, especially in Shanghai and Tianjin. The export of foodstuffs through Hong Kong and Xiamen promised success. The Amoy (Xiamen) Canning Company exported processed food throughout the world.

There were unforeseen pitfalls in the way of this potential progress. The impact of the Great Depression, which started after the Wall Street crash of 1929, on China's foreign trade took some time to manifest itself, but once it had started the trend was irreversible. At first exports declined more rapidly than imports, and China's adverse balance of trade became more marked. The demand for luxury garments made of silk, camel's hair, and cashmere dried up, as the Depression reduced incomes in the West. Imports – mainly machinery, armaments, and raw materials for industry – declined more slowly. Raw materials were often ones that China already had but, given how underdeveloped China's internal transport system was, it was often cheaper to import raw materials than to bring them in from the interior.

The anticipated economic miracle did not emerge in the 1930s. The modern, urban economy gradually declined into the same state of deep

Table 3.3 *China's foreign trade, 1910–36 (million US dollars)*

	Imports	Exports
1910	649	503
1920	997	614
1925	1,242	876
1929	1,620	1,070
1930	1,723	944
1931	2,002	915
1932	1,524	569
1933	1,345	612
1934	1,030	535
1935	919	576
1936	941	706

Source: *China Year Book* (Shanghai: Kelly and Walsh, 1936), p. 57.

crisis that already gripped the rural economy. The rural economy was fragile. As population pressure increased, and as arable land became scarce, peasants increased the intensity of cultivation. Some left the land – to move to the cities, to migrate to another part of China or abroad, or to go into the armies – but most had to stay put. Their farming came to resemble gardening, so carefully and intensively was the land cultivated. They had few animals. Pigs were raised to be eaten only at festival times. Most of the protein in peasant diets came from soya beans.

China's chronic agricultural crisis was widely discussed, by Chinese writers and intellectuals. Their writings presented peasants, almost for the first time in Chinese history, as human beings capable of suffering. *In the Wine Shop* (Zai jiulou shang), written in 1924, was Lu Xun's elegy for the friends of his childhood, now condemned to lives of grinding poverty. This poverty, which gripped most parts of rural China, could be put down to a number of factors. The key underlying factor was the continuing growth of the population, and the pressure that this put on rural resources, but new pressures were emerging as well. Land accumulation, as the rich invested in land because of the insecurity of other investments, caused an increase in the number of tenant farmers. Technological backwardness made it difficult for peasants to increase yields – an issue addressed by rural reconstruction projects in Ding xian (Hebei) and Zouping (Shandong). Most peasants generated very little surplus income, and what they did was eaten up by rents and taxes, which kept rising to meet the incessant demands of governments and the army. Another barrier to improving peasant incomes was the confusion in internal markets,

much of it caused by currency instability. The final blow to rural China was the difficulty in selling products destined for export. In his novella *Spring Silkworms*, Mao Dun described the plight of farmers raising silkworms for the foreign-owned silk industry, as silk prices slumped.

The problems of rural China were so severe that there seemed no way to solve them. R. H. Tawney gave a graphic description of the peasant, as "a man standing up to his neck in water, whom the slightest ripple will drown." In *The Good Earth*, Pearl Buck painted a story of peasants who, however hard they worked, could never find real security.

The slow decline in rural incomes went unnoticed, in the absence of effective national or local government. Peasants still lived in villages dominated by traditional values; they were poor, and vulnerable to disease, crop failure, landlords, money-lenders, officials, soldiers, bandits – and, above all, warfare.

The rural problems really were intractable. The government had many plans, for rural bank loans, crop improvement, agricultural mechanization, but neither the control nor the personnel nor the money to implement them. Real structural changes were needed before China's rural economy could escape from chronic poverty. But the GMD was wary about promoting structural changes in rural society; it associated structural solutions with Communist policies – class war, land distribution, rent reduction. The GMD's leaders had been traumatized by the signs of rural revolution in 1926 and early 1927; they were quite convinced that one of their real enemies in China was rural rebellion.

One bright spot in the working of the Chinese economy was the Post Office, the most efficient civil institution in China, technically subservient to the national government but actually autonomous. Jobs with the Post Office were some of the most secure and desirable in China. By the early 1930s there were over 12,000 post offices, one in every small town; every village had a postal agency. The Post Office was the most truly national organization, and it guaranteed connections to every part of the country, regardless of who was in charge of the government there. The self-image of the Post Office was that it always delivered the mail, by train, lorry, or courier.

The postal system was China's popular banking system. It handled a huge volume of remittances from people working away from home, a system that made migration possible. It overcame the problems presented by China's multiple currencies, by acting as a *de facto* currency exchange service; money orders could be purchased in one place, sent off to another place, and exchanged in the local currency. The Post Office had a modernizing influence in other areas of the economy. It was the pioneer in issuing insurance, a system unknown in China before the 1930s, and

China's postmen

And a splendid body of men are the couriers of the Chinese postal service. Over mountain passes of 16,000 feet, where sometimes a messenger is frozen to death, through forests infested by wild animals, wading swift torrents where a single false step means death, they perform their duties under all sorts of weather and all seasons of the year.

Chu Chia-hua (Zhu Jiahua), *China's Postal and other Communications Services* (Shanghai: China United Press, 1937), p. 75.

a key element in the move from reliance on family in times of need to impersonal protection. The Post Office also introduced financial instruments that encouraged people to manage their money – savings accounts, even gift certificates. The grass-roots modernization that the Post Office represented was more pervasive than much of the industrial growth that occurred during this period, which was limited geographically, to the coastal areas.

The end of the Nanjing decade

As the Republic entered its third decade, it was difficult for anyone in authority to continue to feel positive about the prospects for the future. The government was showered with criticism, from the liberal and left-wing press for being too passive, and from the foreign press for being too nationalist and not friendly enough to foreign business in China. The conviction from both left and right that the GMD administration was hopeless has continued to color interpretations of the period.

In fact, the period saw substantial institution building, at the state level (diplomacy, law), and in sectors where the state allowed considerable autonomy (railway administration, banking, education). The problem was at the center. Chiang Kai-shek's perceived unwillingness to take on the Japanese led him into a trap that he had not foreseen: the loss of the support of China's patriotic elite, students, and intellectuals, who now had many avenues for making their voices heard, through the myriads of newspapers and magazines being published, often in the treaty ports. From 1932 (the year of the Japanese attack on Shanghai) on the press was full of cries for resistance to Japan, for a surge of patriotism that would bring China into her own, and restore her pride in herself. The cries of the writers, academics, and students were taken up in surprising places, by merchants who objected to the competition from Japanese imports, and from Chinese living abroad in the Overseas Chinese communities, who were ashamed of what was happening to their country.

Village in August

Like mosquitoes in the autumn moonlight, carrying their sharp stings to everyone they encountered, the news spread abroad. And the spreading news carried with it a malaise like the malaria that came from mosquito bites. A certain market town, a certain village, had been captured by the irregulars; in such and such a place the farmers had organised a "Self Defence Corps" or a protective "Red Rifle Society" or a "Black Rifle Society". Even more heart-breaking was the fact that while on the one hand the farmers had to resist the Japanese, they were forced on the other to oppose the great families of their own villages, nearly all of whom had had to go over to the Japanese or lose their land. Thus the so-called "People's Revolutionary Army" had appeared. The course of popular feeling proceeded like the uninterrupted flowing of water: the Japanese might wipe out whole villages in a single day with their cannon; the next day more Manchukuo [Manzhougugo] troops would execute their Japanese commanders and desert to join under one shading or another one of the severally coloured bands; like water, the flow divided into separate streams seeking different outlets, but the roar of this movement rose with one constant sound: everywhere there was but a single cry: "Drive out the Japanese!".

T'ien Chun (Xiao Jun), *Village in August* (London: Collins, 1942), p. 111.

Calls for resistance came from within the army too, especially from the Manchurian troops who had been expelled from their homes in 1931, and were vegetating in the remote northwestern province of Shaanxi, near the CCP base in Yan'an. The anguish of the Manchurians was expressed in a famous modern novel, *Village in August*, written by a Manchurian soldier turned writer, Xiao Jun (Tian Jun).[8]

In December 1936 Chiang made the serious mistake of going up to visit Zhang Xueliang and his troops in Xian. These were the Manchurian armies that had been evicted from Manchuria after the Japanese takeover in 1931. There he was kidnapped, at the hot springs near where, three decades later, the Terracotta Warriors would be discovered. He was held prisoner, while his wife and other senior GMD leaders negotiated in Xian for his release. The choice presented to him was stark: return to Nanjing and start resisting Japan, or die in Xian. He accepted the terms, and was released to return to Nanjing – to less than a hero's welcome, since the humiliation he had endured could not be ignored. What could also not be

[8] Xiao Jun has been pilloried for his supposed maltreatment of his wife, Xiao Hong. This has taken away from his reputation as a patriotic writer, and also obscured his own maltreatment by the CCP after 1949. He spent many years in prison before being released as an old man – the waste of one of China's finest talents.

ignored was that the negotiators on both sides accepted that only Chiang could lead China in resistance.

After his return to Nanjing he took his promise seriously, and immediately embarked on preparations for a war of resistance to Japan. This went against the advice of some of those closest to him, who believed that China could never resist Japan. A united front was proclaimed, between the GMD and the CCP, and between the GMD and the regional leaders who had previously rejected Nanjing authority. China's military structure was overhauled, and major command positions given to men who only a few months before had been at daggers drawn with Nanjing. Patriotic associations were formed in every possible place in China. The Japanese found themselves faced with open hostility, with commercial boycotts, and with powerful propaganda. To his surprise, Chiang Kai-shek found himself the beneficiary of the nationalist outpourings; he was elevated to the leadership of a national crusade, and for the first time in his career he was truly popular.

China was now united against Japan. But it was too late. By the spring of 1937, when the united front was fully established, Japan's invasion of China was only months away. The time for battle had come, for the ultimate display of patriotism.

時勢造英雄，
英雄造時勢。

Shishi zao yingxiong, yingxiong zao shishi.
"The times make heroes, and heroes make the times."
Source: traditional

Further reading

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Films

The Good Earth Sidney Franklin, 1937
A 1930s blockbuster that gives a highly sympathetic portrayal of the Chinese peasant – except that the leads were played by white stars.

The Lin Family Shop (*Lin Jia puzi*) Shi Hua, 1959
A family business struggles to survive during the boycott of Japanese goods. Beautiful scenes of the Lower Yangzi region.

Shanghai Triad Zhang Yimou, 1995
A stylized portrayal of the gangster world of prewar Shanghai, starring Gong Li.

Wild Torrent Xia Yan, 1933
Anti-fascist, anti-Japanese, anti-landlord film based on a scenario by the famous dramatist Tian Han.

4 The Resistance War – warfare and chaos: 1937–45

The Resistance War against the Japanese invasion of the heartland of China started on a high tide of patriotism, a passionate spirit of resistance that made legions of Chinese willing to sacrifice their lives for the nation. But this spirit dissipated as the war dragged on. Eight years of war and occupation brought devastation to much of China. Almost all of China's major cities, industrial regions, ports, and transport arteries were occupied by Japanese armies. Half of China's people lived in the occupied areas. The casualties were devastating. More than 3 million Chinese soldiers were killed, or died of injury or illness during the war, and as many as 18 million civilians lost their lives.[1] *Tens of millions of people fled to the interior from the occupied areas. The modern trading and industrial economy was almost destroyed. Much of China's society was disrupted or torn apart. The modern, civilian China, the civil society that had evolved so painfully in the late Qing and the first decades of the Republic, was lost. China was divided into many parts. There could be no attention to the problem of poverty, as much of China's prewar economy collapsed.*

The warfare that started in 1937 lasted until 1945, and then continued under another name until 1949. By the end of the Resistance War China was exhausted, and more divided than ever. There were bitter recriminations, which continue until today, over who was to blame for the way the war had gone. The Japanese defeat did not bring peace to China, but more warfare, this time an even more ferocious form of war: civil war.

The start of the war

On July 7, 1937, a skirmish in the obscurity of night at the Marco Polo Bridge outside Peking, between a group of "lost" Japanese soldiers and a local Chinese military unit, became the pretext for a full-scale Japanese

[1] There was no accurate count of casualties at the time. Most of them occurred in areas under Japanese control, and the Japanese (unlike the Germans, whose records are the source for most casualty figures in the European War) did not record accurate details of casualties. The figures quoted here are in the middle range of statistics commonly quoted in Chinese and Western sources.

Lugouqiao

Five long years (1189–1194) an army of labourers toiled to make the bridge strong and beautiful, shaping the 13 (now 11) stone arches, carving the parapet guarded by stone lions so bewildering in number in bygone years that no man, so the legend runs, could keep count of them. Marco Polo crossed and praised it in the thirteenth century (hence foreigners call it the Marco Polo Bridge), declaring it to be the finest in his day in the world. An enduring monument of a more virile age, the construction is still admired by modern engineers. As the only stone bridge across the Hun River and an important artery of communication, it has been frequently reconstructed.

Juliet Bredon, *Peking: A Historical and Intimate Description of its Chief Places of Interest* (Shanghai: Kelly and Walsh, 1922), p. 245.

attack on Peking and Tianjin. This was the start of the all-out invasion of Mainland China. In retrospect the attack seems inevitable, the end result of several decades of Japanese pressure on China, the second round of the Sino-Japanese War of 1895. At the time it was a horrible shock for China: a surprise attack in the heat of summer that brought a permanent end to peace.

Japan's grand strategy and her military buildup in the 1930s were formally premised on the need to prevent Soviet expansion in Asia, and to stem the tide of communism. The attack on north China had nothing to do with a fight against communism; it was the first stage of the incorporation of China into the Japanese empire. The second stage, already well prepared in Japan, with the buildup of huge armies, a naval armada, and a major air force, was a land war in north China and an amphibious attack on the Lower Yangzi and Shanghai.

In the summer of 1937 China was in turmoil. Millions of people took to the streets in patriotic demonstrations, demanding resistance. The GMD government decided to resist. Its decision was a response to popular pressure. It went against considerable opposition from within the government, and from much of the business world, where there were strongly held views that resistance was futile, and would only make things worse for China.

Once the decision to resist was taken in Nanjing, China went onto a war footing, and mobilized to fight in the Lower Yangzi; the North was already a lost cause. The Japanese were taken by surprise. They had not expected resistance, nor did they expect foreign condemnation or intervention. They were right about foreign intervention – no help came to China from outside, though China tried hard to get help from the Soviet Union, also threatened by Japan – but they were wrong about resistance.

In the Battle of Shanghai/Nanjing, which started on August 13th (a Friday) and lasted four months, half a million Chinese soldiers were committed against 200,000 Japanese soldiers and an armada of naval vessels anchored off the city. It was the largest battle fought anywhere in the world since the First World War. The defence of Shanghai played out in the residential streets and industrial districts of the Chinese city, in full view of the foreign concessions. It was tenacious and bitter. Chinese soldiers fought for each street and factory. They had no air or naval support; Shanghai was at the mercy of Japanese bombing and shelling. By the time the Chinese sections of the city were lost, whole sections had been reduced to rubble. At the end of the fighting more than half the Chinese forces had been killed or wounded, including most of the young officers produced by the new military schools. Chiang Kai-shek had gambled that strong resistance would stop the Japanese, and had lost. The rump of the Chinese army made a panicky retreat across country toward Nanjing, as Japanese reinforcements poured into China. The whole Yangzi region was now under immediate threat of occupation.

危在旦夕

Wei zai danxi.
"Danger is in the morning and evening."
"Danger is imminent."
Source: *Sanguo yanyi*

Nanjing could not be defended against a modern army, one that was highly mobile, with tanks, motorbikes, lorries, field telephones. The city had no natural defences, and, though the towering city walls that had protected it for centuries were still standing, they were no match for bombs and shells. In the late autumn the Chinese government started to evacuate the city, and to move the machinery of government, the personnel, and their family members up the Yangzi, first to Wuhan, and then through the Yangzi gorges to Chongqing. China's great art treasures had already been evacuated.

Soon the armies followed the civil administration upriver; only a rearguard remained to protect the city, though there was no expectation that it would offer much resistance. The ordinary people of Nanjing were told to stay put. The city the Japanese occupied in early December was still full of people – locals, refugees from further east, and soldiers left behind by their units. Many of these people became the victims of the Rape of Nanjing, in which several hundred thousand people were butchered in an orgy of bloodletting that went on for weeks, from mid-December to

The Palace Museum treasures

The odyssey of the treasures of the Palace Museum (Gugong) is a metaphor for modern China. The museum was set up in 1925, in the Imperial Palace in Beijing. It housed the treasures of the Ming and Qing imperial collections. In 1933, as the Japanese threat to north China increased, part of the collection was moved to the new capital, Nanjing. In 1937 these treasures were shipped inland, and stored for the duration of the war in three separate places, in caves and temples. The incredibly difficult enterprise involved moving thousands of cases of priceless artifacts – scrolls, bronzes, ceramics, jades – mostly by water, but some in commandeered Nanjing city buses. The enterprise was undertaken in reverse at the end of the war. The last artifacts sent to the west arrived back in Nanjing on the tenth anniversary of the Japanese attack on Nanjing, in December 1947. Two years later the treasures were on the move again, this time to Taiwan, where they have been displayed since 1965 in the new Palace Museum. Enough artifacts remained on the Mainland to create the Palace Museum in Beijing. The saga of the treasures owes everything to the dedication of the museum curators, who never left the artifacts, and protected them from destruction, theft, humidity, and insects.

Liu Beifan, *Gugong cangsang* (The Vicissitudes of the Palace Museum). Hong Kong: Sanlian shudian, 1988.

The War Conduct of the Japanese

The Japanese have no justification for making war on China. If they think they have, then do it as a civilised people is expected. Crush the Chinese army and incidentally lay waste a part of China if they must and can. Why should they carry on indiscriminate bombing, sink fishing junks, kill ex-soldiers in cold blood, burn cities after capture and indulge in large-scale looting, rape and murder wherever they go? They have so behaved themselves with no corresponding barbarities on the part of the Chinese. They have committed atrocities not even under the pretext of reprisals. They are at war not only with China, but also with law, humanity and civilisation.

Hsu Shu-shi (Xu Shushi), *The War Conduct of the Japanese* (Shanghai: Kelly and Walsh, 1938), preface.

early 1938. The recognition came with brutal clarity that the war was now being fought against China's civilians, that a new kind of warfare, in which civilians were as much on the front line as soldiers, had arrived in China – several years before it became a horrible reality in Europe.

The massacre in Nanjing was witnessed by a large number of foreigners, diplomats, missionaries, and business people, who had stayed on when the Chinese government left. Many of these people provided graphic accounts of the atrocities they saw. The most famous is the account recorded by John Rabe, the Siemens representative in Nanjing, a member of the German Nazi Party, and therefore an ally of Japan – but still horrified by what he saw happen in Nanjing. The number of casualties in the massacre has been disputed, with some Chinese sources claiming a figure as high as 400,000, and some Japanese sources claiming that there was no massacre at all. Clearly, there was killing on a massive and horrible scale – though the exact casualty figure can never be known, since bodies were not counted but were buried in mass graves or thrown into the Yangzi.

Nanjing was not the only massacre committed by incoming Japanese troops, though it was the largest. Smaller-scale atrocities occurred in many of the recently conquered areas, even those that offered no resistance. In Xuzhou District, northern Jiangsu, as one example, the incoming troops killed thousands of people in a string of small towns and villages; houses were burned, crops destroyed, and the population reduced to abject despair. Detailed records of the atrocities were kept by Jesuit priests from Quebec; their mission stations became refuges for tens of thousands of terrified people.

The behavior of Japanese troops created a climate of terror in the Chinese civilian population, a terror intensified by the spread of news of atrocities through rumors rather than through government or media accounts. The government officials had gone, and there were few Chinese journalists in Occupied China. The rumors pushed much of the population to panic, and to abject capitulation. The Japanese occupiers used such force and brutality that many foreign observers were convinced that the Japanese were pursuing a deliberate policy of terror.

The terror was compounded by the widespread bombing of cities and towns in the parts of China that had not been occupied, the first large-scale bombings of civilian targets anywhere in the world. Tall buildings, rare in China at the time, were particularly vulnerable. These included churches and universities, whose modern, Western-style buildings stood out from the single-storied Chinese buildings. In the first six months of the war, Nankai (Tianjin), Zhongyang (Nanjing), Tongji and Fudan (Shanghai) and Zhongshan (Guangzhou) universities were all completely or partially destroyed. The bombing was worst in the early stages of the war, but it continued throughout the war. China had no anti-aircraft defences, and the only protection for the cities was bad weather, which prevented bombing raids.

Table 4.1 *Japanese bombing of Chinese targets, 1937–45*

Numbers of raids	12,592
Explosive bombs	241,304
Incendiary bombs	19,844
Civilians killed	94,522
Civilians injured	114,506

Source: Hong Guiyi (ed.), *Riben zai Hua baoxing lu* (The Violent Behavior of Japan in China) (Taipei: Guoshiguan, 1985), p. 722.

Han Fuju, 1890–1938

Han Fuju, governor of Shandong province and a senior GMD general, was condemned to death for treachery and executed in January 1938. His crime was withdrawing his armies in the face of the enemy. Han was a product of the warlord system, a capable soldier, and a successful regional leader, a "local emperor." He lived well, drank hard, and loved women, including his three wives. His racy lifestyle depended on his military control, guaranteed by his 100,000 soldiers, whom he saw as his personal capital. In late 1937 he decided that he could not resist the Japanese without losing his troops, and so he led them off to the west, allowing the Japanese to pour into his province. He was arrested, tried, and shot soon afterwards. By a strange quirk Han has remained a folk hero, as famous for his awful jokes and his even worse poetry as for his execution for treason.

Diana Lary, "Treachery, disgrace and death: Han Fuju and China's resistance to Japan," in *War in History*, forthcoming.

The Japanese invasion and occupation provoked resistance in various forms. Apart from the full-scale battles, guerrilla activity behind the lines broke out in many parts of China, some guerrilla bands being led by the GMD, some by the CCP, and others by local leaders. But there were also major failures of resistance. Much of the key coastal province of Shandong fell without a fight when the governor, Han Fuju, withdrew his armies at the end of 1937. Chiang Kai-shek immediately ordered his execution, which was carried out at the end of January, to make sure that no other commanders would be tempted to follow his example.

Han's sordid end was a turning point in the war, the end of the rout that followed defeat in the Battle of Shanghai/Nanjing. Chinese troops went on the offensive in early 1938, to prevent Japanese troops in the north from linking up with those in the Yangzi Valley. They won a major victory in April, on the Yellow River front, at a small town in southern Shandong,

4.1 **a. Refugees, 1938 [Robert Capa]**
Source: Diana Lary and Stephen MacKinnon, *Scars of War* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2001).

Taierzhuang. There was huge symbolism attached to the victory. It was the first time that Chinese forces had defeated invading foreign forces in more than a century. Taierzhuang revived China's morale, and restored hope that, with the will to victory, China could survive.

天下無難事，
只怕有心人。
Tianxia wu nanshi, zhi pa youxin ren.
"There are no impossible things if people have the will."
Source: traditional

For Japan, the reaction was the opposite. Japanese troops had been defeated, a word that had no place in Japanese military thinking, and by

4.1 **b. Refugee mother, wartime China**
Source: I. Feng, *Give Me back my Rivers and Hills* (London: Macmillan, 1945).

vastly inferior Chinese troops, in terms of equipment and training. By now China was beginning to receive sympathetic coverage in the West. The end of the Spanish Civil War brought anti-fascist journalists to China. The photographs by Robert Capa, the first and greatest war photographer, who had made a name for himself in Spain, were shown throughout Europe and America.

Japan counterattacked in strength. The victory at Taierzhuang could not be sustained, and in May Chinese troops withdrew. The GMD government now resorted to desperate, scorched earth measures to hold back the Japanese, including the destruction of bridges and railway lines, and the opening of the Yellow River Dyke, which produced one of the largest floods in Chinese history.

Refugees

The Japanese invasion precipitated a massive flight inland from eastern and northern China. In the endless stream of refugees were soldiers, bureaucrats, civilians, factories, newspapers, universities, theater companies. Some of the refugees fled all the way to the west, to Sichuan, others fled only into the countryside near their homes. During the course

Huayuankou

Huayuankou means the Flower Garden Mouth. It is the name of the place on the southern dyke of the Yellow River where, in June 1938, one of greatest disasters of the war started. GMD forces breached the dyke to halt the western advance of Japanese forces. The aim was to block their way with water, to "replace soldiers with water" (*yishui dai bing*). Instead, the waters grew in volume during the summer, as heavy rains added to the normal summer high water in the Yellow River. The floodwaters flowed hundreds of miles across the North China Plain, right to the Yangzi. Millions of peasants tried to flee, but on the flat plain there were almost no place of refuge. There was no government in the flood zone to help the victims; the Chinese government had fled, and the Japanese had not established replacement governments. After the war the GMD government estimated that at least 800,000 people had been drowned.

The policy of preemptive destruction was repeated in November, when the city of Changsha, south of the Yangzi, was burned out to stop it falling intact into Japanese hands. There the casualties were smaller (20–30,000), but the impact was much greater given that there were many foreign observers. The GMD's scorched earth tactics were widely criticized, in China and abroad.

Diana Lary, "The waters covered the earth: China's war-induced natural disasters," in Mark Selden and Alvin So (eds.), *War and State Terrorism*. Oxford: Rowman and Littlefield, 2004, pp. 142–70.

of the war close to 100 million people were uprooted for longer or shorter periods. The entire GMD government from the occupied areas, national, provincial, and county levels, moved inland.

The refugee movements were chaotic and frantic. Civilians were the most vulnerable in the chaos. Family members were often separated, some left behind in the occupied areas, others getting to Free China. The forced abandonment of family members was given a powerful visual image with the famous photograph of an abandoned baby taken by the Chinese-American photographer H. Y. 'Newsreel' Wong, then working for the Hearst Bureau in Shanghai.

Most of the universities in Peking and other northern cities moved inland – or, rather, their faculty and students did. This improbable exodus of tens of thousands of young people with their professors, who sacrificed comfortable lives for patriotism and idealism, was unprecedented. The exodus had an unforeseen outcome: the professors and students gathered in Kunming (Yunnan), where one of the greatest universities of all time came into being, the Southwest United University (*Xinan lianda*), with an unmatched collection of intellectual brilliance among its faculty and students drawn from all the major universities in China.

Many of China's artists, actors, and writers fled from the occupied areas into the interior, especially to Guilin (Guangxi), where, amidst the unearthly beauty of the landscape of limestone crags rising out of brilliant green rice paddies, they created a vivid, exciting, though impoverished cultural world. For seven years Guilin was not just China's most famous scenic spot but also her capital of culture. At the end of the war, in a horrible twist, the city was burned down by the defending GMD forces in a futile attempt to stop the Japanese armies advancing south in late 1944.

In late 1938 Wuhan, China's Madrid, the city that was to have been defended to the death (*sishou*), fell to the Japanese, as did Guangzhou in the south. These were two more humiliating defeats, but they were the last, the end of the beginning. Fighting died down after the end of 1938; all major Chinese cities, ports, and transport systems were now in Japanese hands. Geography finally came to China's aid; any further Japanese advance up through the hundreds of miles of the sheer Yangzi gorges would be prohibitively expensive. There were no further major Japanese advances for six years.

Isolation

In the early years of the war China was quite alone, on the international plane. Her hopes, in 1938, that the Soviet Union might come to her aid proved illusory. Instead, Japan's international position was strengthened by her association with Germany and Italy. The three countries signed an anti-Communist protocol in November 1937, and established the Axis in September 1940; Germany and Italy recognized Japanese hegemony in east Asia. A year earlier the Nazi-Soviet Pact promised Japan freedom from anxiety over a Soviet attack into Manchuria from the north.

China, by contrast, had no hope of any outside help. Her relations with Germany, once quite friendly, had been severed in early 1938, in the midst of the Japanese invasion. The United States was still in an isolationist phase, and though there was great sympathy for China, promoted by American missionaries in China, this did not turn into concrete support. Instead, things got worse. After 1939 Europe was engulfed in war, and could do little to help the Chinese. In 1940 the Vichy government was established in France; France and her colony Indo-China were effectively supporting the Axis – on China's southern border.

In the large foreign communities in China, nationals of Japan, Germany, Italy, and France were on the Japanese side, while people of other nationalities, though not strongly pro-Japanese, were willing to wait and see if the Japanese promises of bringing order and good government

2 Japanese-occupied areas of China, 1940


REHE
(CHAHAR)
MANCHURIA
KOREA
YUAN
HEBEI
SHANXI
SHANDONG
HENAN
ANXI
HUBEI
ANHUI
JIANGSU
ZHEJIANG
HUNAN
JIANGXI
FUJIAN
GUANGDONG
GUANGXI
Changchun
Tongliao
Shenyang
(Mukden)
Chifeng
Jinzhou
Luan R.
Zhangjiakou
(Kalgan)
Jining
Baotou
Datong
Beijing
Tianjin
Baoding
Lushun
(Port Arthur)
Dalian
Gulf of Chihli
Sea of
Japan
Korea
Bay
Pyongyang
Seoul
Yantai
Taiyuan
Xingtai
Jinan
Qingdao
Yellow
Sea
Yan'an
Anyang
Yellow R.
Grand Canal
Kaifeng
Xuzhou
Luoyang
Zhengzhou
Tongchuan
Xi'an
Huai R.
Nanjing
Shanghai
Han R.
Nanyang
Hefei
Hangzhou
Hanyang
Hankou
Wuchang
Wuhan
Hefeng
Nanchang
Wenzhou
Linchuan
Xiapu
Changsha
Pingxiang
Gan R.
Sui R.
Fuzhou
Ryukyu
Islands
Zhijiang
Ruijin
Taipei
Lingling
Changting
Xiamen
Formosa Strait
TAIWAN
(FORMOSA)
Guilin
Sui R.
Bei R.
Meizhou
Liuzhou
Hongshui R.
Shantou
Guangzhou
(Canton)
Nanning
Hong Kong
South China
Sea
East China
Sea
Ho R.
Xiang R.
Z R.
R.

Chongqing

Chongqing (Chungking) is the river port at the head of steam navigation on the Yangzi, behind the massive gorges that protected the province of Sichuan from the invading Japanese, as they had earlier invaders. The city stands on steep cliffs at the confluence of the rivers Yangzi and Jialing. Chongqing was the wartime capital of China, from 1938 to 1945. It was transformed from a commercial city into a government city, packed with refugees from the east. The city was horribly overcrowded, which added to the misery of the climate – always damp, freezing in winter, hideously hot in summer. In this fetid atmosphere Chinese politics became more and more arcane and bitter, between the GMD and CCP, and between factions of the GMD. The large number of foreign representatives – diplomats, soldiers, journalists – looked on in confusion and, eventually, disgust. The atmosphere in Chongqing had much to do with the growing disenchantment with the GMD in the West.

Han Suyin, *Destination Chungking*. London: Cape, 1943.

would be fulfilled. The White Russian community, made up of stateless refugees, threw in their lot with the anti-Communist Japanese. Japan seemed set for a long rule in China.

Wartime regimes: zones of control

By the end of 1938 a grim certainty had settled on China: that the country would be divided for a long time, into a series of different zones, each under a different regime. The possibility of reuniting the country, of throwing out the Japanese, had quite disappeared.

Free China

The government of China, now known as Free China, had its capital in Chongqing, the largest city in the western province of Sichuan, at the confluence of the rivers Yangzi and Jialing.

The government controlled the vast interior of western and southern China, a region rich in agricultural and human resources, but almost without modern assets such as railways, factories, airports, or paved roads. None of the provinces of Free China had been under the control of the GMD before the start of the war; one paradoxical aspect of the flight of the government was that, after it had lost control over almost half of China, it came to control most of the other half. The GMD had lost most of its modern army, but still controlled enormous numbers of soldiers; and its armies were augmented throughout the war by forced recruitment.

Chiang Kai-shek was the unquestioned leader of Free China; he filled the need for a prominent leader in a time of intense crisis. He was a tough leader, dedicated to the micromanagement of the war. This micromanagement derived from the lack of trust he felt in all but a few of his colleagues. Those not trusted included former regional warlords who had resisted his leadership, and members of his own party – and of the Communist Party, who were part of the United Front. His ferocious temper and his frequent tirades meant, too, that many of his subordinates were terrified of him.

The sense of loyalty and commitment to patriotic unity during the first year of the war gradually declined after the flight to Chongqing. The city became a hotbed of infighting, rumor-mongering, and bickering. Chiang went to greater and greater lengths to control his own people. He spied on them through the agency of his sinister spymaster, Dai Li, who headed the innocuous-sounding Military Bureau of Investigation and Statistics (*Juntong*), which was in fact the largest intelligence organization in the world at the time, employing hundreds of thousands of people, many with underworld and criminal connections. They eliminated opposition, ran rackets, and – most importantly – tainted the vision of idealism and patriotism that marked the start of the war.[2]

Chiang did not become a wartime leader of the caliber of Winston Churchill or Franklin D. Roosevelt, men who were able to inspire their military and civilian populations to extraordinary efforts. Chiang could not appeal directly to the nation, in the way that Churchill and Roosevelt could, because he was unable to use the radio. He communicated instead through formal, written messages and statements, and presented himself in rather stiff photographs. Neither of these methods of communication could make him a popular hero. He tried to prove himself as a scholarly analyst of China's philosophical, political, and economic system, but his magnum opus, *China's Destiny*, which became required reading for all GMD supporters immediately after its publication in 1943, is an almost impenetrable mixture of high-flown patriotism and vituperation against Japan and the West. His reputation as a scholar was not enhanced by the "news on the streets" (*xiaodao xiaoxi*)[3] that the book was ghost-written.

Chiang had a major asset in his struggle for the support of the Chinese people, and, as the war went on, of the Allied world – his wife Song Meiling, then at the height of her beauty, sophisticated and

[2] Dai was known in some circles as "China's Himmler." His mysterious death in 1946 was widely welcomed. Mao Zedong had his own equally sinister henchman, Kang Sheng, whose name still sends shivers down the spines of older Chinese.

[3] Since China has had independent media for only brief periods, Chinese tend to rely on active and salacious gossip, known colloquially as the "news on the streets."

4.2 **Chiang Kai-shek, 1940**
Source: Evans Carlson, *Twin Stars of China* (New York: Dodd, Mead, 1940), p. 40.

English-speaking. She was, in the 1940s, the most famous political wife in the world, if not the most famous woman. She charmed most of the leaders of the Allies, and made dramatic tours in North America to raise support for China. Madame Chiang Kai-shek was the face of China. She even attended the summits of Allied leaders, such as one at Cairo in 1943 – officially as translator for her husband, though quite possibly as a real participant. She had no doubt about her own importance.

Within China she enjoyed a carefully constructed reputation for her concerns for the welfare of the Chinese people. She and her two sisters, Qingling (the widow of Sun Yat-sen) and Ailing, were photographed bringing help to victims of bombing. The Song sisters were in private life estranged from each other, but their public persona was a potent symbol of beauty and courage.

Chiang's image as the fountainhead of national unity and resistance worked in the early stages of the war, but, in the enforced idleness of military stalemate, discontent over Chiang's handling of the war started

Winston Churchill on Madame Chiang Kai-shek

On this weekend [May 15th, 1943] was discussed the question of my meeting Madame Chiang Kai-shek, who was making an extensive tour of the United States. She was at this time in New York, and intimated that she would be glad to receive me there. Amid the pressures under which we were working and in the few days that remained before I must leave I did not feel able to make such a long journey. The President therefore invited the lady to lunch with him to meet me at the White House. The invitation was refused with some hauteur. Madame was of the opinion that I should make the pilgrimage to New York. The President was somewhat vexed that she had not adopted his plan. It was my strong desire to preserve unity in the Grand Alliance, and I offered to go half-way if she would do the same. This offer was however considered facetious, so I never had the pleasure of meeting this lady until the Cairo Conference.

Winston S. Churchill, *The Second World War*, vol. IV (London: Cassel, 1951), pp. 712–3.

to simmer. The discontent was encouraged by his enemies, within the GMD and in the CCP, whose status rose as the war dragged on.

Communist China

The second wartime capital of China was at Yan'an, the capital of the main Communist base in Shaanxi. Yan'an was a very different place from Chongqing. It was a remote enclave in the stark, barren hills of northwest China.

Yan'an

Yan'an (Yenan) is a small town in the arid loess country of northwestern China. In 1935 it was the unintended terminus of the Long March that brought the CCP from Jiangxi. Here the CCP set up its provisional capital, which it remained until 1948. The town was poor and traditional. The sudden influx of southern revolutionaries must have been a great shock, but it put Yan'an on the revolutionary map for ever, as a symbol of determination and egalitarianism. Like the local peasants the CCP leaders lived in caves, ate simple food, and grew their own tobacco. Western journalists were allowed short trips into the isolated town, and most came back with glowing reports of the Communist movement and its leaders, much more flattering pictures than those that were painted of Chiang Kai-shek and the GMD.

Mark Selden, *The Yenan Way in Revolutionary China*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1971.

4.3 **Mao Zedong, 1940.**
Source: Evans Carlson, *Twin Stars of China* (New York: Dodd, Mead, 1940), p. 160.

Here Mao Zedong and other CCP leaders became the darlings of left-leaning Western journalists, the first of whom, Edgar Snow, wrote the legendary *Red Star over China* just before the war started. The Spanish Civil War had just ended with the triumph of Franco's fascists; China and the CCP became the next cause of the left in the West.

Mao Zedong was emerging as the star of the Chinese Communist movement, as he was to be for the next thirty years. His combination of simplicity, sophistication, and an almost mystical faith in the future showed up in his writings of the period. In one essay, *The old man who moved the mountain* (*Yugong yishan*), he took a traditional legend and gave it a Marxist spin (the mountain the old man was trying to move was poverty, ignorance, and feudalism), and a transcendental ending (an angel came down from heaven and moved the mountain).

The CCP leaders had a flair for promoting themselves as reasonable, patriotic, dedicated people, willing to make any sacrifice to see the Japanese driven out of China. They claimed to be leading a people's war, giving the Chinese people the leadership they needed to resist Japan. The

leaders were informal, humorous, and approachable – in contrast to the stiff Chiang Kai-shek. They gave the impression of living simple lives in their cave homes. Their frugality impressed outsiders deeply; Mao was shown cultivating his own tobacco, and rolling his own cigarettes, the master of brilliant simplicity.

Other Communist base areas were scattered through north China, usually in the isolated borderlands between provinces. There was only sporadic contact between the base areas, given that the spaces in between were occupied by the Japanese, and the more remote base areas were semi-independent of the Party control in Yan'an. This led to considerable divergence in Communist policies – and created a major task of later rectification for the Party, to bring its supporters into line.

The Communists showed consummate skill in turning disadvantages to advantages. Living in remote rural areas, they made peasant culture their own. They adapted hauntingly beautiful folk songs and jolly dances as the approved forms of culture. Woodblock prints traditionally produced for the New Year became a propaganda vehicle. The Communist propaganda skills convinced most of their visitors, Chinese and foreign, of their sincerity and commitment – and set a continuing pattern of ingenious persuasiveness.

Autonomous areas

Some parts of China were completely autonomous during this period, as they had been for a considerable period before the war. Xinjiang, bordering the Soviet Union in the northwest, had its own autonomous government under Sheng Shicai. Tibet was a completely independent theocracy. It was untouched by the war, except for the arrival of a few German refugees from India, the best-known being Heinrich Harrer, author of *Seven Years in Tibet.* Inner Mongolia, under De Wang, moved to establish its autonomy from China as soon as the Japanese took Manchuria. De Wang hoped to use Japanese help to ensure that autonomy, but he was treated by the Japanese merely as a puppet, and the dream of real Mongol autonomy turned sour.

Many parts of China were contested for the duration of the war. There were non-Communist guerrilla areas throughout Occupied China, places where no one had permanent control, and where there was no submission to the Japanese either. In these areas GMD troops who had taken to guerrilla warfare, and local armed men, launched resistance against the Japanese. Control was continuously shifting, between locals, outsiders, the Japanese, and their mercenaries. The level of instability and confusion was almost unbearable. It is captured in one of the finest novels

Lattimore on De Wang

[Owen Lattimore, the leading expert on Mongolia, knew De Wang during the 1930s and 1940s.] His [De Wang's] idea for the future was a kind of federated republic in which both Inner and Outer Mongolia, Tibet and Sinkiang [Xinjiang] would be their own independent republics under the overall sovereignty of China.

In spite of being a very high-ranking prince, De Wang was not against the idea of Mongolia becoming a republic. He was an honest man who had a real sense of devotion to his own people.

Owen Lattimore, *China Memoirs* (Tokyo: University of Tokyo Press, 1990), pp. 210–11.

about the war, Mo Yan's *Red Sorghum*, which describes a small region of eastern Shandong where control shifted almost constantly, and the whole population was brutalized.

Occupied China

Japan exercised different degrees of control in the occupied areas. Taiwan was run as a colony, integrated into the economy of the Japanese mainland. It evolved into a well-managed, progressive entity, the "model colony." Manzhouguo, a supposedly autonomous state, with the former emperor, Pu Yi, as its figurehead, was in fact controlled by the Japanese military. The economy, fueled by massive investment from Japan, was quite prosperous. There was some resistance, passive and active, but the administration was tough. The state seemed permanent. After the war one frightful aspect of Japanese rule emerged: the medical and biological experiments carried out on Chinese prisoners of war at Unit 731, outside Harbin. At 731, Chinese were treated as subhumans, in much the same way that Nazis such as Dr. Mengele treated their victims in Europe.

In Manzhouguo Japan had a clear vision for the future, but this was not true elsewhere. Japanese authorities seemed unsure what they wanted to do with other conquered areas of China. The guiding theories of the New Order (1938) and the Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere (1940) were vague and mutable. They allowed only for Japanese domination. The three Japanese army commands[4] remained dominant in Occupied China,

[4] There were three main Japanese army commands in China: the Guandong Army, in Manchuria; the North China Area Command; and the Central China Army Command. Relations between the armies were poor, and each struggled jealously, in Tokyo, for dominance over the other two.

and showed little enthusiasm for sharing power, with their own civilians or with Chinese. Japan drifted toward *de facto* military colonialism in China.

Japan was a latecomer to imperialism, but seems not to have been tempted to model her colonial administrations on any of the European imperialists. The Japanese conception of imperialism was severe: the people of occupied countries were inferior and had to be knocked into shape. This conception meant that the Japanese relied on terror, and their reactions to resistance or non-compliance with their orders were vengeful and brutal.

The Japanese armies recruited men to help them run the occupied areas – "bad elements" (*ronin*) from Japan, as well as Koreans and Taiwanese[5] already living under Japanese rule. They also recruited Chinese soldiers into what came to be called "puppet armies"; they may have numbered as many as 800,000 men. The Peace Preservation Corps set up to police occupied areas attracted the scum of society, known generically as "scoundrels and bums" (*dipi liumang*). The hired hands were under even less control than Japanese troops, in terms of behavior toward civilians, who lived in an atmosphere of chronic fear. This fear was particularly acute for women. The arrival of the Japanese armies meant the danger of the unspeakable (China was still a socially conservative society; the word "rape" was not used). Women who were raped had not only to endure the terror of the act itself but also to endure ostracism from their own society afterwards.[6]

Japan had an extensive and active intelligence system in China, a branch of the national secret police. Kempeitai agents contributed as much to the climate of fear in occupied China as did rampaging soldiers. No one was safe from their attention – or from being wrongly fingered by informants, who might be their own family, friends, or neighbors.

Chronic fear was one burden endured by Chinese in Occupied China. Economic pressure was another. Japanese economic demands were onerous. The conquest of China turned out to be much more expensive than Japanese planners had anticipated. China had to contribute to Japan's costs, under a plan known as "financing war with war" (*yizhan yangzhan*) – i.e. by plundering, requisitioning, and commandeering businesses, means of transport, and food supplies. The press-ganging of coolies increased as the war went on; in the last few years of the war there was the mass export of forced labor to Japan and Korea. Japan's predatory

[5] The Taiwanese agents were detested by Chinese civilians. Although they were Japanese citizens, they were Chinese by descent and they spoke dialects of Chinese; they seemed to be betraying their own people.

[6] The issue of forced prostitution, the recruitment of sex slaves (sometimes erroneously called "comfort women"), was less acute in China than it was in Korea.

The Kempeitai

The Kempeitai was a very powerful organization, subordinate to the Japanese Imperial Army. It combined intelligence services and the military police. From the 1890s on its agents collected detailed intelligence on foreign countries, including China. The information they gathered greatly facilitated the Japanese assault on China. Kempeitai agents used a range of methods to collect information, from running brothels and opium dens as "honey-traps" to using threats and force to get people to work for them. After the war started, Kempeitai agents came to play a role similar to that of the Gestapo – and were regarded by the Chinese population with at least the same level of fear and loathing that the Gestapo attracted in Europe.

Richard Deacon, *The Japanese Secret Service*. London: Frederick Muller, 1982.

economic behavior ensured that the battered Chinese economy could not recover; the promise of a new economic order became more and more of a mirage.

Japan established several regimes in the occupied areas of China. These administrations are referred to politely as "client regimes," though this is not a concept Chinese accept; they refer to them as "bogus" (*wei*) or as "puppets" (*kueilei*).[7] The largest was set up in Nanjing in March 1940, with Wang Jingwei at its head. His regime used the same name, titles, and ideology as the GMD in Chongqing, a practice that caused confusion and compromised the legitimacy of the *real* GMD government. Wang had been an opponent of war with Japan, which he had never believed that China could win; he had called in 1937 for a peace settlement. Even so, he went to Chongqing with the Chinese government, but a year later he slipped away to Hanoi, and made his way back to Nanjing.

Wang was installed at the head of a government that was never more than a puppet administration. Wang's motives for his actions have never been clear. He died in Japan in November 1944, before he could be held to account. His body was brought back to Nanjing, and was buried at Meihuashan. After the war his grave was desecrated. His role as a puppet was a miserable end to what might have been one of the great political careers of modern China. Wang was close to Sun Yat-sen; he was clever, handsome, cosmopolitan, and urbane, but he was never able to build on

[7] The term *wei* is conventionally applied by Chinese governments to their enemies. The government in Nanjing called the Chongqing government a *weizhengfu* ("bogus government"). Another term of opprobrium is *fei* ("bandit"). For a long time the GMD called the CCP *gongfei* (Communist bandits), and the CCP called the GMD *jiangfei* (Chiang Kai-shek's bandits).

those strengths and achieve a position of real power. His behavior in the war has condemned him to lasting ignominy.

Japan's disdainful treatment of Wang and other collaborators negated her vision for China. The fact that they were puppets deprived the Nanjing regime and the regimes in north China of any credibility. The Japanese inability to treat their "allies" as partners meant that they themselves could never be more than occupiers, and prevented them from establishing a successful colonial regime, such as the one they had set up in Taiwan.

The Japanese occupation brought a renaissance to some groups of people. Manchus re-emerged in Beijing and in Manzhouguo after difficult years in the wilderness. They were offered positions in the occupation regimes, and they gloried in the resurrection of their emperor in Manzhouguo. Elderly Qing officials emerged from retirement. Deep conservatives welcomed the Japanese for their support of Confucianism and other forms of traditional thought. They joined the Japanese-sponsored New People's Organization (*Xinminhui*), though the internal contradictions in the title ("new" for conservative and "people's" for foreign-sponsored) were an indication of the conflict involved in working with an occupation power.

Some people had personal reasons for working with the Japanese. Zhou Zuoren, the brother of Lu Xun (Zhou Shuren), stayed in Peking with his Japanese wife, and worked with the Japanese throughout the war; he was severely punished afterwards, as a traitor. Guo Moruo, the antiquarian, went the other way; he left Japan shortly before the war, abandoned his Japanese wife and family there, and married a Chinese wife in Chongqing.

Much of the story of the Occupied areas is still opaque. Chinese have had the same difficulties coming to terms with the period as France has had dealing with the Nazi occupation.

Shanghai, Hong Kong

At the start of the war Shanghai and Hong Kong both had substantial Chinese populations living under foreign (though not Japanese) control. The populations of the two cities swelled in 1937 and 1938 as refugees poured in from Occupied China. In Shanghai people moved out of the parts of the city that had fallen and into the International Settlement and the French Concession, ten square miles of land encircled by Japanese armies, cut off from the rest of China, though not from the world. This area came to be called the "solitary island" (*gudao*), and was home to 4 million people. Hong Kong saw an influx of refugees from the north early in the war, and then, after the fall of Guangzhou in the autumn

of 1938, from that city. Both cities were accustomed to refugee influxes, from warlord turbulence, and took the new arrivals in their stride, until the start of the Pacific War brought dramatic changes.

The effects of war

Living with the enemy

Half of China lived under some form of Japanese rule for eight years. It was endured with sullen acceptance. People survived, they lived their lives.[8] Was this collaboration? The answer, in terms of the Chinese language, would be "no." There is no word in Chinese that translates the broad English word "collaboration." Instead, there are several words that cover the most egregious forms of collaboration: "traitor to the Chinese people" (*hanjian*); "consorter with the enemy" (*tongdi*); and "puppet" (*kuilei*). These words described many people, but only a fraction of those who lived under Japanese rule.

Very few people in Occupied China protested overtly against Japanese rule, a move that was life-threatening. People had to survive, to get on with their routine lives – which meant living with the enemy, at least in a passive way. They were never labeled with any of the negative terms listed above, but their behavior, which twisted and turned in response to varying Japanese pressures, left behind a sour taste – and a bitterness amongst those who did flee, or joined the underground resistance. There was little respect for those who had simply saved their own skins.

Living with the enemy was a draining process, in which previous moral and social bearings were lost or distorted, replaced by a narrow mentality of survival. This was the same mentality that allowed Chinese to survive the Civil War that followed the Resistance War, and then the tormented upheavals of the Mao era. Displays of courage and conviction landed one in deadly trouble – and implicated one's family and relatives. The Japanese army practiced a policy known innocuously as the "three all policy" (*sanko-seisaku*), which in implementation meant "kill all, burn all, destroy all." When the army discovered (or suspected) guerrilla resistance in a particular village, it punished the whole village by killing the people and burning their houses. This practice is sometimes said to have been based on the Nazi model of collective responsibility (i.e. punishing a whole community for acts of resistance), but it was used in China before

[8] The evocative film *Huozhe* (To Live) deals with this sense of surviving, of getting through the many painful and difficult periods of modern Chinese history.

The Weixian camp

The start of the Pacific War meant the internment of enemy nationals (Americans, Britons, Canadians, and Australians) throughout Asia. Those in north China were interned in a large camp in Shandong province, at Weixian (Wei hsien), from 1942 until 1945. The camp occupied a mission compound, where internees lived in poor, crowded conditions, prey to boredom and anxiety. Amongst the internees were Arthur Hummel, later US ambassador to China, Arthur and Mary Wright, later sinologists at Yale, and Eric Liddell, the athlete hero of *Chariots of Fire* who refused to race on a Sunday. In the 1940s he was a missionary in China. He died in Weixian shortly before the end of the war, of a brain tumour; the many doctors in the camp had no facilities to operate on him.

Sally Magnusson, *The Flying Scotsman*. London: Quartet, 1981.

the European War began. With the threat of terror hanging over their heads, the dearth of resistance in Occupied China is understandable.

No group in Chinese society was more affected by the need to survive than those in the business world. Most of the business leaders in Shanghai and Tianjin were reluctant to move their enterprises into the interior, even had they been physically able to do so. Less than 10 percent of Shanghai's industries relocated to Free China. Most stayed where they were – only to suffer serious misfortunes. Early in the war the common misfortunes were the destruction of their plants through bombing, the loss of markets, and the expropriation of plants and other assets by the Japanese. Those who survived these misfortunes became increasingly embroiled with the Japanese, who were insistent that Chinese businessmen work with them. Such "cooperation" brought the risk of assassination by GMD secret agents. Those who refused to cooperate risked being kidnapped by the Japanese authorities and held until they *did* agree to cooperate.

Most foreign businesses in China stayed on after the Japanese invasion. For German and Italian companies this was expected – their countries were linked to Japan through the Axis. French companies who gave allegiance to the Vichy government also showed no hostility to the Japanese, though during the course of the war some French shifted their loyalties to de Gaulle and the Free French. The United States and Britain did not enter the war against Japan until after Pearl Harbor, in December 1941; before that date most US and British companies operated as if no invasion had taken place. After that date US and British firms closed down; the nationals of the two countries, along with Canadians and Australians, were interned in concentration camps for the duration of the war.

Business under Japanese occupation was poor, and the port cities of Shanghai, Tianjin, and Guangzhou went into a slow decline. Chinese businesses were in a no-win situation. The war ruined most of them. By the end of the war Shanghai was a pale shadow of its former dynamic self. There were some newcomers. Shanghai provided sanctuary for thousands of European Jews, who fled eastward from Nazi Europe across the Trans-Siberian Railway. They eventually reached Shanghai, and lived there in poverty but relative security until the end of the war. To the fury of the official German representatives in Shanghai, the Japanese authorities insisted on treating the Jews as German, Austrian, or other European citizens; they did not recognize Germany's anti-Semitic policies, and therefore did not intern Jews. On the same principle Peking became the wartime home of most German sinologists, who were Jewish. They were forced to leave their university positions in Germany after 1936; they found refuge there for the duration of war, where they lived in a shrunken foreign community.

Living with the enemy was a sad affair, one that involved endless compromises and brought little security. The people of the occupied areas shared the economic insecurity of all of China.

Economic dislocation and disintegration

Almost every sector of China's economy was disrupted by the war. Internal trade stopped almost completely in the early stages of the war, as railway lines were cut and ships sunk. The Yangzi was closed by the fighting in late 1937, and kept closed by the Japanese for many months after that. When Yangzi trade resumed, it was at a much lower level than before. After the *de facto* stabilization of the zones of control at the end of 1938, trade across the front line between Chinese and Japanese forces started. It carried major risks and insecurity. The difficulties were overcome by the creativity of merchants in border areas, who focused on smuggling, which flourished in some areas, and on trading goods that could bear high markups – opium, tobacco, medicines – or on complex barter deals.

China's international trade had already been badly affected by the Depression, and the decline in world trade. In the first stages of the war international trade slowed still further, and after the start of the Pacific War in December 1941 it virtually ceased. The loss of international trade had damaging effects on the merchants involved, and even more so on the industries that provided trade goods, such as the silk, ceramics, and tea industries.

The losses connected with trade were dwarfed by the material losses suffered by businesses and families. When their properties were lost to

The Henan famine

One of the most tragic events of the Resistance War was the terrible famine of 1942–3, which devastated the northern province of Henan. Most of the province lies on the North China Plain, where the land is fertile provided the rainfall is sufficient. The periodic failure of rain means that it has often suffered food shortages, which are alleviated by government relief. The famine of 1942–3 started with a drought in the spring and summer of 1942, which caused widespread crop failures. This time there was no relief. The province lay across the front line between the Chinese and the Japanese, and neither side was willing or able to mount a relief operation. The people were left defenseless; in the end, of the roughly 30 million people in Henan before the famine, 2 to 3 million fled and another 2 to 3 million died of hunger and disease. Tens of thousands of others died in neighboring provinces on the North China Plain. This was a tragedy on the scale of the much better-known Bengal Famine in India, which occurred at about the same time.

Theodore White and Annalee Jacoby, *Thunder out of China*. New York: Sloane, 1946.

them through requisitioning or bombing, the loss was total. China had no commercial insurance beyond the treaty ports. In times of peace there was a suspicion of this new, foreign institution, that it would undermine family responsibility; in times of disaster its absence meant that losses could not be made up.

South China was hit by a particular economic loss: the remittances from local Chinese who had emigrated to Southeast Asia and North America dried up. Contact was lost between the emigrant communities (*qiaoxiang*) along the coast of the South China Sea, largely made up of women, children, and the elderly, and their men working abroad. The flow of remittances stopped; families and communities that had depended on them were made destitute.

In other areas of China the greatest economic damage was the absence of effective local and regional government to cope with disasters. In the past famine relief had been one of the major roles of local government. Now there was no government aid available to mitigate natural disaster. The famine that hit the North China Plain in 1942 and 1943 was one of the worst in Chinese history.

These economic losses occurred at a time when the military was more demanding than ever. China had to maintain huge military forces, and keep them fed and armed. The only way this could be done quickly and easily was by printing money – a widespread practice, and one that led inevitably to inflation.

Social dislocation, social suffering

Economic and political disintegration created widespread social dislocation in all parts of China. Though many were not directly affected by warfare, hardly any escaped indirect effects. Family and clan structures were disrupted, by refugee movements, by the loss of employment, and above all by the absence of young men. Tens of millions of young men were serving in the Chinese armies or with the guerrilla forces. As the war continued, young men not in the armies became vulnerable to labor conscription in the occupied areas, being forced to work in Manchuria and in Japan itself. Between 1942 and 1945 over 2.5 million men were taken from north China as forced laborers.[9]

The departure of young men meant that many families came to consist of older men, women, and children. They were impoverished by the lack of income from their most productive workers. Since so many families were in the same situation, the old systems of mutual aid were overburdened, and could not meet all the needs. Agricultural yields seem to have decreased in many parts of China during the war, because of the difficulties in cultivating the land, and the problems of marketing crops in the dislocated rural marketing systems. Actual fighting brought huge losses to agriculture in areas where fighting took place. In 1938 the summer of fighting in the Yangzi Valley and to the north made it almost impossible for peasants to harvest many of their crops.

The war brought insidious breakdown to the tight-knit family structure. Family members were separated physically by the war, out of touch and out of communication for years; many families did not know if their relatives were still alive or not. Physical separation was only one form of separation. Many families suffered political and emotional separations, as some members worked with the Japanese while others refused. Families and communities were deeply scarred by distrust and by betrayal, of activists to the Japanese and their allies, or of collaborators to guerrilla and underground forces. It became increasingly difficult to tell whom one could trust and whom not – a situation made even more difficult by the use of double agents (Chinese apparently working for the Japanese but actually spying on them, and vice versa).

The fear of being betrayed undercut attempts at local resistance, and forced most people living under occupation to turn in on themselves and trust no one. Old family and local ties fell into disuse. The complexity and anguish of these situations is captured in *Red Sorghum*; Mo Yan shows the sullen, quietly desperate inhabitants of a rural society that was falling

[9] Former slave laborers have launched lawsuits in Japan, seeking compensation. The suits have all failed.

Gladys Yang and Yang Xianyi

One famous wartime love story was that of Gladys Tayler and Yang Xianyi. Gladys was born in China, of missionary parents, but brought up in England. At Oxford in the 1930s she met Yang Xianyi, the son of a wealthy Tianjin family who had been sent to Oxford to study. They fell in love, and at the beginning of the war went to Chongqing together. They married there and made a huge impression there, a handsome, charming couple, dedicated to the war effort. Later, they had distinguished careers as translators in Beijing. They were terribly maltreated in the Cultural Revolution, but survived and continued their work.

Yang Xianyi, *White Tiger: An Autobiography*. Hong Kong: Chinese University Press, 2002.

apart under the pressure of the Japanese occupation. Neighbors betrayed each other, husbands abandoned wives, old friends informed on each other. The old loyalties were undercut, and the sinews of society stretched to breaking point.

The confusion and upheaval of war was mirrored in the health of the nation. Civilians were vulnerable to disease; epidemics of plague and cholera broke out, and the endemic diseases ran rampant. Many Chinese medical personnel, who might have fought the epidemics, were away, either in Free China or working for the military; the foreign medical missionaries were also away from their posts – after 1942, under internment. The assaults of disease seemed a metaphor for a society under mortal threat.

There were, however, some positive social changes during the war. In Free China, women were given greater freedom than they had had beforehand, and took on political and economic roles that would not have been possible previously. Young women who were living away from their natal families contracted their own marriages – something almost unheard of before in Chinese society. Romance flourished in Chongqing and Yan'an.

Women began to take on new roles, as heads of households, supporting their families. But these new freedoms were outweighed by the terrible insecurities facing many more women – widows, women who did not know whether they were widows or not, and women who were forced by the war to support themselves, with no skills to do so. Their pitiful situation was a symbol of a society in slow disintegration.

Stalemate

The first part of the war, the most dreadful and costly part, lasted for just over a year, from July 1937 to the autumn of 1938. After that, the fighting

The Seven Deadly Sins

Self-seeking, in my opinion, is the most vicious of several evils, which may, for brevity's sake, be catalogued as the "Seven Deadly Sins". They are: (1) Self-seeking, (2) "Face", (3) "Cliquism", (4) Defeatism (*mu-yufa-tzu [meiyou fazi]*), (5) Inaccuracy (*tsa-pu-tu [chabuduo]*), (6) Lack of self-discipline, (7) Evasion of responsibility. Long ago they combined to retard our emergence as a first-class world power, and they now delay our victory in war.

The shortcomings I have mentioned combine to cause the stagnation in which we have so long been floundering and from which we now see, I hope, the means of escape, and from which, with resolute courage, we can and must escape. These evils can be cured because we know that they have to be cured; and we will cure them in time because patriotism and pride will, inevitably, impel even the weak and the negligent to respond to the spiritual and material stimulation embodied in the word *Resurgam*.

Madame Chiang Kai-shek (Song Meiling), *China Shall Rise Again* (London: Hurst and Blackett, 1941), pp. 38–9, 48.

quietened down over much of China, until 1944, six years later. The hot war was replaced by a grim state of permanent hostility. The Japanese tried to entrench themselves more and more strongly in the areas they occupied, while the GMD and, increasingly, the CCP tried to continue the resistance.

The government in Chongqing made attempts to rally the nation, attempts that became fitful as the war went on. Early in the war great efforts went into propaganda, into the production and distribution of patriotic magazines, songs, plays, written and performed by China's best artists, in a high tide of patriotic fervor. But, as the war settled into a dismal rut, propaganda production wound down, not helped by a chronic shortage of paper; books and magazines that survive from the period were made with paper of appalling quality, containing large pieces of chaff or grass.

It was almost impossible for government propaganda to reach the population under Japanese control. There was only the most rudimentary radio network. There were no national newspapers, no means of getting books and magazines safely into Occupied China. Only one institution kept running throughout the country – the Post Office. Even that organization found it impossible to get letters from abroad into much of China.

In this situation of stalemate, China's internal politics became increasingly murky and divisive. Different factions within the GMD struggled with each other, and undermined each other, in an endless round of backbiting and back-stabbing. The hostility between the GMD and the CCP

resurfaced and turned again to bitter enmity. The United Front broke down; GMD and CCP forces clashed in early 1941, in what was known as the New Fourth Army Incident. The bitter irony that the United Front was collapsing just at the moment that Japan was acquiring a new and powerful enemy, the United States, was not lost on China, or on her allies. Even a common foreign enemy could not keep Chinese enemies united. It seemed that the Japanese had actually won, and that Free China was dying a slow death.

Song Meiling was one of the fiercest critics of the despondency that settled on Free China.

A new stage: the start of the Pacific War

In December 1941 the Japanese attacked the US Pacific Fleet in Pearl Harbor. This extraordinary act of bravado, the "sneak attack," changed the course of the war. The United States was suddenly at war, and very angry. China now had the strongest ally in the world. In retrospect, the eventual defeat of Imperial Japan was assured by the attack on Pearl Harbor, though it would take three and a half years of ferocious fighting and immense casualties, many of them Japanese casualties of conventional and nuclear bombing, before the defeat was confirmed.

In the short run the defeat of the Japanese was not at all clear. Within weeks of Pearl Harbor the International Settlement in Shanghai was taken over, and Hong Kong fell, making China more isolated than ever. Singapore and most of Southeast Asia followed shortly afterwards, putting millions of Overseas Chinese directly under Japanese control. In

Admiral Yamamoto, 1884–1943

Yamamoto Isoroku was the admiral who planned the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor. He was a brilliant, dedicated career officer, who spent several years in the United States during his early career. His planning of the attack on Pearl Harbor was bold, original, and completely successful. The irony of the success at Pearl Harbor is that Yamamoto had argued strongly against the attack on the United States. He was convinced that, though Japan might attack the United States successfully, in the end that country would defeat Japan. Yamamoto died in 1943 when his plane was ambushed in a daring US reprisal for Pearl Harbor.

His image of a professional fighter serving in an honorable armed force, the imperial navy, is much more favorable than that of the soldiers responsible for Japan's actions in China, where the army was in charge.

John D. Potter, *Admiral of the Pacific: The Life of Yamamoto*. London: Heinemann, 1965.

each place enemy aliens (British, American, Canadian, Australian) were interned. There were rumors that local Chinese were delighted to see the internment of once proud Westerners, but these claims are more likely to reflect contemporary Japanese views than Chinese ones. The Japanese takeover of Hong Kong and of the International Settlement was a disaster for the Chinese populations there, and led to another jolt downward in the economy. Refugees poured inland, driven by a combination of fear of the Japanese and lack of employment.

The Japanese occupation of European colonies marked the beginning of the end for Western imperialism in Asia. What it did not mean was the replacement of Western imperialism with Japanese imperialism. The Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere fell flat, in the face of widespread local antipathy and economic collapse. But the humiliation of Western soldiers and civilians, and the collapse of Western economic power, were blows that could not be recouped after Japan was defeated. European imperialism had been critically wounded.[10]

The entry of the United States into the war meant the arrival of a new foreign overlord in Asia – not a colonial one, but a nation that would have an overweening influence in Asia, right upto the present day. In the immediate aftermath of Pearl Harbor the US arrival was a much-needed boost for China. There was now a new source of arms and ammunition, and an ally that held out the promise of defeating the Japanese. This sea change has led some people to claim that Chiang Kai-shek had been waiting all along for the Americans to come in, rather than risk his own armies aginst the Japanese. Almost the opposite was true. From a Chinese point of view, if the Americans had come in earlier China would not have had to exhaust many of her armies in the initial resistance against Japan. As in Europe, the arrival of the United States in China often produced the reaction: "What took you so long?"

When the Americans did come in, they brought an energy and enthusiasm that galvanized the war effort. American airmen and soldiers shook up the cautious GMD commanders. Their can-do attitude got things moving, though it annoyed the Chinese as much as it helped, because there was little recognition from the Americans that the Chinese had already been at war for five years. Chiang Kai-shek had continuous, acrimonious conflicts with the ranking US commander in China, Joseph Stilwell, whose view that Chinese generals were incompetent, and only

[10] In *Forgotten Armies: The Fall of British Asia, 1941–1945* (London: Allen Lane, 2004), Christopher Bayley and Tim Harper tell the grim story of how the Japanese overran the British colonies in Southeast Asia, and destroyed what once seemed an impregnable empire.

4.4 **Chiang Kai-shek in full uniform**
Source: Zhonghua minguo kangri zhanzheng tumu (Taipei: Jindai Zhongguo chubanshe, 1995), p. 143.

American officers were capable of getting good performances out of Chinese soldiers, was widely accepted for a long time. Stilwell made a point of wearing casual uniforms, as Chiang Kai-shek took to more and more elaborate uniforms as the war went on. Stilwell went on campaign in Burma, to show up the desk-bound Chinese generals. It now seems that there was considerable hubris in Stilwell's interpretation.[11]

The US arrival brought material aid in quantities that China had not dreamed of before. Money was made available to build airbases in southern China, and to provide China with new weapons. It was manna; the first real outside aid after four years of war. American air power was used to fly in vital supplies from India, over the Himalayas (the "Hump"), and to start bombing raids against the Japanese from the new airbases in China.

[11] Hans van de Ven's recent study shows that Stilwell was a man whose temper was so foul, and his manners so bad, that his eventual recall to the United States, in disgrace, was a product of these traits more than of Chinese intransigence and unwillingness to fight.

The Flying Tigers

The Flying Tigers was one of the most flamboyant fighting units of the Second World War. The official name of the unit was the American Volunteer Group (later the 14th Air Force), but it was known as the Flying Tigers, even though the decoration on the noses of the planes was of sharks' teeth. The unit was raised by Claire Chennault, who was appointed adviser to the GMD in 1940, his mission to begin building an air force for Free China. He started recruiting American pilots and support staff in the spring of 1941, on generous contracts – pilots were paid $600 per month, with a bonus of $500 for every Japanese plane shot down. The planes flew from airfields in southwest China on fighter sorties and bombing raids. The Flying Tigers were legendary for their courage, their derring-do, their extravagant lifestyles – and their consummate skill at self-promotion. They claimed very large "kills" – 1,634 Japanese planes shot down in six months, for sixteen of their own. Their fame was carried forward after the war by Chennault's charismatic wife, Anna Lee Chennault, who became almost as well known in the United States as Madame Chiang.

Anna Chennault, *Chennault and the Flying Tigers.* New York: Eriksson, 1963.

The US presence brought a new energy to the war, but it was some time before the military situation really changed. 1942 and 1943 were years of stalemate in the Chinese theater of war. China's international status was recognized now as equal in the Allied cause. In 1943 China's new allies cancelled the extraterritorial system, under which citizens of imperial powers had lived under foreign rule in China. This momentous move went unnoticed, however, since the focus was on defeating Japan. Japan was busy trying to consolidate her new holdings in Southeast Asia, and to withstand the US threat as the armada of American naval forces started moving north up the chain of islands from Australia. The hot war was elsewhere. Attention shifted away from China until 1944.

The worst beyond the worst: 1944

By early 1944 the Pacific War was going badly for the Japanese; the possibility that they would hold out against the Americans was receding. The darkening of their horizons did not weaken Japanese military resolve but, rather, made their armies fight harder, and take larger gambles. In 1944 the Japanese army launched Operation Ichigo, southwards from central China, against GMD forces; the ultimate, and impossible, strategy was to connect with Japanese troops in Indo-China – impossible because there was no real land route between China and Indo-China, only rough tracks. The railway line from Hanoi to Nanning, in planning for more than fifty

years, had yet to be built. Ichigo involved a greater concentration of troops and resources than any in China since the fighting of early 1938, a huge body of Japanese troops, more than 400,000, moving against an even larger concentration of GMD forces into the unoccupied parts of southern China – Hunan, Guangdong, Guangxi, and Guizhou.

The campaign was a catastrophe for the GMD. Their troops were much less well equipped than the Japanese troops. They were shocked to be under attack again, when the tide of war had clearly turned. Their morale was low, and became even lower as the fighting continued, because all their efforts at resistance came to nothing. Japanese forces moved southward in a relentless tide. The GMD field commanders resorted to scorched earth tactics. In the early autumn of 1944 the beautiful city of Guilin was torched, and a flood of refugees and soldiers poured westward along the just completed railway line into Guizhou, which became a killing field as Japanese planes bombed the fleeing people and Japanese soldiers harried the retreating troops.

There was no simultaneous Japanese attack in the northwest against the Communist armies, though these armies had given the Japanese forces a lot of trouble throughout the war, mastering the art of guerrilla warfare. It was as if the Japanese were doing their utmost to strengthen the position of the CCP in north China, by withdrawing forces from Manchuria and north China to fight in the South. There was an awful irony here. The Japanese launched the war under the pretext of stopping Communist expansion. In the last year of the war they did exactly the opposite: weakening the defence of Manchuria, where a Soviet attack was in prospect, and strengthening the relative position of the CCP against the GMD by doing everything they could to weaken the GMD.

Economic collapse

By the end of the war almost every part of China's modern economy was in a state of collapse. Trade had almost ceased, factories were closed, the foreign sector of business in China had almost stopped functioning. Only a few German, Italian, and French companies continued to operate. The cities were racked by hyperinflation, caused by the printing of unbacked paper currency by the governments in China, GMD, Japanese, and puppet – the only method any of them could find to finance the war. The issue of inflation was highly political, especially in Free China, where the middle classes saw inflation as the last straw, punishment from their government instead of rewards for patriotic endurance.

After eight years of warfare there was a sudden break; with the dropping of the atom bombs, and the entry of the Soviet Union into the war,

Table 4.2 *A measure of inflation*

	Index numbers of *fabi* in circulation	Purchasing power per 1 *fabi*
1937, June	1.00	1.0000
1940, June	4.20	0.1976
1941, June	7.50	0.0784
1942, June	14.30	0.0255
1943, June	32.10	0.0073
1944, June	72.30	0.0019

NB: *Fabi* was the official currency.
Source: Wu Chi-yuen, *Currency, Exchange and Prices in Wartime China* (Chongqing: China Institute of Pacific Relations, 1945), p. 21.

Japan was defeated. The good news came too late. The people of China were exhausted, often despairing. There had been too many casualties, the cost had been too high. China suffered from the war at least as much as the Soviet Union, and far more than most of the European countries. Paradoxically, the only country whose sufferings approached China's was Japan; in the last months of the war Japan was bombed even more ferociously than she had bombed other countries.

The bitter end

Japan surrendered in August 1945, immediately after the atomic bombs were dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki. The Soviet Union sent its troops into Manchuria on August 9, in between the two bombs, and occupied the region. US troops landed in Japan. The war ended in China not because the Japanese military had been defeated there but because the home islands of Japan were shattered, and Japan could not face the two greatest military powers in the world, the United States and the Soviet Union. The war that had started in China ended elsewhere. The form of Japan's defeat gave a sour taste to the victory in China, and made it difficult for the Chinese to celebrate it with great enthusiasm, even though it meant the end of an eight-year nightmare.

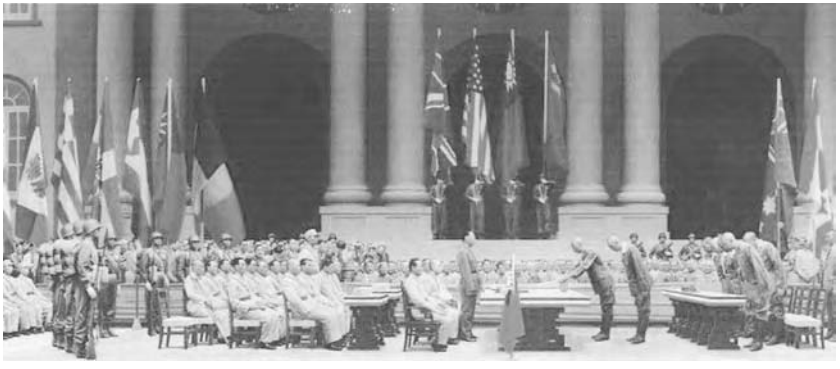
The formal ceremony of surrender of Japanese forces in China was held in Nanjing on September 9th, at 9 a.m., the ninth hour of the ninth day of the ninth month (a recognition that the number nine is a lucky one in Chinese numerology, or tacit reference to the end of the First World War at the eleventh hour of the eleventh day of the eleventh month?). The commander-in-chief of the Chinese army, He Yingqin, received the

4.5 **a. Japanese surrender, September 1945 [photograph]**
Source: Zhonghua minguo kangri zhanzheng tumu (Taipei: Jindai Zhongguo chubanshe, 1995), p. 193.

document of surrender from the commander of the Japanese army in China, Okamura. The ceremony took place in the great hall of the Central Military Academy.[12]

China celebrated the end of the war as a victory, but it was a victory that had been won at an enormous price. The casualties of the war now had to be counted. China had lost some 3 million soldiers killed, and millions more wounded. Between 15 and 20 million civilians were dead,

[12] A three- by six-meter painting by Chen Jian of the surrender ceremony won the Gold Medal at the Tenth National Exhibition of Arts, held in Beijing in December 2004. It shows a much more lavish ceremony than the one portrayed in contemporary photographs.



4.5 **b. Japanese surrender, September 1945 [oil painting by Chen Jian]**
Source: Exhibition catalogue, 10th National Exhibition of Arts, Beijing, 2004.

tens of millions more homeless and uprooted. The modern economy had virtually stopped functioning. The railway system had collapsed, a critical means of transport in a country without a modern road network. There were still huge numbers of men under arms, disconnected from civilian life, and in conditions of chaos there was little chance of demobilizing them.

The society that emerged from the war was fractured. The GMD government was critically weakened, its armies by the effects of the fighting, especially the last, desperate campaign, and its political authority by the loss of its natural constituency, the urban bourgeoisie and the rural elite. These were the echelons of society where collaboration had been most widespread. People who had lived under Japanese rule were unprepared for the end of a rule that they had assumed would last for ever. When it did end they feared retribution from the returning government, and instead of welcoming it they retreated into deep cover, trying to disguise their roles during the war.

In rural China, the end of the war revealed widespread emiseration, the product of eight years of warfare and neglect. Conditions were worst in north China, especially in the old course of the Yellow River and in the flood zone created further south by its change of course in 1938. The peasants of these areas were natural candidates to follow the only political force that seemed to be interested in them, the Communist Party, which had used the wartime confusion to strengthen greatly its work amongst the peasantry, to organize its bases, and consolidate its leadership. The CCP was poised, at the end of the war, to take this work much further, and to expand its revolutionary bases.

What lay before China at the end of the war was not peace, nor the movement toward democracy that the Allied occupation would bring to Japan, nor the restoration of the economy brought to postwar Europe by the Marshall Plan – but, instead, an even more intense form of suffering: a civil war.

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Films

A Bride's Tears (*Huajiao lei, le palanquin des larmes*) Jacques Dorfman, 1989
A picture of Shanghai society before, during, and after the Japanese occupation. The story is flimsy, but the settings are wonderful.

Farewell my Concubine (*Bawang bieji*) Chen Kaige, 1993
Set in an opera school, the film tells modern Chinese history through the experience of opera artists.

The Four Hundred Million Joris Ivens, 1938
A documentary filmed by a leading left-wing director to win support for the Chinese cause at the beginning of the Japanese invasion.

Empire of the Sun Stephen Spielberg, 1987
A boy on his own in wartime Shanghai. Dramatic and improbable, but with terrific crowd scenes.

To Live (*Huozhe*) Zhang Yimou, 1994
The struggles of an ordinary Beijing family to stay alive through the turbulence of modern history.

5 The Civil War – the most vicious conflict: 1946–9

Civil war often follows on inter-state warfare, when a state has been weakened and divided by wars with other states. In Russia the 1917 revolution and the civil war that followed were precipitated by Russia's poor performance in the First World War. In China the tremendous toll of the Resistance War on the central government, and the parallel success of the CCP, opened the way for civil war. At the beginning of the Resistance War, the CCP could never have challenged the GMD; after eight years of war, it could.

The Civil War lasted from 1946 to 1949. It determined the future of China. It was one of the most important stages in the world's descent into the Cold War. It was so brutal and so sad that it is hard for many of the people who lived through it to talk about it. It has been consigned to a dark corner of memory. In its historiography, the CCP draws a line at 1949. Everything "after Liberation"[1] *is good, socialist, and Red; everything before was bad, feudal, and black; the Civil War was the sweeping away of the evil old world. In Taiwan the Civil War was a disaster, but not a GMD one. Chiang Kai-shek blamed the GMD loss on the Soviet Union. The United States blamed the Communist menace, especially hidden Reds in their own country, for the United States' "loss of China." The hundreds of millions of Chinese involved had no voice, though they suffered separation, anxiety, and financial ruin. They endured the Civil War as they had survived the Resistance War, by relying on a survivor mentality. Many did not take sides until the end was in sight. The end, for those who opted for the CCP, was as much relief after twelve years of war as it was joy at the arrival of socialism.*

The outcome of the Civil War was not a foregone conclusion. At the beginning of the war the GMD was much stronger than the CCP, but by the end its morale was lost, its constituencies gone. The war was a jolting series of lurches downhill for the GMD, of great victories for the CCP. It lasted three years, a shorter time than most protagonists and commentators expected. The Communist victory

[1] Since the 1980s, and the start of the new policies that have transformed China, the term "Liberation" has been replaced by the "Establishment of the State."

took China – and most of the world – by surprise. The Communists were amongst the most surprised – and unprepared – when they found themselves the masters of the New China, presiding over a shattered country.

衣裳破尚可褳，
手足斷難行連。

Yishang po shangke lian, shouzu duan nanxing lian.
"Torn clothes can be mended, but hands and feet cannot be reconnected."
Source: traditional

Victory and its aftermath

The end of the Resistance War/Second World War came suddenly, after the dropping of atomic bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki. For China the suddenness was illusory; it did not produce the outpouring of joy that it did in North America. The country was exhausted after eight years of warfare. Half of the country had been under Japanese rule, and there had been widespread acceptance of the occupiers, from full-scale collaboration to reluctant accommodation to Japanese hegemony. The Japanese had been thoroughly defeated, but the defeat did not take place in China; the sense of victory there was muted. There were moments of triumph: the September 9th victory ceremony in Nanjing, the October 10th victory ceremony in Peking. This took place in front of the Taihedian, one of the great pavilions of the Forbidden City, where victories were traditionally announced, on the thirty-fourth anniversary of the Xinhai Revolution. There were few other ceremonies, few of the standard accompaniments of victory – martyrs' monuments, medals, reparations,[2] compensation for individual victims, pensions for widows. The soldiers who "liberated" the occupied parts of their country were not greeted as heroes, they were not given victory parades; often they did not look like heroes either.

Most of the men who fought in the Resistance War were not honored in the aftermath of the war, or later on. Some of those who died are commemorated at the Martyrs' Memorial in Taibei, but only in the last

[2] The issue of reparations was not raised by the Chinese side, either after the Resistance War by the GMD or by the CCP when China established diplomatic relations with Japan thirty years later. It remains a sore issue.

Qingdao: the return of the GMD

The euphoria [at the end of the war] in Qingdao was short-lived, replaced by sullen wariness the day a rag-tag collection of filthy, half-starved men straggled into town. Their uniforms were in tatters. Many were shoeless. Others had wads of straw tied to their feet. Some were without weapons, others dragged ancient hunting rifles, even bird guns, by the barrel, looking more like an army in retreat than the conquering heroes. The officers riding in American jeeps were smartly turned out and well fed. American aid clearly did not filter down to the ranks.

Michael David Kwan, *Things that Must not be Forgotten* (Toronto: Macfarlane, 2000), pp. 145–6.

few years has there been any discussion in Mainland China of the wartime sacrifices of the GMD military, and the beginning of a recognition of their efforts.

There was no economic peace bonus after the war, since China remained on a war footing. Much of the modern economic sector was ruined or derelict, and, although there were Japanese assets to be confiscated in many places, they could not be used to get the economy going so long as inflation continued to distort the economy.

The political situation was equally gloomy. There was an initial hope for peaceful coexistence between the major political entities. Mao Zedong went to Chongqing for two months in the early autumn of 1945, to try and negotiate a power-sharing deal; it did not work. The GMD hardly took the CCP's proposals seriously. The GMD was so much stronger, and had so many other issues to deal with, that the arrival of what they mistakenly took for a relatively minor rival with a proposal for power-sharing seemed almost risible.

The government faced daunting and immediate logistical problems at the end of the war: bringing refugees back from Free China; restarting industry; reestablishing national government; reassuming sovereignty over Taiwan. There was famine in several parts of the country, a result of the loss of harvests due to the fighting in 1944. The government also had to get the Japanese and their allies out of China. This involved moving well over 2 million people. The Chinese military assembled them at collection points; US vessels then shipped them back to Japan, Taiwan, and Korea.

The Japanese left behind a huge infrastructure, military, administrative, and commercial. In the rush to leave China, some families were forced to

Table 5.1 *Repatriated Japanese and their allies, 1945–6*

	Military	Civilian	Total
Japan	1,240,471	779,874	2,020,345
Korea	14,428	60,935	75,363
Taiwan			44,118

Source: Hsu Long-hsuen and Chang Ming-kai, *History of the Sino-Japanese War* (Taipei: Chungwu, 1971), p. 571.

abandon children.[3] The Japanese armies left stockpiles of weapons and ammunition – including chemical weapons, some of which continue to present threats today.

The GMD returned to a damaged society. In the areas recovered from the Japanese, the incoming government had to deal with social and economic problems of great urgency. Not all the GMD's personnel were overly concerned about relieving the suffering of their fellow citizens. After eight years of uncomfortable living in what they regarded as the backwoods of the west, many of those who returned to Shanghai, Nanjing, and other places were intent on making up for their losses, at the cost of those who had stayed on and lived under the Japanese. There was a wave of carpet-bagging, as the incomers "liberated" houses, cars, and movable property. Some of the booty was their own, abandoned at the start of the war, and taken over by relatives and friends who were now unwilling to surrender it; but much was not. The incomers found an easy way to acquire property: simply accuse the owner of having collaborated with the Japanese, and sequester the property.

The natural constituencies of the GMD, the urban bourgeoisie and the rural elite, were in bad shape at the end of the war. The return of the GMD did nothing to help them. Their situation actually deteriorated; many lost huge sums of money in the winding up of the occupation currencies. The government handled the question of reestablishing the national currency by setting an artificial exchange rate of 200:1 between the national currency (*fabi*) and "puppet" currencies. This one move bankrupted hundreds of thousands of people. The incompetence and injustice of the resumption of fiscal power meant that private enterprises could not get back on their feet, and economic activity continued to stagnate. The government found itself having to take greater and greater

[3] The Japanese government made efforts in the 1980s to retrieve these children, by then adults, who could not speak Japanese.

control of the economy, to maintain the distribution of vital commodities, and to manage the transport system. Inadvertently, the government assumed responsibility for the failure of the economy to recover.

Dealing with collaborators

Given the length of the Japanese occupation, and the scale of full collaboration, it was hard to punish all those who had worked with the Japanese. In the end, collaboration was dealt with only in a cursory way; often expropriation took the place of prosecution. The returning government had another concern: it needed many of those who had worked in less than dramatic ways for the Japanese – civil servants, bankers, businessmen, doctors, teachers. This pressing need took precedence over examining wartime conduct; countless instances of collaboration with the Japanese were passed over. In the southern port city of Xiamen, for example, occupied by the Japanese for seven years, only 231 people were investigated for collaboration. Of these only sixty-four were prosecuted; ten of those prosecuted were acquitted and the others sentenced to quite short prison terms; only two were executed. The military allies of the Japanese were also treated leniently. Some of the puppet troops who had served under the Japanese flag were reincorporated into GMD armies, a practice also used by the CCP to build up its own forces. (The situation in China was slightly better than that in other countries; in Indo-China and Indonesia Japanese troops were actually asked to stay on to maintain order until the colonial power could return.)

There could be no dealing with the most notorious of the collaborators. Wang Jingwei had died of bone disease in Japan in November 1944.[4] His wife, Chen Biqun, was less fortunate. She was arrested, and sentenced in 1946 to life imprisonment, as a traitor (*hanjian)*. She died in jail in Shanghai in 1959.[5] Other egregious traitors were executed or jailed. De Wang, the leader of the Mongol independence movement co-opted by the Japanese, was sentenced to hard labor and served in the Fuxun coal mine, the largest opencast pit in the world – and one of the chief sources of pride of Japanese imperialism in Manchuria.

[4] Subhas Chandra Bose, the Indian politician who worked with the Japanese, also died just before the end of the war, in a mysterious plane crash in Taiwan. Unlike Wang, he remained a hero to many of his followers, who refused to believe that he was dead; he was regularly sighted until the 1960s. Leonard Gordon, *Brothers against the Raj* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1990).

[5] Jiang Qing, the widow of Mao Zedong, was forced in a similar way to pay the price for her husband's crimes. After his death in 1976 she was arrested and charged as a member of the "Gang of Four," the people held responsible for the horrors of the Cultural Revolution. She was given a suspended death sentence, and died in prison in 1991.

War crimes trials

There were two forms of war crimes trials after the end of the war. In China the Chinese government put on trial a number of Japanese and Chinese collaborators. A total of 883 Japanese were tried in China between 1946 and 1949; 504 were convicted, and 149 executed. The trials were conducted under the Chinese legal code. Some of the accused, including General Okamura, commander of the Japanese armed forces in China at the end of the war, were acquitted. The trials of collaborators were bitter. Many of Wang Jingwei's close supporters were tried; some were sentenced to death, others to life in prison. These trials were some of the most important legal proceedings in modern China. In Tokyo the International Military Tribunal for the Far East indicted twenty-eight war criminals, but not Emperor Hirohito. Matsui Iwame, the commanding officer of Japanese land forces in 1937, when the Nanjing massacre occurred, was sentenced to death, and executed in 1948.

Philip Piccigallo, *The Japanese on Trial.* Austin; University of Texas, 1979.

The lack of enthusiasm for punishing Chinese collaborators stemmed from the conviction that the real war criminals were the members of the Japanese war machine, headed by the Showa emperor, in whose name the invasion and occupation had taken place. China had to accept the US decision not to prosecute the emperor; it was a decision that still rankles.

Restoration of government

There was never any question that, once the enemy had been defeated, the legitimate government would resume sovereignty over China. The GMD government did return to Nanjing, though not until May 1946. Resuming sovereignty was not a simple matter. Well before the end of the war it was clear that the GMD government would have difficulty in reestablishing its authority over the whole country. The CCP emerged from the war much stronger than it had gone in, with large bases in north China and well-trained armies, strategically placed to take over Manchuria. It had a powerful ideology, a charismatic leader, and the realistic goal of expanding its power into the northern cities. There were parts of what was nominally China that had known no Chinese rule for a long time: Taiwan, Hong Kong, Manchuria, Mongolia, Xinjiang, and Tibet.

The GMD had one advantage in reasserting control over China, besides formal sovereignty: its alliance with the victorious United States; but it was poorly positioned to use this advantge. The GMD armies were in west China; it took months to reposition them. In the meantime, the

Pu Yi: the last emperor

The wretched life of Henry Pu Yi, the Xuantong Emperor, was brought to the screen by Bernardo Bertolucci in his movie *The Last Emperor*, a film based on Pu Yi's autobiography, *From Emperor to Citizen*. The film starts with Pu Yi's arrest as he is returned to China by the Soviets, after he fled to the Soviet Union when Manzhouguo collapsed in 1945. It then goes back to his upbringing in the Forbidden City, after the fall of the Qing dynasty, and shows his distorted, debauched youth and young adulthood. The last part of the film deals with his interrogation by an upright Communist commissar (played by Ying Ruocheng, the founder of the Peoples Art Theater, and himself a Manchu). The glory of the film is in the richness of its settings, and the faithful recreation of imperial life.

Aisin-Gioro Pu Yi, *From Emperor to Citizen*. Beijing: Foreign Languages Press, 1964. Translated by W. J. F. Jenner.

United States could do little to help the GMD reestablish itself in the once occupied areas; the Americans' overwhelming concern was establishing new regimes in Japan and Korea.

In some parts of China the vacuum of power was resolved rapidly. The GMD flew troops into the main cities of China and Taiwan, and by early autumn held most of the key cities. They could not prevent the Communists from taking hold of the rural areas of north China, and, thanks to material help from the Soviet Union, making considerable gains in Manchuria.

Soviet armies moved into Manchuria in August 1945, after the Hiroshima bomb. The GMD had no hope of countering what was virtually an invasion. At the other end of the country, the GMD made no attempt to regain sovereignty over Hong Kong, a step anticipated by the British colonial power. The Royal Navy took the Japanese surrender in Hong Kong, and temporarily took charge, waiting for Chinese troops to arrive. When, by the end of 1945, none had come, the prewar British governor, Sir Mark Young, was reinstated, and Hong Kong remained British for another half-century. The GMD did send troops to other parts of the south; Yunnan was brought under GMD control soon after the end of the war.

Taiwan

The GMD put enormous – and strategically unjustifiable – stress on Taiwan. In the aftermath of victory, Taiwan was singled out for special (i.e. harsh) treatment from the incoming Chinese troops and administrators. Taiwan had been under Japanese rule for fifty years. Instead

of looking at the Taiwanese with sympathy, for their long ordeal under colonial rule, the GMD treated them almost as traitors. There was a tremendous amount of carpet-bagging, of Japanese and local Taiwanese property – this on top of the chaos caused by the end of the efficient Japanese administration: there was widespread unemployment, the monetary system had collapsed, and the export trade geared to Japan and her colonies had died.

The reaction of the Taiwanese was to fulminate against their so-called liberation. They had thought of themselves as Chinese while they were under Japanese occupation, but now they saw a yawning gulf between themselves and the officials and soldiers who took over the island. It seemed that they were quite different from their liberators, that they belonged to another culture. They felt confusion and anger in the face of a national rule that seemed worse than the colonial rule.

Taiwanese anger culminated in demonstrations and protests, which started on February 28, 1947. At first it seemed that the GMD might accept local demands for greater autonomy and fairer treatment. Then troop reinforcements arrived from the Mainland and the protests were brutally suppressed. A campaign of terror was launched across the island. As many as 20,000 people were killed over the next few months, and tens of thousands more arrested and jailed. Many of Taiwan's most prominent intellectuals and members of the social elite were victims. The whole period is known in Taiwan as *Ererba*, the numerals for February 28.

Chen Yi, 1883–1950

Few Chinese are more reviled in Taiwan than Chen Yi, the governor-general of Taiwan immediately after the retrocession. He was held responsible both for the widespread carpet-bagging after the retrocession and for the brutal suppression of *Ererba*. He was soon transferred back to the Mainland, as governor of Zhejiang province. There his career took an astonishing turn. He was arrested in January 1949, on suspicion of being a Communist agent. He was sent back to Taiwan, jailed there, and soon afterwards executed. His atonement for the massacres in Taiwan had come swiftly, but from an unexpected quarter.

Chen Yi should not be confused with Marshal Chen Yi (1901–72), of the People's Liberation Army (PLA). The two men share a surname (the commonest surname in the world) but the "Yis" are written with different characters.

Zhongguo ren min zheng zhi xie shang hui yi (Chinese Political Consultative Assembly), *Chen Yi sheng ping ji bei hai nei mu* (The Life of Chen Yi and his Demise). Beijing: Zhengxie chubanshe, 1950.

The crushing of protest created an enormous shock in Taiwan, a bitter disappointment and a feeling of betrayal, an unbridgeable gap between Taiwanese and Mainlanders. These feelings are captured in Hou Hsiao-hsien's film *City of Sorrows*. *Ererba* is seen now as the start of the Taiwan independence movement, and parallels have been drawn between *Ererba* and the Beijing Massacre of 1989 (in Chinese *Liusi* [June 4]).

The democratic deficit

The takeover of Taiwan was a shambles, a failure of both planning and implementation. Another failure was a less obvious one, a missed opportunity rather than a botched action: the GMD's failure to make any moves in the aftermath of victory toward democracy, the cause in whose name the Second World War had been fought. After the First World War China had been excluded at Versailles from the right to national self-determination. Now China was excluded from the democratic bonus of war by her own leaders' determination to remain an autocracy.

There were loud calls for change and for greater freedom from liberal elements in Chinese society, many of them intellectuals but also soldiers and businessmen, who felt that the war must bring some benefit to their nation. The GMD, far from making common cause with these people, was ruthless in suppressing opposition. In July 1946 a leading liberal, Li Gongpu, was assassinated in Kunming, and, shortly afterward, the renowned poet Wen Yiduo, who had just organized Li's funeral, was gunned down. These murders were seen as the death of the hope for democracy – and they pushed liberals toward the CCP.

The ruined economy

The modern sectors of the Chinese economy emerged from the war in ruins. With the exception of Taiwan, where the modern economy suffered only slight damage, China's developed regions were critically damaged, either directly by warfare or by the decline of the economy under Japanese rule. These regions did not recover in the period immediately after the war, but went the other way, toward complete collapse. In the once occupied areas Japanese capital, management, and markets all disappeared simultaneously. In Manchuria most employment in industry and mining disappeared; factories closed, migrant laborers had to return to their homes in Shandong and Hebei; the emigrant communities there that depended on the remittances of the laborers were devastated. To make the damage to Manchuria permanent, the Soviets looted much of the machinery from the closed factories and mines; the one industrial

The looting of Manchuria

The Soviet army entered Manchuria in the closing week of the war, after much pressure from the Allies to open an eastern front. The Soviets claimed all Manchuria's industrial machinery, railway engines, and rolling stock as the spoils of war. They started shipping these materials to the Soviet Union, using Japanese prisoners of war for the work of dismantling the machinery for shipment. The Soviet aim was to use the undamaged industrial plant of Manchuria to replace all that had been destroyed in the western parts of the Soviet Union during the European War. The Chinese authorities were given no say in this process, and the Soviets ignored the protests of the GMD and CCP, both of whom felt that Chinese assets were being looted.

The looting brought little real benefit to the Soviet Union. The process of removing the industrial plant was inefficient; equipment was loaded onto trains and sent off without clear plans of where individual shipments were going and how they would be used. A further problem was the operating manuals; these were in Japanese, a language few people in the Soviet industrial system knew. Most of the looted equipment was useless.

Dieter Heinzig, *The Soviet Union and Communist China.* New York: M. E. Sharpe, 2004.

region of China that had not been damaged by bombing was now made unusable by the "ally," the Soviet Union.[6]

Industrial plants in Shanghai had suffered considerable damage at the start of the war; part of that damage was made up during the war. What really affected the economy there, and in other industrial cities, was the collapse of world trade during the war, a collapse that was not reversed when peace arrived. In the immediate aftermath of the war there were no export markets for Chinese goods; foreign trade was minimal, given the limited purchasing power in the shattered economies of Europe and Japan. China did not share in the economic aid that came to Europe from the Marshall Plan; what they got instead was George Marshall himself, President Truman's personal representative to broker peace.

Inflation

The inflation that had started during the war spiraled out of control after the end of the war into hyperinflation. Hyperinflation on its own would have been enough to damage any modern economy severely, but it was too much for a battered one. There was a complete loss of confidence

[6] The spiky relationship between the Soviet Union and China after 1949 was partially influenced by Chinese resentment over Soviet postwar behavior.

in the modern, monetary economy. Only the US dollar inspired confidence, and the progress of the hyperinflation was measured in the value of the Chinese currency against the dollar. In early 1948 a hotel room in Shanghai cost 7 million *fabi*, or $3.50. By the middle of the summer the Chinese currency had been devalued by a further 300 percent. Paper money had become virtually useless.

Inflation created a state of chronic anxiety, sometimes flaring into panic, amongst civilians, especially in the last months of the Civil War, when the currency was in free fall, the value of money dropping by the hour. Salaried employees had to take suitcases to work in order to receive the vast quantities of paper notes that made up their salary. They then had to run to the stores to buy what food they could before their money depreciated even further. This was a lucrative time for speculators, and for anyone with access to US dollars – including many senior people in the GMD.

The inflation destroyed the last shreds of morale of the urban population. It brought out the worst in profiteers, while keeping ordinary people in a miasma of fear – fear that they might not be able to eat. There were beneficiaries of the hyperinflation: peasants in the areas surrounding major towns were able to feed themselves without money, and they could barter their produce in the cities for items that they needed. For once, they had a competitive advantage over the normally superior townspeople.

By August 1948 the situation had deteriorated so far that the government introduced a new, gold-based currency, the Gold *Yuan.* There was a compulsory exchange of the old *fabi* for the new currency, at a rate of 3 million to one. This process produced pandemonium, and wild scenes at banks – one captured by Henri Cartier-Bresson. It was no solution. The Gold *Yuan* held for less than three months, then started to depreciate itself.

A fractured society

Chinese society had been divided and lacerated by the eight years of war. Families and communities had been separated, physically, politically, and emotionally, by their wartime experiences. They found it difficult to come together again after the war; there were scores to be settled. The harm caused by some betrayals and injuries could be assuaged, but others could not. Old relationships did not survive the war-induced strains. The social scars of war were deep and painful. The old social cohesion and harmony, the ideal of Confucian society, could not be restored.

航7.7 香港版

航7.8 香港版

三十七年間幣值變動，需要高額航空郵票，乃將各版航空原票，交由上海大業印刷公司，以長型楷體字及阿拉伯數字澆製凸版，加蓋紅或黑色「改作×萬圓」字樣，數字外框嵌有菱形花紋。因原票格式不同，加蓋形式分爲二種：

①北平三版及香港版航空原票——改作字樣及數字均橫列於票面中央，另以空心十字花紋蓋沒左右二下角原刊之數值。

②上海版航空原票——改作字樣直行緊靠右邊，數字蓋在左下角原刊數值之上。

慈 3　資助防癆附捐郵票

發行日期：民國37年7月5日
全張枚數：50 (10×5)
用　紙：道林紙
承 印 者：上海大業印刷公司
圖　幅：23×30
印　法：膠版
齒　度：慈3.1—3.3　14
　　慈3.4—3.6　無齒
背　膠：無膠

有　齒

慈3.1　青蓮、紅

1,000,000

慈3.2　淡茶、紅　　慈3.3　藍灰、紅

500,000　　500,000

無　齒

慈3.4　青蓮、紅

500,000

慈3.5　淡茶、紅　　慈3.6　藍灰、紅

500,000　　500,000

爲響應政府積極倡導防癆運動起見，於三十七年夏，發行資助防癆附捐郵票，每枚除郵票使用面值外，另加收捐款二千元，附捐所得，彙繳政府充作防癆基金。票面圖案爲萬里長城，寓有備無患之意，上端左角套印紅色防癆標誌，中央右邊刊郵票使用面值及「加貳仟圓」字樣，左邊刊阿拉伯數字，下端刊「資助防癆」四字。

常臺 7　國父像重慶大東版「限臺灣貼用」改值郵票

發行日期：常臺7.1　民國37年11月
　　常臺7.2　民國38年2月
　　常臺7.3—7.4　民國37年7月
加蓋全張枚數：常臺7.1及7.3—7.4　100 (10×10)
　　常臺7.2　200 (20×10)

5.1 **Overprinted stamp, 1948, showing inflation**
Source: Zhonghua youpiao mu lu (Taipei: Jiaotong bu, 1996), p. 119.

5.2 **a. Queue to withdraw money, Shanghai**
Source: Henri Cartier-Bresson, *China in Transition* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1956), p. 56.

5.2 **b. Same queue, five minutes later**
Source: Henri Cartier-Bresson, *China in Transition* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1956), p. 57.

This was a time when social cohesion was most in need. There were vast numbers of destitute people. The widows, orphans, and elderly parents of soldiers killed during the war, the dependents of men seized as forced labor by the Japanese, the people whose property had been destroyed by bombing – these people were all destitute. They received no state compensation or relief; there were no pensions for survivors. The wounded and the injured received almost no care, as there were few state structures in operation to help them. The old universal insurance system, the family and the lineage, was no longer able to cope with the upsurge in need; the needs went beyond the capacity of the old social structures.

The war had disrupted China's ritual world, and brought disturbance to the basic element of social ritual, the clan or lineage. The previous patterns of respect and deference through which lineages functioned were eroded by the experiences of war. Some of the core functions of lineages had been abandoned. Lineages had not been able to keep up the recording of deaths and births: members had died and been buried away from home. These were symbolic offences against the tradition, as were the disturbances to inheritance patterns caused by the deaths of so many young men – a loss that threatened the future care of the ancestors. The influence of the war hung over Chinese society like a malevolent black cloud. Recovery seemed almost impossible; the last thing China needed was further warfare. In 1946 it started.

The course of the Civil War

The Chinese Civil War followed a classic pattern of dynastic change. A new power emerged in the North and started to move against the South. This was a war between two regions: – the tough, poor northerners, wheat-eating, speaking dialects of Mandarin, versus the richer southerners, rice-eating, speaking a variety of distinct dialects. The South, the areas of China from the Yangzi Valley south, was the heartland of the GMD; it was pitted against the North, increasingly swinging to the CCP.

During the Resistance War the CCP armies had grown dramatically. At the start of the war they had only about 60,000 troops, confined to a small corner of northwest China, the Yan'an region of Shaanxi. Eight years later the army, now known as the People's Liberation Army, numbered some 860,000. The CCP controlled over 20 percent of China's land mass, and perhaps a third of the population, mainly in the rural areas of north China. The GMD armies, at about 4.5 million, dwarfed the PLA, but many of them were still in southern and western China.[7]

[7] An irony of the North/South divide was that many of the leaders of the CCP, including Mao Zedong, were southerners.

Chiang Kai-shek was determined to defeat the CCP on the battlefield. He had returned to his prewar obsession with Communism, and he now made its defeat a high priority, at a time when the reconstruction of the country would have won him much greater support from Chinese and from his foreign allies. In late 1945 and early 1946 it became apparent that the GMD's anti-CCP line had alienated people who would normally support the GMD: business people, intellectuals, and former military allies. The anti-CCP line also determined the GMD's international alliances. Chiang did not make a new alliance with the Soviet Union, even though the Soviets withdrew most of their troops from Manchuria in early 1946. Chiang's choice put China firmly into the United States' emerging Cold War ambit. But even the Americans did not support the Chinese government starting a civil war with the CCP. General Marshall made strenuous efforts to prevent civil war. He used his huge prestige to try and reconcile the two sides, but his efforts foundered on the intransigence of both sides, and on their shared desire for war. Marshall left China disappointed and quietly disgusted with both sides.

The CCP was as eager as the GMD for war. The ideology of Marxism-Leninism insists that the triumph of socialism is inevitable, and that war is the instrument that brings it about. Within this ideological framework, victory in a civil war would be the victory of the proletariat and the peasantry over the bourgeoisie and the imperialists. The CCP was in full ideological flood, and in the powerful essays of Mao Zedong – persuasive, simple, and direct – there was a clear-cut vision, apparently quite feasible, for the future. He asked for great sacrifices but promised self-respect, equality, and shared progress.

Mao's extraordinary ability to appeal to the Chinese people through his own writings and through his reference to the classic of traditional popular culture, *The Romance of the Three Kingdoms,* had a role to play in the CCP's fight for power, but much of the battle for the hearts and minds of the Chinese people was left until *after* the Communist armies had conquered a particular place. Before that, there was bitter fighting.

CCP supporters outside areas under Communist control had to stay underground until then. The GMD had reverted to treating Communists (and people suspected of being "Red") as vermin who had to be eradicated rather than risk them spreading the contagion of Communism to others. The CCP was more sophisticated in the treatment of people on the other side, Japanese or GMD. In the early stages of the Civil War they were magnanimous to captives, many of them soldiers, and encouraged them to come over to the true path, to "make themselves new again" (*zixin*). In gratitude alone, from people who expected to be executed, this policy brought the Communists legions of new supporters. Only later on would the converts discover that theirs was only a temporary reprieve, that their

pasts would come back to haunt them during the political campaigns of the 1950s and 1960s.

The first stage: Manchuria

The Civil War started in Manchuria. The GMD did not appreciate at once how important Manchuria would be, or how difficult it would be to fight there. The GMD's leaders were southerners; cold, harsh Manchuria was an alien world. The GMD had almost no experience in Manchuria; until 1931 it had been the independent kingdom of the Zhang father and son, Zhang Zuolin and Zhang Xueliang. The GMD still had Zhang Xueliang under house arrest for his actions in 1936, and they did not release him now, to help them build connections in Manchuria.

As the preparations for war got under way in 1946 the differences between the administrative styles of the two sides evolved. On the GMD side there was a concentration of civil and military authority in the hands of one man, Chiang Kai-shek. On the CCP side there was a form of role-sharing. Mao Zedong, now clearly the overall leader, focused on long-term planning, on ideological vision, and on inspirational leadership. He lived a remote, mysterious life, working at night and sleeping during the day. He left the daily conduct of military affairs to Generals Lin Biao, Nie Rongzhen, Zhu De, and Liu Bocheng; civil administration and diplomatic negotiations were entrusted to Liu Shaoqi and Zhou Enlai. At lower levels the CCP recruited phalanxes of peasants, who operated in the countryside, supporting the CCP for their promises of land reform. The dislike of the GMD in many parts of China also made it easy for the CCP to recruit networks of spies and sympathizers, many deep within GMD ranks.

The CCP had made some immediate gains in Manchuria after the Japanese surrender thanks to the Soviets, who transferred Japanese arms and ammunitions to the CCP armies. These transfers included thousands of trucks and armored cars, essential for moving the vast distances to be covered in Manchuria, and the first aeroplanes the PLA had ever owned. The new equipment did not help; in this first stage of the Civil War they lost badly. In the late spring of 1946 GMD forces kicked the CCP out of the cities of Manchuria, places they had occupied as the Soviet forces withdrew. In the autumn there were further defeats for the CCP, and their armies were driven back deep into the countryside. It looked as if the GMD was winning the war. In fact, the GMD held only the cities, and the lines of communication between them. The Manchurian people had little sympathy for either side. They had suffered four successive occupations in less than a year – Japanese, Soviet, CCP, and finally GMD.

Things got worse for the CCP in early 1947, when Yan'an was captured. This loss was explained away by the CCP at the time as a deliberate

stratagem, to lure the enemy in deep on the principles of Sunzi, the ancient military philosopher, but actually it was a strategic fiasco, and for a while the CCP leadership was forced to operate on the move. The leaders escaped capture only by the skin of their teeth, and then because the secretary of the GMD general attacking Yan'an, Hu Zongnan, was a Communist agent and warned the CCP that the attack was coming.[8]

The GMD was unable to capitalize on its advantage. Its position was less strong than it seemed. It was overstretched in Manchuria, and it had too large a proportion of its total military strength there. The attack on Yan'an achieved very little; it turned out to be more a propaganda exercise than a strategic necessity. There were no effective moves against the large CCP base areas in Shandong and in north-central China, both to be key CCP strongholds in the latter stages of the Civil War. Quite the contrary, the GMD stimulated pro-Communist sentiment when the Yellow River was returned to its old course in early 1947 and the hundreds of thousands of peasants who had settled in the old bed after the 1938 flood were made homeless again.

The closure of the breach in the dyke ("uniting the dragon" [*helong*]) was largely financed and carried out by the United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Agency. It was a huge operation, taking well over a year, and employed almost 50,000 workers. For the GMD the closure was meant to be a symbol of their reassertion of control over China, by their renewed control of the Yellow River. To modernize the traditional symbolism, the formal ceremony to celebrate the closure was only held on May 4th, several weeks after the gap was actually filled in. It was a hollow achievement. For the last period of the work the site was shelled from CCP forces north of the river, and soon after the breach was closed the whole region, north and south of the river, fell under CCP control.

The GMD was also weaker than it seemed on the international front. The alliance with the United States was not as useful as it had been; after the failure of the Marshall mission the Americans were unwilling to get involved in what seemed like a quagmire. Washington was irritated with Chiang Kai-shek for insisting on going his own way. In 1947–8 the United States distanced itself from China and the GMD, seeing the country as a nightmare of contradictions and perversity. The reluctance to support him was later interpreted, during the McCarthy era, as the work of covert Communists and "comsymps" (Communist sympathizers) in

[8] There are theories that Hu himself was a Communist mole, a "sleeper." The theories are based on his spectacular incompetence in the Civil War, interpreted as a plot to let the PLA win: Jun Chang and Jon Halliday, *Mao: The Unknown Story*, pp. 312–18. But Hu's long closeness to Chiang Kai-shek makes the interpretation that he was simply incompetent the most likely answer.

the US State Department, and led to a witch-hunt against American experts on China.

Not only was the United States reluctant to support Chiang in the civil war; it also had image problems in China. In December 1946 there were reports that US soldiers had committed rape in Peking. These reports fueled an anti-American backlash that came back on the GMD, which was accused of abetting rapists. The swing in urban sentiment was a sign of worse to come for the GMD.

In the spring of 1947 the CCP restarted its campaign in Manchuria, with a new tactic – using the countryside to surround the cities. The Manchurian cities are far distant from each other, connected together by thin ribbons of railway lines, which were very vulnerable. The PLA was able to isolate cities and their garrisons from each other by blowing up the railway tracks. The GMD, meanwhile, believing that it had won in Manchuria, had turned its attention to the CCP bases in Shandong, without much success, since they were up against the seasoned troops of Han Fuju, who had gone over to the Japanese when Han was executed in 1938, and were now fighting for the CCP.

The tide was turning against the GMD. In the autumn of 1947 the swing accelerated. As the harsh winter set in the CCP launched a major campaign in Manchuria, its hardened troops fighting in bitter temperatures against troops just brought in from the south. Over the winter, when some of the GMD leaders must have thought of the experiences of the Napoleonic and Nazi armies in Russia, the CCP made continuous advances, and much of Manchuria passed into CCP control. By the end of the winter the surviving GMD forces were marooned in a few cities, with the only access to or exit from them, for senior officers, in small planes. The GMD forces had been outmaneuvered by the topography, the climate, and the ability of the CCP commanders, chief of whom was Lin Biao.

The war in Manchuria was watched from afar by the rest of China. The gradual increase in the power of the CCP set off seismic shifts in Chinese society, which were to bring the CCP key new recruits. Students were drawn to the new ideology of Communism, to the ideas of purity and self-sacrifice involved in a revolution set against the corruption and self-interest of the GMD. The educated young found the Communist message, peddled in secret and with the excitement that secrecy entails, appealing. This appeal is vividly captured in Jun Chang's *Wild Swans*, in her account of how her parents became Communists. Urban residents too were drawn to a party that promised good government and an end to corruption – the GMD's corruption. The CCP base began to expand beyond the peasants and the military.

Lin Biao, 1908–71

Lin Biao is the mystery man of Communist Chinese history, a military genius but a tortured soul. As a very young man (less than twenty years old) he won distinction as a commander on the Northern Expedition. He then fell out of sight for many years, his disappearance attributed to illness, physical or mental. He reemerged in the 1940s, and came to command Communist forces in the Civil War; he is credited with the PLA's military victories in the war. After the war he again withdrew from public sight, until the Cultural Revolution. He rose high as Mao Zedong's "close comrade in arms and chosen successor" in the early part of the Cultural Revolution, and then crashed as one of "the biggest criminals in Chinese history," equated with Confucius. He died in 1971, in a plane crash in Inner Mongolia. The many theories surrounding his mysterious death are discussed in Ismail Kadare's novel *The Concert* (New York: HarperCollins, 1994).

North China

In the summer and autumn of 1948 the CCP went strongly on the offensive, with two simultaneous campaigns, the LiaoShen Campaign to mop up what by now were the GMD remnants in Manchuria, and the Huai-Hai Campaign to divide China between the Yangzi and Yellow Rivers. The HuaiHai Campaign was the largest of the Civil War, a series of full, set-piece battles that a guerrilla army, as the PLA was still seen, should not have been able to fight – but did. The GMD generals were traumatized by the capabilities of the enemy, and astonished at the CCP military might, which seemed to have come from nowhere.

They began to discover where much of the CCP's new strength came from: defectors from their own side, with their arms and equipment. The terrible Manchurian experience ended with defections from the GMD by men who believed they had been abandoned by their own commanders, and joined the fight against the GMD. These were the first of what was soon an avalanche of defections, a huge boost in self-confidence for the CCP, both ideological and military.

The GMD compounded its misery by turning on itself. Just when it should have been most united the GMD gave itself over to intense infighting, and almost lost sight of the war. Most of the senior generals turned against Chiang Kai-shek, blaming him for the loss of Manchuria. He was pushed out of office in January 1949, and Li Zongren took over as acting president. This was a pyrrhic victory. Li was allowed no real power, since those generals still close to Chiang would not obey his orders. The disarray in the top echelons of the GMD got worse in early 1949. Each

The Battle of Xuzhou

Hsuchou [Xuzhou] was abandoned on December 2, 1948, but the retreating government troops were surrounded anew in the vicinity of Yung-ch'eng [Yongcheng], south west of Hsuchou. The Communists mobilised several hundred thousand local farmers, who in a single night dug several ditches around the positions held by the government troops. The latter managed to hold these positions on the open ground, in heavy snow and hail, for several weeks. Their fighting spirit finally collapsed when the Communists set up loudspeakers and called on them to surrender. Thousands laid down their arms and offered to surrender peacefully . . .

More than 300,000 of the best-equipped and trained government troops, along with several armored divisions, vanished entirely within a period of a few weeks. It was the worst defeat that the National Army ever experienced.

Tong Te-kong (Tang Degang) and Li Tsung-jen (Li Zongren), *The Memoirs of Li Tsung-jen* (Boulder, CO: Westview, 1979), p. 478.

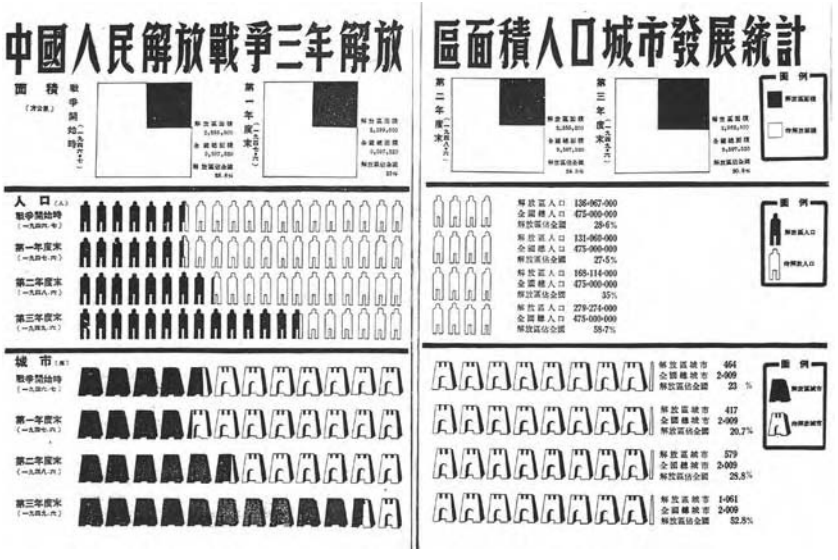
man now had to make his own decision about what to do. Some were for sticking with Chiang, and were preparing to leave the Mainland and follow him to Taiwan. Others were prepared to fight on, confident that they could still defeat the CCP forces. Many had given up hope and were going over to the Communists. In January 1949 Fu Zuoyi, the senior GMD commander in the Beijing region, handed over the city without fighting, after discovering that his own daughter was a CCP agent and had been reporting his every action to the CCP. The rest of north China fell soon afterwards.

One possible end to the Civil War, which would have changed the face of China, was to demarcate the country along the Yangzi, with the GMD holding onto the South and the CCP setting up a new government in the North, in much the same way that other countries were being divided at the time – Germany and Korea. This would have reified the regionalized nature of the Chinese combatants, and replicated a situation seen in China 1,000 years before, when the country was divided between the southern Song and the Jin in the North. The idea was a non-starter. One of the few things that both the GMD and the CCP have always agreed on, and still do, is that China is indivisible.

Collapse

四面楚歌

Simian chuge.
"The songs of Chu all around."
Source: *Shiji*



5.3 **a. Growth in Communist power, 1947–9**
Source: Zhongguo renmin jiefang zhanzheng sannian zhanji (Beijing, 1949), no pagination.

5.3 **b. GMD and CCP armies compared, 1947–9**
Source: Zhongguo renmin jiefang zhanzheng sannian zhanji (Beijing, 1949), no pagination.

The fall of Nanjing

April 23rd, 1949.

The defending troops north of the river and of the city were withdrawn towards the south and southwest of the city during the night. All the police had gone too; at least they had ceased to function. Chaos reigned in the first half of the morning. Looting broke out in several busy centers of the city. There were some casualties. In the afternoon the street was full of people carrying bundles and odds and ends; these were their whole worldly possessions. They stopped on the pavement and sat and talked and laughed as if nothing unusual had happened or was happening. These people were called 'refugees' but they had no look of fear or anxiety. They looked totally different from the refugees during the war with Japan. I remarked on this strange contrast. My companion replied: "They have waited for so long and now it has come. What is there for them to fear?"

"Nanjing: an eye-witness," in *Asian Horizon*, 2 (Summer 1949), p. 20.

The People's Liberation Army captures Nanjing

Over Chungshan swept a storm, headlong
Our mighty army, a million strong, has crossed the great river
The city, a tiger crouching, a dragon curling, outshines its ancient glories;
In heroic triumph heaven and earth have been overturned.
With power and to spare we must pursue the tottering foe
And not ape Hsiang Yu [Xiangyu] the conqueror seeking idle fame
Were nature sentient, she would pass from youth to age,
But man's world is mutable, seas become mulberry fields.

Mao Zedong shice (Mao Zedong's poems, English edition) (Beijing: Shangwu, 1976), p. 50.

In the spring of 1949 the CCP had victory in its sights, and the "advance on all fronts" was announced. The most dramatic of its attacks was the crossing of the Yangzi and the fall of Nanjing at the end of April. The triumph was commemorated in verse by Mao Zedong.

The GMD had once again lost its capital – just over ten years since it had fallen to the Japanese. Shanghai fell on May 25th. The GMD was now on the run. Once again central China was the scene of huge refugee movements, as the GMD armies poured south in disarray, and civilians who could not see their future with the Communists fled south or across the sea to Taiwan. At first the exodus was quite calm. In early 1949 there seemed to be plenty of time to make prudent plans, but the fall of Nanjing,

The *Amethyst*

In April 1949 the frigate HMS *Amethyst* sailed up the Yangzi from Shanghai to Nanjing, along the front line between GMD and PLA forces. The vessel was shelled, ran aground, and was stranded until July, by which time PLA forces had crossed the Yangzi. In the sweltering heat of the Yangzi summer the crew repaired the ship, and made a daring nighttime run for the coast. The escape of the *Amethyst* was heralded as a victory for British courage. The crew members were given heroes' receptions in their hometowns. As a schoolchild I stood in the rain on Hills Road, Cambridge, waving a small Union Jack, as an *Amethyst* stoker was drawn past on a gun carriage, on his way from the station to the Guildhall. In the longer view the *Amethyst* incident was a display of hubris, the last gasp of the gunboat diplomacy that had dominated the Yangzi and the China coast for a century.

Malcolm Murfitt, *Hostage on the Yangtse*. Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, 1991.

and then Shanghai, brought on a panic-stricken flight. The GMD armies, taking many dependents with them, flowed south toward Guangdong and Guangxi in an endless tide, driven as much by a sense of doom as by the PLA forces. By late summer 1949 the end was near. GMD forces in the north were evacuated by sea to Taiwan, while the armies in the South put up very little resistance. In the last months of the war the GMD lost millions of its troops, either killed or because they surrendered. By the end of the year almost all the GMD armies had disintegrated, their men either dead, captured, or on Taiwan having fled there. The great might of the GMD armies had disintegrated with little serious fighting.

The foreign powers looked on at the debacle in bemusement. None gave much aid to the GMD, or to the CCP – aid to the CCP from the Soviet Union was noticeable by its virtual absence. Foreign governments sat and waited to see what would happen, some of them in real fear of the prospect of a communist China.

The GMD's civilian supporters were left to fend for themselves in the chaos of the retreat. Some decided to leave, with or without money, though there were lurid rumors that many already had money abroad, or were able to take money with them. Non-partisan people vacillated, wondering whether to go or to stay. Some were persuaded by skilled CCP negotiators to stay on in China and serve the new regime. The CCP welcomed anyone who was willing to come over to them – with the promise that their pasts would not matter, that the CCP would be inclusive, radical but fair.

Flying to Taiwan: Chen Lifu

[In December Chen left from Chengdu with Yan Xishan.] The plane took off at night and flew over the mainland. By the time it reached the border of Szechwan [Sichuan] and Hupei [Hubei], a cold current caused the wings to freeze with heavy ice, and the plane dropped seven hundred feet. We had to find a place to land. When I saw a brightly lit city on the ground, I thought it was Hankow [Hankou, already in CCP hands] and took out a pistol from my briefcase, ready to commit suicide. Only after the pilot's announcement did I realize that we had returned to Chengdu. So I was a victim of a false alarm.

I later learned that the reason the plane was so heavy was that it carried tons of gold bars, all part of Yen's [Yan's] luggage. The next day, before we took off, the pilot told me that in order to avoid the same incident, the plane must be lightened. I spoke with Yen. He insisted that all the gold bars be placed on board, but he was willing to leave behind a few of his bodyguards. We arrived in Taiwan safe and sound. I later learned that when Yen left Shansi [Shanxi] Province, he left behind many followers who depended on Yen for their livelihood. For Yen those gold bars were a matter of necessity. But our lives were almost lost because of his gold. What an irony!

Ch'en Li-fu (Chen Lifu), *The Storm Clouds over China* (Stanford, CA: Hoover Institution, 1994), p. 213.

The Communists had already shown great skill in winning over large sections of the rural population. In the areas that they had occupied during and after the Resistance War they implemented a moderate form of land reform that gave land to the tillers but did not involve radical social revolution. Class warfare started after the CCP was assured of victory. It involved the "turning over" (*fanshen*) of rural society and the killing of large numbers of landlords.

In China's cities people waited in a state of wariness and chronic exhaustion, after twelve years of warfare, to see what the future would hold for them. Most stayed put, believing that nothing could be worse than what had come before; others fled. The whole country seemed captive to the capriciousness of fate. In the last few weeks before the Mainland was liberated (or fell, as GMD supporters said) individuals and families lost control over their lives. The vagaries of their fate constitute a central theme of Amy Tan's *The Joy Luck Club*.

Those who left China went in different directions. The GMD's core supporters moved to Taiwan. Those within the GMD who were at odds with Chiang Kai-shek went to the United States. Members of the Shanghai commercial elite moved to Hong Kong, and, within a few years, were making major contributions to the Hong Kong economic miracle, in the

5.4 **PLA troops enter Shanghai, 1949**
Source: Sam Tata, *Shanghai, the End of an Era* (Toronto: Deneau, 1990), frontispiece.

1950s and 1960s. This role has continued to the present day; Dong Jianhua (C. H. Tung), the former chief executive of Hong Kong, is a member of one such family.

The Civil War was effectively over on October 1, 1949, when Mao Zedong proclaimed the establishment of the People's Republic of China, from the Gate of Heavenly Peace (Tiananmen) in the center of Peking.

Staying or leaving

Many prominent Chinese had the chance to leave China in 1949, to go into exile in Taiwan, Hong Kong, or the United States. Some chose not to go, either because of their own belief in the coming revolution, or because skillful Communist intermediaries, using "united front" tactics, persuaded them to stay. The most prestigious was Song Qingling. Other famous people who stayed were the painters Xu Beihong and Qi Baishi, the sociologist Fei Xiaotong, the philosopher Feng Yulan, the opera singer Mei Lanfang, the archeologist Xia Nai, the capitalist Rong Yiren, the novelists Lao She and Qian Zhongshu, the historians Jian Bocan and Qi Sihe, and the GMD generals Cai Tingkai, Huang Shaoxiong, Li Jishen, and Fu Zuoyi. All had comfortable positions waiting for them outside China. All of them were given, in the short run, full credit for their patriotism. Those who lived until the Cultural Revolution came to regret their decision to stay, since all became its victims.

Tiananmen

The great red outer gate of the Forbidden City, the Gate of Heavenly Peace, has come to be a symbol of the new China. Its image appears on Chinese currency and coins. Chinese visitors to Beijing always have their picture taken standing in front of Tiananmen. Mao Zedong looks down benevolently from the top of the gate, seeing, in the distance, his splendid mausoleum. A favorite children's song is "I love Tiananmen in Beijing" (*wo ai Beijing Tiananmen*).

The name has a different symbolism in the West. The common name for what the Chinese call *Liusi* (June 4th) is the Tiananmen Massacre, after the square where student demonstrators protested for several weeks in the spring of 1989. In fact, most of those killed in the massacre did not die in the square but in the roads leading toward it.

There was heavy symbolism in every aspect of the ceremony. Its location proclaimed that the capital had moved back from the South to the North, from the capital of the Republic to the capital of dynastic China. Mao stood on the balcony of the front gate to the imperial palace. On the gate the red flag of socialism now reigned. It was an appropriate color (unlike the blue and white flag of the Republic), the color of good fortune and happiness in the Chinese tradition. To add insult to injury to the GMD, the ceremony was held nine days before the Republic's national day, October 10th.

Though the war was officially over, the battles between the CCP and the GMD continued long after 1949. The fighting did not end neatly at

the end of 1949. Some GMD units took to the hills inside China and continued to fight the PLA until at least 1953. The GMD soldiers who were left behind on the Mainland were labeled by the CCP as "bandits," men who were to be "exterminated" (*xiaomie*), by which was meant a number of possible fates: death; a sentence to reform camp; or (the best possibility) forced resettlement in remote border regions, such as Xinjiang in the northwest or the Great North Waste (Beidahuang) in the northeast. In the southernmost province of Guangxi, 400,000 "bandits" were eventually eradicated.

Civil war is the most painful and horrible of all wars. It pits people against their fellow citizens, it turns family members against each other. The enemy is not a strange, alien force, but is known – it is one's own people. The Chinese Civil War was an intensely painful process, so much so that, to this day, it has been very little studied or discussed.

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Films

The Last Emperor Bernardo Bertolucci, 1987
This lavish film starts with the arrest of the emperor Pu Yi on his return to China from the Soviet Union.

City of Sorrows (*Beijing chengshi*) Hou Hsiao-hsien, 1989
This masterpiece portrays the pre-1945 hopes of Taiwanese anti-Japanese fighters, and their terrible disappointment with the arrival of GMD forces.

To Live (*Huozhe*) Zhang Yimou, 1994
The opening sections of this profoundly sad film deal with the chaos of the Civil War.

6 More than survival – the Republic on Taiwan: 1949 to the present

In 1945 Taiwan was reintegrated into China as a province, after fifty years under Japanese colonial rule. Four years later it became the only home of the Chinese Republic, as the Communists swept to power on the Mainland and established the People's Republic of China. Taiwan had an existing tradition as an island of exile. At the end of the Ming dynasty one of the last loyalists, Zheng Chenggong (Cheng Ch'eng-kung), fled to the island and set up the first Chinese administration there, in Tainan.[1]

After 1949 the People's Republic of China isolated itself from its Asian neighbors and turned toward its new ally, the Soviet Union. The sudden expansion of Communist power in Asia created something close to panic in the West. The United States moved to resist further "Red" expansion, and was soon involved in the Korean War and in protecting Taiwan from invasion from the Mainland. With this protection, the GMD was able to maintain the fiction that the Republic represented all of China, and that its exile was temporary. The GMD's pledge to reconquer the Mainland seemed less far-fetched in the late 1950s and 1960s, when the Mainland was convulsed by the Great Leap Forward and the Cultural Revolution, and seemed on a path to self-destruction. Taiwan's economy flourished, though it remained under tight authoritarian control.

From the 1980s onward the Mainland's post-Mao reform agenda has called for opening up to the outside and modernizing its economy, while Taiwan has evolved from a repressive, authoritarian state into an open, democratic society. The advent of democracy has brought the supporters of Taiwan independence to power, while Mainland China has pursued a hard irredentist line that demands that Taiwan follow Hong Kong's example and return to the embrace of the motherland.

Chiang Kai-shek left the Mainland ahead of most of the GMD. In the last year of the Civil War he had lost the confidence of the GMD, and

[1] Where Mainland and Taiwan romanizations differ, I use the Mainland practice first, with the Taiwan romanization following in brackets. The exception is for names with established romanizations – Chiang Ching-kuo, Lee Teng-hui, Ch'en Shui-pien – where using Mainland romanization could be confusing.

Zheng Chenggong

Zheng Chenggong (Cheng Ch'eng-kung) is known as "the Father of Taiwan." He was the first person to arrive in Taiwan from the Mainland, in 1661, fleeing from the conquering Manchus. He ousted the Dutch from their foothold on the island, near Tainan, and set up his own government there. Very little is known about his actual life, and this lack of knowledge allows different political constituencies to put quite different constructions on him. He has been seen in a variety of guises, always heroic. For native Taiwanese he is the symbol of independence, the man whose actions marked the start of their autonomous history. For the GMD, after their flight from the Mainland, he was the symbol of nationalism and irredentism, the man who fled from a brutal conqueror to keep faith with a truly Chinese regime – the Manchu Qing dynasty was equated with the CCP and its Soviet connections. For Beijing today his name holds the promise of reunification of Taiwan with the motherland. During the Japanese colonial period he was even claimed as a Japanese hero, because his mother was Japanese.

Guo Moruo, *Zheng Chenggong*. Shanghai: Shanghai wenyi chubanshe, 1978.

had been replaced as its president. He went into exile in Taiwan well before the Communist takeover of the Mainland was completed. As the GMD armies disintegrated in the face of the PLA onslaught, Chiang was joined in Taiwan by most of the GMD government members and by the rump of its armies. Some senior members of the GMD stayed on the Mainland and were reorganized by the new government there into the Revolutionary GMD, one of the toothless parties set up by the CCP to give a semblance of democracy, but the majority of the GMD's senior associates left the Mainland for ever.

勝者王侯敗者寇。

Shengzhe wanghou baizhe kou.
"The winners become king and marquis, and the losers become bandits."
Source: traditional

A refugee world

The advent of the CCP to power on the Mainland produced an earthquake in Chinese society. One part of the upheaval was the massive exodus of people from the Mainland, which started in early 1949 and


N
0 25 50 75 km
0 10 20 30 40 50 miles
East China Sea
Yangmingshan National Park
Taipei
Hsinchu
Miaoli
Hsuehshan 3883m
Tienhsiang
Changhua
Hualien
TAIWAN
Penghu Islands
Makung
Alishan
Yushan National Park
Yushan (Jade Mountain) 3997m
Shihtiping
Anping
Tainan
Maolin
Taitung
Green Island
Kaohsiung
Tungkang
Liuchiu Island
Fengkang
Lanyu
South China Sea
Oluanpi

3 Taiwan

The Hakka

The Hakka are a culturally distinct group of Chinese who live throughout south China and in many overseas communities. They make up 15 percent of the population in Taiwan. They have a reputation for being fearless, entrepreneurial, and independent. Hakka women are equal to men; they have never had their feet bound. Hakka communities are strong, highly organized, and cohesive. The Hakka also have a reputation for political boldness. The roster of Hakka amongst the leaders of modern China is impressive: Hong Xiuchuan, the leader of the Taipings; Sun Yat-sen, the father of the Republic; Deng Xiaoping, the Communist leader; Ye Jianying, marshal of the People's Liberation Army; Li Guanyao (Lee Kuan-yu), the leader of Singapore for many years after independence; and Lee Teng-hui and Ch'en Shui-pien, Presidents of Taiwan. Not all of these men have been self-declared Hakka, and none of them has represented Hakka interests over general Chinese interests, but their fame is a source of pride to other Hakka.

reached its peak in the late summer and early autumn. These were people who anticipated that the CCP would make good on its promises of class warfare, and that they would be its victims. Between 2 and 3 million people crossed the Taiwan Straits, by boat or by plane, one of the largest flight migrations since the Russian Revolution. The refugees arrived in a state of shock, most without any possessions. The Mainlanders, known in Taiwan as *waisheng* ("from outside the province"), added 15 percent to Taiwan's population. This population now consisted of a large majority of native Taiwanese, the *bentu* ("of this land") Minnan people whose ancestral roots were in Fujian, and smaller groups: the indigenous peoples, still living up in the hills and on the rugged east coast; the Mainlanders; and the Hakka.

The people who fled to Taiwan were often traumatized. Most had left behind their relatives and friends, and they lost all contact with them; the refugees often had no idea, for three decades, whether their relatives were alive or dead. For senior army officers there was the terrible sense of shame, that they had had to leave many of their men behind, knowing how harshly the people and the regions associated with the GMD would be treated by the incoming Communists – as landlords, as bourgeois, as soldiers of the GMD, as "bandits," the epithet used by the CCP to describe the hundreds of thousands of GMD troops who did not get away, but took to the hills in the southwest.

The refugees were haunted by feelings of betrayal by long-time colleagues and friends who had gone over to the Communists, and by the pain of defeat. There was a gnawing anguish, publicly denied, that their own government had contributed to the defeat. In the United States the

McCarthy inquisition asked who had "lost" China, as if the country had been an American asset to lose. The GMD had to cope with the knowledge that China *had* been theirs to lose. They started their exile on the island exhausted after twelve years of warfare, grieving for the loss of relatives and colleagues – and certain that their own future was perilous.

離鄉背井

Lixiang beijing
"Leaving home and turning one's back on the well."
"Separation for ever."
Source: traditional

Settlement of the refugees was a major problem for the government, though it was made easier by two fortunate coincidences. The first was that they had complete control of Taiwan, and could put their supporters where they wanted, without any concern for the local people, who were often pushed aside. The second was that the departure of the Japanese in 1945 had left a large stock of housing and commercial and military installations throughout the island, now available for reallocation. Many soldiers were settled on the wild east coast of the island, where the Japanese had started to develop new towns at Hualian (Hua-lien) and Yilan (I-lan). Others were put to work in new factories or settled on the land.

Not all those associated with the GMD who left China in 1949 went to Taiwan. Some went to the United States, seeing the debacle of 1949 as a sign that their careers were over. Chen Lifu (Ch'en Li-fu), one of Chiang Kai-shek's closest advisors, and the wartime minister of education, bought a chicken farm in New Jersey and ran it for almost a decade, doing all the work of the farm with his wife and sons. Many academics moved to the United States, where they made major contributions to the growing field of sinology, heavily financed by the US government as a means of understanding the enemy, the PRC.

Many foreign agencies followed the GMD to Taiwan. Western countries, led by the United States, refused to recognize Communist China, and moved their embassies to Taipei (Taibei). A few Western countries maintained some form of recognition of Peking. The British Foreign Office stationed the ambassador to Mongolia in Peking, a diplomatic sleight of hand that allowed Britain to have an ambassador in Peking without accrediting him to the new Communist government, while the PRC kept a chargé d'affaires' office in the old embassy building in London, in Portland Place.[2] Other foreign residents of China also moved to

[2] This was the same austere building in which Sun Yat-sen was held captive in 1896.

Table 6.1 *US aid to Taiwan, 1951–66 (million US dollars)*

1951–54	375.2
1955–58	423.3
1959–62	390.1
1963–66	259.9

Source: Li-min Hsueh, Chen-Kuo Hsu, and Dwight H. Perkins (eds.), *Industrialization and the State* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2002), p. 21.

Taiwan, including many missionaries, who were no longer permitted to work on the Mainland. Most foreign businesses moved their operations to Hong Kong.

The refugees on Taiwan were driven by overwhelming, shared feelings: they hated the Communists, they bitterly regretted the end of the Republic on the Mainland, and they were determined that it would survive. This was a conflict of two regimes, two ideologies, and two cultures – and one that in 1949 and 1950 the GMD and Taiwan might easily lose and be overrun, as eastern Europe had been swallowed up by the Soviet Union.

The survival of the Republic

Fortunately for the survival of the Republic on Taiwan, the move into exile coincided with the intensification of the Cold War, and the designation in the West of China as a new evil, the Red peril. Eastern Europe had fallen under Soviet control, behind the Iron Curtain. Now the Bamboo Curtain had come down in Asia. Taiwan became an integral part of the US crusade against Communism. The United States began to send large amounts of aid to Taiwan, and continued to do so for many years.

Taiwan became a military world, dominated by the still large armies that had escaped from the Mainland. The armed forces took priority over all other government activities. The threat of invasion from the Mainland was very serious. The possibility of an invasion of the Mainland from Taiwan was also real. The new Communist government believed for many years, with considerable justification, since Taiwan often trumpeted its intention to "free the Mainland," that there might be a counterattack from Taiwan, with the help of their US ally. Both sides of the Taiwan Straits were armed to the teeth.

The United States, however, was soon involved in the Korean War (1950–3). The outbreak of the Korean War was crucial for Taiwan's

GMD soldiers in Southeast Asia

In early 1950 thousands of GMD soldiers crossed into the Shan States of northeastern Burma, from Yunnan, the "narco-province" of China. They set up a base in Kengtung, in the rugged mountains close to the Yunnan border, supplied by air. The base was supposed to be a forward position for the GMD recapture of China. By 1953 there were 12,000 troops there, many with their families. To finance themselves, the soldiers turned to opium trading, the major product of the Golden Triangle, the border zone of Laos, Thailand, and Burma. The GMD forces joined with ethnic Chinese already working in the area, including the redoubtable Olive Yang, a graduate of the Guardian Angel Convent School in Lashio (Burma). The trade was sometimes an embarrassment to the GMD in Taiwan, but the base itself was not, so long as an invasion of China was even a remote possibility. The base continued in operation for many years.

Now refined opium (heroin) is trafficked openly across the border. The trade has brought with it the affliction of AIDS. Yunnan is the worst-affected part of China, and most sufferers are drug addicts.

Bertil Lintner, *The Golden Triangle Opium Trade*. Chiang Mai: Asia Pacific Media Services, 2000, p. 7.

survival. The PRC's attention turned northward, toward the land border with Korea. President Truman had refused to give further help to Taiwan in early 1950, but by June, as the Korean conflict was starting, Washington decided that there must be no fighting across the Taiwan Straits – which would detract from the US campaign in Korea. The 7th Fleet was stationed in the Straits and the Straits were sealed off. The start of the Korean War also saw the resumption of major arms sales to Taiwan by the United States, and the strengthening of the air force and navy, the key elements in preventing an attack from the Mainland.

Taiwan did not participate in the Korean War, beyond acting as a base for rest and recreation for US soldiers. The only GMD troops outside Taiwan were remnants in China and in Southeast Asia, with dubious connections to Taiwan.

In the early 1950s Taiwan lived in a state of chronic tension, war always only a few hours away. The war threat was felt most strongly in the outposts of the GMD forces, the islands of Jinmen (Quemoy) and Mazu (Matsu), just off the coast of southern Fujian, close enough to be visible from the China coast. These islands were armed camps. They were under constant bombardment from the Mainland, with shells and leaflets. On Taiwan itself, air raids and seaborne invasion were a constant threat; the beautiful tropical beaches of the north and west coasts were mined and criss-crossed with concrete tank traps (as they still are). There were peaks to the constant threats; the times of greatest pressure coincided

6.1 **The presidential palace, Taipei**
Source: Andrea Luppi, *The Republic of China* (Udine, Italy: Magnus, 1982), pp. 6–7.

with political events – in 1954 the signing of a mutual defence treaty between the United States and the Republic of China, and in 1958 the Great Leap Forward inside China. Taiwan was never secure.

During the 1950s and 1960s Taiwan was presented as a bastion of the Free World, a leading light in the struggle against the Antichrist and the Devil's battalions – Communism. Though some people in the West were full of enthusiasm for the new world coming into being on the Mainland, at the government level the PRC was beyond the pale. In the fight between good and evil, there was no room for middle positions. The starkness of the ideological battle that gripped the whole world allowed the GMD to maintain a harsh military discipline over Taiwan.

The military was omnipresent in Taiwan. The state of martial law continued, and the army dominated society.[3] All young men had to do two years' compulsory military service (as they still do – there are now some 3.5 million reservists in Taiwan). Taiwan had to maintain its military

[3] The Mainland was almost as much under military dominance, though there its dominant feature was a militarist system of civilian organization, the *danwei* system, which organized China's economic and social systems along military lines.

technology at the cutting edge, quite easy as long as the Mainland's military relied on revolutionary zeal as much as on weaponry.[4]

Masked by the dominance of the military, and the martial images of resistance and anti-Communism, a subtle transformation began to take place in Taiwan in the late 1950s and early 1960s. The island was slowly becoming prosperous – and with the prosperity came a new confidence.

Economic transformation

After 1949 Taiwan might simply have been an island of exile, a place of inexorable decline, where a defeated group of soldiers and politicians lived out their lives; but it was not. To its own, and outsiders', surprise, the Republic underwent a period of sustained economic growth. The economic transformation that had eluded the GMD on the Mainland came true on Taiwan. In the 1950s and early 1960s the island went through a period of radical economic restructuring, which was the basis for the economic miracle that took place there in the 1960s and 1970s, and made Taiwan, along with Hong Kong and Singapore, the most prosperous parts of the Chinese world. Between 1951 and 1984 the annual economic growth rate in Taiwan was almost 9 percent – the same order of growth that the Mainland has known over the past twenty years.

Taiwan already had many of the preconditions for strong economic growth. The Japanese had left an excellent infrastructure of roads, railways, schools, universities, and hospitals. On the model set by the first Japanese governor, Goto Shimpei, Taiwan had become a prosperous, economically successful colony, referred to as the "model colony."[5] The Taiwanese population was healthy, with one of the highest life expectancies in Asia, and quite young, thanks to a major growth spurt in the 1930s and 1940s. The 6 million people were well educated, and literacy rates were high.

The GMD inherited an excellent base for an economic takeoff. The first element of the economic transformation was structural. The GMD achieved what it had not been able or willing to do on the Mainland: it established a working system of economic administration. Pragmatic civil servants took over economic management, and turned out to be good at

[4] In the past two decades this has become more difficult, as the PLA has modernized. The issue of arms purchases, mainly from the United States, but also from France, has been one of the most sensitive of political issues, and one in which the vendor has usually had to face the fury of the PRC.

[5] Many of the colonial-era buildings have survived, including the complex of government buildings in the center of Taibei. They are built not in Japanese styles of architecture but in a rather incongruous mixture of classical, French chateau, and baronial styles.

it. The corruption that had haunted the GMD on the Mainland gradually lessened, with the tacit recognition that corruption had been one of the causes of the GMD's defeat. The economy was still tightly controlled, but the control was less arbitrary than it had been on the Mainland, and the island was small enough that control could be exercised quite efficiently. It was quite straightforward, for example, to collect tax revenue, something that had been almost impossible on the Mainland.

The second element of the economic transformation was land reform, which started in 1949 and lasted for four years, and reduced the amount of land farmed by tenants from 44 percent of the total cultivated area to 17 percent. Several factors came together to help the government carry out a policy that they knew would be popular with Taiwan's many tenant farmers. Some 20 percent of the arable land was already available for distribution – it had been confiscated from the departed Japanese. Much of the other 80 percent was owned by Taiwanese who had supported the *Ererba* movement, people whom the government was happy to punish by depriving them of their landholdings. And the United States was willing to pay some of the costs of land surveys and preparation. The land reform was highly successful, and led to a rapid increase in farm yields – and incomes.[6] Agricultural production shifted over to commercial crops, for export. The food processing industry grew rapidly, producing a wide range of tropical products for export to Asia and North America. Sugar, tea, fruits, and sauces were amongst the early successes; later on Taiwan specialized more and more in exotic fruits, tea, and flowers.

The land reform and the commercialization of agriculture were the first, key stages of the Taiwan economic miracle. One unanticipated consequence of the land reform was that it created one of the most egalitarian societies in the world, in terms of the gap between the lowest and highest incomes. Land was scarce, and rose dramatically in value, in rural and urban areas. Landowners became rich – by borrowing money against a rising asset, for industrial investment, or by capitalizing on the use of land, by intensive agriculture in the rural areas, and by building upward in the urban areas. Charitable and religious organizations as well as families benefited from their landholdings. In Gaoxiong (Kao-hsiung) the Episcopalian church was rebuilt on its existing site, but with an office tower beneath it, which generated more than enough income to run the parish.

[6] The land reform on the Mainland, meanwhile, jolted through a series of stages – distribution, partial collectivization, and then full collectivization with the commune system. The land reform failed dismally, and contributed to one of the worst famines in Chinese history (1959–61). In the late 1970s China finally embarked on a successful reform to lease land to the tillers.

Taiwan's first post-1949 industrial ventures were in goods designed for export – bicycles, sewing machines, and other types of light manufactures, much of the work being done as piecework by people working in their own homes. This small-scale manufacturing was financed in part by compensation paid to landowners during the land reform. It created, with low levels of investment, a vibrant, family-based economy that was closely linked to exports, producing labor-intensive manufactures in which the cost of labor scarcely mattered, since it was not wage labor but a contribution to the family economy.

Taiwan had another competitive edge, in the matter of trademarks and intellectual property laws and practices. Taiwan's business people paid little attention to them; copyrights and patents were regarded as irritants to business, alien to Chinese commercial culture, rather than as solemn obligations that could be legally enforced. The government tacitly agreed and turned a blind eye to practices that elsewhere were regarded as piracy. In the 1950s and 1960s Taiwan developed a reputation for pirating, often of very high quality. Books were one form of pirated goods. High-quality copies of Western books presented a moral dilemma to Westerners interested in China: whether to buy a pirated version of an expensive book, such as Joseph Needham's monumental series *Science and Civilisation in China* (Cambridge University Press, 1945 to the present), for a modest price in Taiwan or pay the full market price in Europe or North America.[7]

Taiwan's greatest strength lay in its energetic and creative people. The island's education system grew from the foundations built by the Japanese, with major additions of academics and even whole universities from the Mainland. Primary and secondary education was available for all children, and college and university education for many young people. The career paths of young people from *waisheng* families and native Taiwanese families diverged sharply. Native Taiwanese students saw little prospect of a government career in GMD-dominated Taiwan; they focused instead on training in science and technology, getting first degrees in Taiwan and then going abroad, especially to the United States, for graduate study. From the late 1950s on Taiwan suffered a continuous brain drain; many of the talented young who went to study in the United States did not return but developed their careers there. These people also kept alive the ideal of Taiwan autonomy, and the hope for future

[7] Taiwan has long since moved out of the pirating game, but it continues to flourish on the Mainland, and is one of the main issues that foreign business people hope will be resolved by China's accession to the World Trade Organization (WTO). But, as long as a DVD of a current film costs 5 percent of the retail price in the West, piracy is unlikely to disappear.

democracy. The Taiwan independence movement grew in the safe haven of the United States – an irony given that the United States was the major sponsor of the GMD government.

The politics of exile

While the economy was being transformed, Taiwan's political world was stagnating. Once the debacle on the Mainland was complete, Chiang Kai-shek resumed the presidency of the Republic in March 1950, a control that extended to only one province. The fiction that it covered all China was maintained: the National Assembly had representatives from every province in China, men who got older and older as the separation from the Mainland lengthened.

Chiang preserved not only the fiction of a national leadership of a whole country but also the rivalries that had been part of the GMD political world when it ruled all China. His most hated rival, Li Zongren, was in the United States, out of sight but not out of mind. Li lived in seclusion in New Jersey, in fear of his life. He went back to China in 1965, in part for security, in part so that his wife could be treated for cancer. On both counts he was deceived; his wife died soon after his return, and the Cultural Revolution broke out within a year, bringing chaos and insecurity. Li died in 1969. Chiang took one of his other old enemies, Zhang Xueliang, to Taiwan with him, as always under arrest; he kept him under house arrest in Taipei, allowed to live in comfort but still without freedom. Zhang was not released until 1991; he was released on his ninetieth birthday. His fifty-five years of imprisonment, from late 1936 on, was one of the longest periods of incarceration any human being has ever endured.

Other political and military leaders were free but emasculated, given no real power and often kept under such close observation that it amounted to house arrest. This was the fate of many of the GMD's senior generals, including Bai Chongxi and Yan Xishan, who were given no further military roles. The word was put about that it was these people, rather than Chiang Kai-shek, who were responsible for the loss of the Mainland.

Chiang tolerated no criticism or disagreement amongst the members of the GMD under his direct control. He became in Taiwan something he had never succeeded in being on the Mainland: a successful autocrat. He did this with some style, moving towards the Confucian model of a strict but benevolent ruler. He and Song Meiling set an outward example of austere self-discipline, she increasingly dedicated to Christianity, he to Confucian ideals, the two blended in a puritan morality. They lived quietly, under heavy security, always fearful of attack, in one of a number

Yangmingshan

A heavily wooded mountain rises steeply from the plain to the east of Taipei, and looms over the city. Until the GMD moved to Taiwan the mountain was called Caoshan (Grass Mountain). Chiang Kai-shek had it renamed Yangmingshan, in honour of the great Confucian thinker, his hero Wang Yangming, and as a symbol of Taiwan's integration into China's high culture. Chiang spent much of his time in exile living up on the mountain, in a residence that was painted a drab olive green to blend in with the vegetation and so as to camouflage it from enemy (i.e. Mainland) bombers. It is now a huge public park.

of modest mansions. The two most often used were at Shilin, in the suburbs of Taipei, and at Yangmingshan.

Song Meiling exercised a great influence in Taiwan, as she had in Chonqing during the war. She and the people round her – known as the "Madame Faction" (*Furen pai*) – were influential and affluent. Political connections helped them to make excellent financial investments. Song Meiling was responsible for the construction of the Grand Hotel, an ornate fusion of Chinese and Western architecture that still dominates the Taipei skyline. As she grew older she spent more and more time in the United States, but her influence in Taiwan remained formidable.

Repressive politics

Chiang was tough on his own people in the GMD, but even tougher on the native Taiwanese. The repression that had started in 1947 was never relaxed during Chiang's lifetime. No political voice was permitted, no protests allowed. The Taiwanese felt that they had been occupied by an external force, a feeling intensified by the continuing penalties they had to pay for their own history of living for fifty years under the Japanese. The native Taiwanese were cut off from many benefits offered to *waisheng*; the 200,000 men who had served (many involuntarily) in the Japanese armies, for example, were not given pensions, though retired soldiers from the Mainland were. Buildings and businesses continued to be expropriated, on the grounds that their owners had "collaborated" with the Japanese, or on the grounds that their property was needed for the resettlement of *waisheng*.

There was an underlying rancor in the GMD's harsh treatment of the native Taiwanese, an unspoken and sour recognition that, although the Taiwanese were technically Chinese, they had been happier under

Japanese rule than they were under Chinese. To punish them for their "disloyalty," they were not allowed to speak Japanese, and their Japanese educational qualifications and their work experience under the colonial rule were not recognized. They were barred from many jobs that now required fluency in *Guoyu*, a language that most Taiwanese had never learned; their languages were *Taiyu*, the Minnan dialect of their ancestors, and Japanese.

The dismal situation of the native Taiwanese, as second-class citizens in their own homeland, created anger and disillusionment. Many, especially educated people and members of the old elite, felt nostalgic for the Japanese period, when they had also been second-class citizens, but had been subject to less harassment than they were under the GMD. Taiwanese nationalists went into exile – in the United States, not in the place that would have seemed most logical, in their ancestral homelands in Minnan, now under the rule of the GMD's enemies the CCP. The Taiwan Straits, the most heavily defended frontier in the world, were completely impassable. The Taiwanese were alienated ideologically from the Mainland; there was never any support for the Communist cause amongst them. They were also cut off from people with whom they shared common Minnan origins, the Overseas Chinese spread throughout Southeast Asia. These people, in countries emerging from colonial rule, such as Indonesia, Vietnam, and Malaya, were increasingly identifying themselves with the countries in which they lived. They tried hard to avoid being caught up in the battle for their loyalty between the CCP and the GMD, who were both conducting a war for the hearts and minds of the Overseas Chinese.

The only people worse off than the native Taiwanese were the true indigenous peoples, the aboriginals, who had been driven higher and higher into the mountains on the eastern side of Taiwan by successive waves of settlers from the Mainland since the seventeenth century, and were now almost completely dispossessed. Though Taiwan is a small island, they lived in almost total isolation in the central mountain chain and on Orchid Island. The only road across the mountainous center of the island was not built until the late 1950s, and even then only with great difficulty, at the cost of the lives of hundreds of workers.

No one took the plight of the aboriginals seriously until much later, when, in the 1980s, as part of a global recognition of the worth – and the maltreatment – of indigenous peoples, concern emerged in Taiwan. Today the 350,000 aboriginals have gained limited recognition. Like aboriginal people elsewhere, they are beginning to assert their rights, a sign of which is lawsuits involving accusations about the theft of cultural heritage.

6.2 **Taroko Gorge and new road**
Source: Andrea Luppi, *The Republic of China* (Udine, Italy: Magnus, 1982), p. 131.

Enigma and *Return to Innocence*

The theme song of the 1996 Atlanta Olympics was *Return to Innocence*, sung by the pop group Enigma. The chorus featured the voices of Ami people, from eastern Taiwan, which had been recorded without their permission. This appropriation was seen as another example of the theft of the aboriginal people's intellectual property – after Kirin Beer and Mitsubishi had both used Taiwan aboriginals in their advertisements without permission or compensation. In the Enigma case, the band was taken to court, and some compensation was paid to the Ami. More importantly, it was made clear that aboriginal peoples, in Taiwan and elsewhere, had to be treated better.

The new Taiwan

For a long while the island of Taiwan was the last rampart of an old order, a place of retirement and regret, buoyed up by increasingly thin hopes of a return to power. Then, almost imperceptibly at first, a new entity began to emerge, economically strong, politically progressive, and full of self-confidence.

The knowledge economy

When the GMD arrived in Taiwan the island was largely agricultural, producing cane sugar, tea, tropical fruits, and vegetables. Then came the movement into industry, and a period of rapid development. The next stage was a huge leap: to the labor-intensive manufacturing industry was added a new knowledge economy.

For all the talented young people who had moved to the United States, many more had stayed in Taiwan. They were helped by government support, in the form of research institutes and government investment, to promote the development, from the late 1960s on, of the high-tech knowledge economy, the basis for Taiwan's current economic success. The knowledge economy was highly flexible. It operated on what was essentially a Japanese model, the core–satellite model. A parent company relied on small subsidiaries to produce parts. Both levels focused on loyalty – from the company to the workers, and from the workers to the company. They used practices familiar in Japanese industry to enhance solidarity amongst the workers: regular meetings of managers and workers, company songs, uniforms, outings and parties.

Stan Shih

Stan Shih (Shi Rongji) is the archetype of the Taiwan "big man." He is the chairman of the Acer Group, one of the most successful of the Taiwan microprocessor companies. He was born in Taiwan at the end of the Japanese period, then as a child helped his widowed mother by selling eggs. This early entrepreneurship was the first manifestation of the business genius that led to the setting up of Acer in the mid-1970s. Stan Shih is famous for the low-key, informal way in which he runs his business, and for his concern for his employees, who are treated more like family members than employees, and participate in profit-sharing schemes. He and his wife live simply, with few of the trappings of the super-rich. His style is considered to be classically Taiwanese: relaxed, direct, tough, and humorous.

Taiwan's close contacts with Japan had other benefits. Most native Taiwanese could speak Japanese, and many had been educated there. The new companies benefited from Japanese knowhow, and from extensive contacts with Japanese companies.

The electronics industries developed from the early recognition in Taiwan that there would be a huge international market for the electrical appliances that were coming to be a part of every household – refrigerators, hairdryers, electric kettles, television sets, and calculators. As technologies evolved the companies that had produced appliances moved into computers and artificial intelligence. The Taiwan advantage was being able to spot market trends. Much of the electronics manufacturing took place in native Taiwanese companies, run by "big men," creative entrepreneurs who have become the new folk heroes in Taiwan.

These "big men" developed a particular model of business practice. They ran what were essentially family businesses; however large the scale, they treated their workers well and practiced profit-sharing. This expanded version of the traditional family firm has proved a very effective model for business development in Taiwan, though not one that is easy to replicate, since it depends so strongly on the personal ties between Taiwanese.

Two cultures

In business there was some fusion between *waisheng* and native Taiwanese, but this fusion did not happen in the world of culture. Culture in Taiwan has moved on two different trajectories since 1949. The first one, the official one as long as the GMD was in power, involved the preservation of China's traditional high culture. No expense was spared

on housing the treasures of the imperial collection from Peking in a new Palace Museum (*Gugong bowuguan*) in Shilin, a suburb of Taipei.

The humanities and sciences were heavily subsidized. Thousands of scholars were maintained at the Academia Sinica, their role to preserve and enhance the high culture. The academic entreprise was highly political, and the research positions went to people whose loyalty was unquestioned. The first president of the Academia Sinica was Hu Shi, his last job in a long career not as an innovator, as he had been in his youth, but as a preserver of the tradition now threatened on the Mainland. Besides preserving the old culture, the GMD wanted to dominate the recent. Historians prepared histories of modern China that proved conclusively that the GMD itself had made no mistakes during its rule on the Mainland.

The leaders of the GMD paid great attention to what they saw as their duty to preserve the cultural tradition. Chiang Kai-shek and his wife set the style. While Song Meiling became an accomplished painter of flowers and birds, Chiang reinvented himself as a man of culture. Like other Chinese military men, he believed that generals should be just as cultured as intellectuals. His calligraphy appeared everywhere on the island, on the name boards of public buildings. This cultured image continues after his death, in the monumental Memorial Hall (*Zhongzheng jinian guan*), in the center of Taipei. At 9 a.m. every morning the great bronze doors of the main hall slide back, to reveal Chiang smiling benevolently down on the visitors, dressed not as a military man but in the long gown of a scholar.[8]

The official culture depended on linguistic control; language became as dominant an issue in Taiwan as it was in the Mainland, where fundamental language reform was introduced in the early 1950s with the simplification of characters and the imposition of a national spoken language, *putonghua*.[9] In Taiwan the same national language, known as *Guoyu,* became the official language of government, business, and commerce. Japanese, which had been the official language of the island for fifty years, was outlawed, though many older people continued to speak it among themselves. Taiwanese (*Taiyu*/*Minnanhua*) was not outlawed, but the *waisheng* refused to learn it, regarding it as an inferior local dialect, not a real language. It could not be used in schools or in any official activities. *Taiyu* became the preserve of the native-born Taiwanese – and

[8] The main attraction of the Memorial Hall and of other official GMD sites in and around Taipei is the changing of the guard. On the hour reed-thin soldiers, who have been standing as still as statues for an hour, suddenly leap into action, march off with exact precision, and are replaced by an identical squad.

[9] One of the aims of the language revolution in the 1920s had been to establish a common spoken language. The dialect chosen was the Peking dialect. It is known outside China as Mandarin.

6.3 **Images of Chiang Ching-kuo, 1989**
Source: Zhonghua youpiao mu lu (Taipei: Jiaotong bu, 1996), p. 419.

a powerful means for native Taiwanese to assert their own identity. This identity came to be known by the shorthand *tuxiang* ("native land"[10]), with a clear sense that it means "our land."

The official focus in culture was on maintaining the great tradition. There was no possibility that Taiwan would become a center for new or avant-garde culture. Painting was dominated by traditional landscapes, and bird and flower painting. Much of the publishing industry was given over to the reproduction of classical texts. Taiwan was a desert for modern Chinese fiction. Most of China's modern writers were considered to be pro-Communist (as many of them were); in 1949 almost all the major living writers had stayed on the Mainland. Their books were proscribed in Taiwan – as they were, in many cases, on the Mainland itself.

[10] This word translates poorly into English. A closer match is the German word *Heimat*.

The Shrine of the Eighteen Lords

On the northernmost tip of Taiwan is a shrine to the Eighteen Lords, seventeen unknown fishermen whose bodies were washed ashore and were buried by the local people in a common grave at some undetermined time in the past. The eighteenth body was their dog, who swam to safety but then jumped into the grave with them. The shrine became famous when it was used to thwart plans to build a nuclear power plant nearby, which would have involved the destruction of the shrine. The shrine was hastily enlarged, and became a focal point for eventually successful anti-nuclear demonstrations. The dog, represented by large bronze statues, acquired a particular fame, not only for its help in the anti-nuclear movement but for its reputation for helping gamblers and prostitutes; the statues are worshiped not with incense sticks but with burning cigarettes.

Robert Weller, "Matricidal magistrates and gambling gods," in Meir Shahar and Robert Weller (eds.), *Unruly Gods: Divinity and Society in China*. Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1996, pp. 258–60.

At the same time, almost ignored by the official culture, a vivid local culture, much of it unwritten, flourished amongst the native Taiwanese. This was the *tuxiang* culture, carried through the oral tradition, a telling and retelling of the stories of the *real* history of Taiwan: the oppression of the people, and the misdeeds of the GMD. It was located in families, in Buddhist and Daoist temples, and in religious observations and festivals, communal eating, and fairs. At the apex of *tuxiang* culture were the thousands of shrines of Minnan deities. Mazu, the goddess of the sea, is Minnan's major deity, but there are innumerable shrines to other deities and to clan and family ancestors.

Tuxiang culture was one that at first no *waisheng* wanted to share, one that most of them looked down on as unsophisticated and rustic. The culture therefore came to underline the divide between *waisheng* and Taiwanese, and to emphasize local Taiwan identity – a sense of place and time captured most beautifully in some of the films of Hou Xiaoxian, such as *The Puppet Master* (1993).

Hou set an example of gentle, elegiac filmmaking that has been taken up by other filmmakers. Li Ang's 1994 film *Eat, Drink, Man, Woman* is a loving portrayal of family and food. It was a forerunner of his successes in the West – *Sense and Sensibility* (1995), *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon* (2000), *The Hulk* (2002), and *Brokeback Mountain* (2006). Hou's and Li's success abroad is a sign of the entry of Taiwanese culture into the international world on its own terms.

Hou Xiaoxian

Hou Xiaoxian (Hou Hsiao-hsien) is Taiwan's master film director. A Hakka from Guangdong, Hou was brought up in Taiwan. His masterpiece, *City of Sorrows* (Beijing chengshi, 1989), was one of the first cultural products of the new freedom in Taiwan. It describes the confusion and betrayal accompanying the arrival of the GMD on the island. It does not show the actual events of *Ererba* but often refers to them. It shows the departing Japanese in a quite sympathetic light, not as the brutal, inhuman characters that appear in Mainland films. The film is a statement of Taiwan identity; most of the dialogue is in the *Minnan* dialect, with subtitles in Chinese characters. The film won very favorable reviews in international film festivals, putting Taiwan film on the map alongside the Mainland works of directors Chen Kaige and Zhang Yimou.

June Yip, *Envisioning Taiwan: Fiction, Cinema and the Nation in the Cultural Imaginary*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2004.

In the world of literature a different pattern emerged, one in which young writers, both *waisheng* and native Taiwanese, began to explore themes of colonization, patriarchy, and emasculation – themes that reflected the complexity and confusion of identity in Taiwan. One of the first new writers to emerge was Bai Xianyong (Pai Hsien-yung), son of General Bai Chongxi. His first collection of short stories, *Taipei People*, published in 1971, described the lives of ordinary Taipei people, many of them Mainlanders living in chronic shock from being forced into exile, adrift in a world of uncertainty and anxiety. Bai was at the forefront of a movement that created experimental, often shocking, works of fiction. One of the earliest novels to appear was Li Ang's[11] *The Butcher's Wife,* in 1983. Her graphic novel about sexual obsession ends in the gruesome death of the butcher at his wife's hand (this is not a novel for the squeamish). Bai himself went on to write explicitly about homosexuality, notably in *Crystal Boys* (1990).

Religion and social welfare

Taiwan is a society steeped in religion. Every city and town has a large complement of temples and shrines. Up in the hills, beyond the cities and towns, are monasteries and nunneries, for every sect of Buddhism and for Daoism. While organized religion was under assault on the Mainland, in Taiwan it flourished, in every conceivable form; sects such as the traditional Yiguandao (and, later, Falungong) were as free to practice as more

[11] Not to be confused with the filmmaker Li Ang.

Ziji Compassion Relief Foundation

Ziji (Tzu-chi) was founded in 1966 by the Buddhist nun Zhengyan (Cheng-yen), to enable lay Buddhists, mainly women, to perform acts of charity. The organization focused at first on bringing medical care and education to the poor of Taiwan. Under Zhengyan's inspirational leadership the organization has grown to more than 4 million members worldwide, some of them nuns but many more of them laypeople. Although there are male members, it is predominantly a women's organization. The adherents put themselves under strict self-discipline, on the negative side not to kill, steal, engage in sexual immorality, lie, use intoxicants, chew betel nuts, gamble, and, on the positive side (for men) to be filial sons, good husbands and fathers, and to use safety belts when driving, helmets when riding a motorcycle. In addition to running hospitals and schools in Taiwan it is one of the largest relief organizations in the world, working in many different countries, especially after disasters.

formal religions. Almost every denomination of Christianity flourished in Taiwan. The intense involvement in religion coexisted with a society that was becoming more and more modern in its economy. The religious organizations steered careful paths while Taiwan was still authoritarian, but once democracy took hold their influence expanded dramatically, and they have found a major role in social welfare.

The major Buddhist organizations, such as Ziji (Tzu-chi) and Foguang (Fo-kuang), have assumed a range of charitable and welfare activities, from medical care to education to the care of the elderly. Ziji, founded in 1966 by the charismatic nun Zhengyan (Cheng-yen), has both a large cohort of nuns, many of them well-educated women who have chosen the religious life over professional and family life, and an army of volunteers. Foguang runs hospitals and schools, besides its many temples and monasteries. The organizations are highly professional, and well managed; though their fundamental focus remains religious, their activities are often profitable, the profits going back into their work. These two and other religious organizations provide the majority of social welfare on the island, making it possible for the government to play a lesser role. In 1999 the Buddhist organizations were the first on the scene after the devastating earthquake in Taizhong (Tai-chung), providing direct aid and spiritual comfort; their energy and competence showed up the army, police, and local government.

There are fewer adherents of Christian denominations than there are of Chinese religions, but they are tightly organized and operate at a high level of intensity. Christianity has been an integral part of Taiwanese society,

led from the top by the deeply devout Song Meiling. The Episcopalian (Anglican) Church has a strong presence in the north of the island, and has always been close to the GMD and the United States. Its influence has been dwarfed by that of the Presbyterian Church. The Church was founded in Taiwan by George "Black-bearded" MacKay, from Oxford County, Ontario. He established the Danshui High School and Oxford College, schools that became the training ground for many prominent Taiwanese. The Presbyterians also established hospitals and other social services.

The Presbyterian Church has played a key role in the movement of Taiwan toward democracy. Its leaders in the first decades of GMD rule were outspoken supporters of democracy and of autonomy for Taiwan. Since the late 1980s the Presbyterian Church has become something it can never have expected – almost an official church. The first elected President, Lee Teng-hui, is a devout Presbyterian, as are many of his close colleagues.

The provision of welfare in Taiwan is manageable in part because Taiwan has solved the population problem. The society is now largely middle-class, and the birth rate low, one or two children per family. Legal immigration is strictly controlled; even people with close relatives on the Mainland cannot bring them in as permanent residents. The number of illegal immigrants is unclear, though probably substantial.

In the first decades of Communist rule the Mainland used to have an integrated system of social welfare based on the work place (*danwei*), but this system has been dismantled over the past three decades. The Mainland authorities have shown a discreet interest in Taiwan's social service system, and the role of religious organizations within it. At the moment the Mainland has little in the way of government-funded social services – unemployment benefits, welfare, state pensions. There is no national health system, and since medical care has been "marketized", it has become expensive. The Taiwan model, in which the religious organizations take much of the burden of social welfare off the shoulders of the government, seems promising, thought there are fears that "religion" may mean healing groups like the Falungong, which the government regards as a dangerous schismatic sect.

Democracy

In the mid-1970s the two old warhorses of the Chinese political and military world died, in quick succession: Chiang Kai-shek in April 1975, and Mao Zedong in September 1976. The two leaders were consigned to very different resting places, which symbolize the gulf between the Republic and the People's Republic. Mao's remains were embalmed, placed in a

crystal coffin, and displayed in a mausoleum in the center of Tiananmen Square in Beijing.[12] Chiang Kai-shek's black lacquer coffin was placed in a lakeside pavilion in Zihu (Tzu-hu); his coffin is decorated with a Christian cross.

The deaths of the old men marked the end of an era. On the Mainland Mao's radical policies were abandoned. In 1978 China embarked on the "opening to the outside" and on rapid economic development. For Taiwan this was a threatening change. The Western nations were eager to get back into China, and one after another they recognized the PRC and cut their ties with Taiwan. The most damaging for Taiwan was the US recognition of the PRC, a move that was widely interpreted as the abandonment of Taiwan.

The change in Taiwan was slower in coming than on the Mainland. The presidency passed to Chiang Kai-shek's son, Chiang Ching-kuo,[13] who emerged from his father's shadow for a final stage of his career. His role in *Ererba* had given him a chilling reputation for brutality and ruthlessness, and his continuing toughness as premier of the Republic had done nothing to soften it; he seemed an unlikely candidate to promote progressive, democratic change in Taiwan. The first few years of his rule confirmed this image. He was "elected" President with 98 percent of the votes of the unelected National Assembly. His regime continued the persecution of pro-independence groups, and of Church leaders. In 1979 the Gaoxiong pro-democracy demonstrations were suppressed savagely, and several of the leaders put on trial, including a fiery woman lawyer, Annette Lu (Lu Xiulian). She and other defendants were convicted, despite the energetic interventions of her lawyer, Ch'en Shui-pien.

Opponents of the GMD were physically attacked, even murdered. The mother and twin daughters of Shi Mingde (Shih Ming-te), one of the Gaoxiong group, were killed by an unidentified gunman. The wife of Ch'en Shui-pien, Wu Shuchen (Wu Shu-chen), was hit by a lorry in 1985 and crippled for life. And the journalist Henry Liu was murdered in the United States.

The pattern of harsh repression seemed set for the future. Then there was a sudden and unexpected change. Chiang Ching-kuo himself

[12] The presence of Mao's remains has led to the irresistible temptation to call Tiananmen Square the "dead center" of the city, even more so since the square became a place of student demonstrations for democracy and then of killing in May and June 1989.

[13] The structure of the Chiang family is complex. Chiang Ching-kuo was considered the older of two sons, though it was widely believed that the second son, Chiang Wei-kuo, was not fathered by Chiang Kai-shek but by his friend Dai Jitao. Neither Ching-kuo nor Wei-kuo was the son of Song Meiling. The progeny of Chiang Ching-kuo are even more complicated. He had two sons by his Russian wife, and two more (twins) by another woman.

Henry Liu

Henry Liu (Liu Xiliang) is often regarded as a martyr for democracy in Taiwan. As a journalist his speciality was revealing material about the Chiang family that the family wanted ignored, such as the fact that Chiang Ching-kuo had spent a long time in the Soviet Union, and that his wife was Russian. Liu was a strong supporter of democracy and liberalization, so much so that in 1967 he moved to the United States, joined the Taiwan independence movement there, and published articles critical of the Chiang governments. He was murdered there in 1984, provoking a storm of protest in Taiwan. The sign, however, that things had changed in Taiwan was that his murderers (two members of the Bamboo Gang and an admiral) were convicted in Taipei, and sentenced to life in prison. Henry Liu was the last of the victims of repression in Taiwan.

changed. His last years of rule were quite different from his early years. He began to cultivate a rather folksy, man-of-the-people image, a simple family man who had little to do with the pomp and circumstance of power.

In 1984 he nominated as his Vice-President the first native Taiwanese to be given a senior post, Lee Teng-hui, a Japanese- and American-educated agricultural economist, and the former mayor of Taipei.[14] The choice of Lee was a major turning point in the Republic's history, because Lee had no association with the Mainland, but was entirely Taiwanese.

What is Taiwan's identity?

President Chiang Ching-kuo did not necessarily choose me as his vice-president with the thought that I would one day succeed him. At that time, with no idea that he would become ill and die so quickly, he wasn't thinking about his successor yet. I remember him telling me once, "I am a Taiwanese," but I don't think he ever thought about what kind of political culture best suited the Taiwanese people.

It is impossible to form a political culture that embodies Taiwan's identity without, first and foremost, an intense love for Taiwan itself. I say this all the time, but the person who will lead Taiwan in the future must be a real fighter, someone who loves Taiwan deeply and will shed blood, sweat and tears for Taiwan.

Lee Teng-hui (Li Denghui), *The Road to Democracy: Taiwan's Pursuit of Identity* (Taipei: PHP Institute), 1999, p. 51.

[14] The post of mayor of Taipei is often a stepping stone to higher office. Ch'en Shui-pien was a crusading, reforming mayor of the quality of Ken Livingstone. The new leader of the GMD, Ma Yingjiu, has also been mayor.

6.4 **Memorial figure of Chiang Kai-shek**
Source: Andrea Luppi, *The Republic of China* (Udine, Italy: Magnus, 1982), p. 13.

In 1986 Chiang Ching-kuo started putting in place mechanisms for the Republic's movement toward democracy. His actions were so out of character that it took a while for his moves to be taken seriously – but he *was* serious. The best explanation for his change of heart is not that he had a sudden conversion to democracy but that he was old, ill, and had moved into the "legacy" mode – the time at which leaders start to think not so much of day-to-day politics but of how they will be judged by history. Chiang was a severe diabetic, and seems to have recognized that the time had come for his last chance to make his mark on history – by abandoning his father's legacy of authoritarian rule and taking the GMD in the direction in which it had always claimed to be moving: toward democracy. His instincts were right. He died in 1988, having set in motion a process of change so dramatic – the establishment of an elected parliament, political parties, a free press – that it has canceled out his earlier, authoritarian, reputation.

Taiwan took to democracy with a passion and an enthusiasm rarely seen in mature democracies. All the elections held since the system was introduced – presidential, national assembly, mayoral, local – have been bitterly fought, with no holds barred. Campaigns are ferocious, and all-consuming. The whole population participates, in noisy demonstrations, and in the actual vote. Individuals value their votes so much that, if they happen to be abroad at an election, they fly home to vote. Parliamentary politics are vivid, sometimes even physical. They are televised widely; parliamentary proceedings and political analysis, with stock market reports and Buddhist devotional programs, make up the bulk of Taiwan's extensive television coverage, much of which can be picked up in Fujian across the Straits.

The rise of democracy in Taiwan had an inevitable outcome: the emergence of an independence party, the Democratic Progressive Party (*Minjindang*). In the late 1980s and 1990s many supporters of this party, almost all native Taiwanese, returned from the United States and Canada, no longer in danger of arrest. Some of those who returned went into business, and played major roles in the economic transformation of the Taiwan economy on a larger-scale, more corporate, model. Others took up influential positions in government and politics.

The DPP did not win the presidency until 2000, when Ch'en Shui-pien was elected, but even before his election the Taiwan-born Lee Teng-hui had moved away from the GMD's irredentist politics and the reunification with the Mainland, and toward the creation of a state that at least in *de facto* terms would be independent. He filled his Cabinet with highly educated (three-quarters of its members had PhDs), highly articulate people whose prime commitment was to Taiwan's development, not to reunification.

Zhang Fumei

One of the best-known returnees to Taiwan is Zhang Fumei (Chang Fumei), the current minister of overseas affairs. Zhang went to the United States to study in 1960, and stayed there for thirty years. She won a distinguished reputation as an academic expert on Chinese law. She was blacklisted by the GMD government for her open support of Taiwanese dissidents. She was finally able to return to Taiwan in 1990, after the democratic reforms had taken hold, and has since held a series of senior positions. She was also heavily involved with the government commission that investigated *Ererba*. The results of the commission were a rewriting of official history, and the building of a memorial to the victims in the middle of Taipei. Zhang Fumei is one of several very senior women in Ch'en Shui-pien's administration – a contrast to the Mainland situation, where only one woman, Wu Yi, has made it close to the top of the system.

Lee was a transitional figure in the passage from the eroding ideal of a reunified China under GMD rule toward some form of autonomy for Taiwan. He presided over a process in which the GMD gradually got weaker, and turned more and more to internal wrangling, while the DPP grew stronger and stronger. Lee's position has brought accusations on his head of being a traitor to the GMD, though he has never openly supported the DPP. One of the most effective members of the new party was the lawyer Ch'en Shui-pien. He became first mayor of Taipei (in 1994), and then President. His Vice-President is his former client, Annette Lu. Ch'en was re-elected in 2004.

Democracy has been embraced at every level in Taiwan. The Academia Sinica, once the most loyal of GMD organizations, now works at a high level of academic independence. Even GMD party buildings have been opened up. The pink granite GMD tower in downtown Taipei is now open to all, its cafeteria especially popular.

Taiwan and the Mainland

Since the reform period started on the Mainland in the early 1980s, almost everything has changed apart from two fundamental non-negotiables: the rule of the Communist Party, and the insistence on the retrieval of all "lost" territories. The return of Hong Kong to the embrace of the Mainland in 1997, and of Macao the following year, were supposed to be the first steps on a process that would bring back Taiwan. This is not a view widely supported in Taiwan. The GMD has been opposed to reunification while the Mainland is still under the control of

the Communist Party. The DPP is opposed to any return to full Mainland sovereignty, though not against some form of looser connection to the Mainland through a federalist system. For some years there have been frequent "Cross-Straits"[15] dialogues, interspersed with military menaces from the Mainland, but reactions have been muted. Few of the Taiwan political players show any interest in political reunification. The GMD, which always supported reunification once the CCP was defeated, now faces two obstacles. The first is that the CCP shows little sign of falling. The second is that the party has been divided and leaderless. The GMD leader until 2005, Lian Zhan (Lien Chan), a man of limited charisma, won a very public fight with Song Shuyu (James Soong), once the governor of Taiwan, that led to Song forming a splinter party, the People First Party (PFP). The division meant that neither party could defeat the DDP. The new leader of the GMD, Ma Yinjiu, has a much better chance. He is a charismatic, attractive leader, the only one in the Chinese world at the moment, where rather uninspiring technocrats are the rule.

On the economic front, relations with the Mainland are quite different from how they are on the political front. Over the past two decades Taiwan has made massive investments in the Mainland, and transferred to China the production jobs in the electronics industry that were behind Taiwan's own economic boom. The business attractions are China's cheap labor and her huge domestic market. There may now be as many as half a million Taiwanese business people working on the Mainland. This new closeness has led to some loss of jobs in Taiwan itself, but Taiwan, like Hong Kong, has managed to diversify enough to prevent job losses from becoming crippling. These extensive production and trading relations take place almost without reference to the political struggles between Beijing and Taipei. The major irritant is that, because direct flights are still not allowed between Taipei and Shanghai, business people have to travel to Shanghai via Hong Kong or Macao.

Since the 1990s there have been reconnections to Minnan, the ancestral home of most Taiwanese, some through business, trade, and investment, though most Taiwanese business people working on the Mainland operate in the Shanghai area. Many of the reconnections have involved the reestablishment of family ties, the rebuilding of family temples and religious shrines destroyed during the Cultural Revolution, and the recreating of clan genealogies. The special characteristics of what is now called

[15] The term "Cross-Straits" refers to the Taiwan Straits, between Fujian province and Taiwan. In fact, most of the political discussions take place between Beijing and Taipei, rather than across the Straits, while the main flow of economic relations is between Taipei and Kunshan, just west of Shanghai.

Tea culture

Taiwan and Minnan share a dedication to the cultivation, preparation, and consumption of what they regard as the world's finest teas, varieties of *Tieguanyin* (Iron Goddess) teas originally from Anxi county, still grown there and also transplanted to the high mountains of eastern Taiwan. The tea bushes are cultivated with great care, the leaves being picked twice a year and then dried by secret processes. The tea is sold for increasingly high prices; the best teas are now worth their weight in gold. The best part of tea is the consumption, at lengthy, relaxed sessions; the host carries out a complex ritual, serving tiny cups of tea to the guests. A discriminating knowledge of tea and the ability to prepare it (*paocha*) are essential attributes of a cultivated person, in Minnan and in Taiwan.

Wang Ling, *Zhongguo cha wenhua* (China's Tea Culture). Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1992.

Min Tai culture are emphasized on both sides of the Straits. One of these is the passion for tea.

Few Taiwanese have returned to live permanently on the Mainland; their interest does not extend to citizenship or long-term residence. The Mainland propaganda machine also stresses reconnections between Minnan and Taiwan, in direct and indirect ways. There are still no direct links by air or sea between the Mainland and Taiwan, but the Mainland has made gestures that are meant to underline the close cultural connections between Minnan and Taiwan. In 1997 the major image of Mazu, the patron saint of Taiwan and of Minnan, was sent from Meizhou (Fujian), her ancestral temple, on an officially sanctioned tour of Taiwan, and spent 100 days there. She traveled in splendor, and was met at every stage by adoring crowds. The political message that came with her stressed her help in letting Qing forces conquer Taiwan in 1683, by providing a strong following wind that literally blew them across the Straits, but the message may have been lost on most of the people who came to see her.

Taiwan's autonomy, actual or future, is more than a thorn in the Mainland's flesh. The calls for Taiwanese autonomy threaten to precipitate similar demands not only from the non-Han regions of China (Tibet, Xinjiang, Inner Mongolia in particular) but also from prosperous coastal Han provinces with strong regional cultures (Guangdong and Fujian), or the superbly self-confident municipality of Shanghai. Beyond the threat that Taiwan presents of encouraging other "renegade provinces" or "breakaway regions," the Beijing leaders find the toughness and the self-assurance of the Taiwanese grating. The Taiwanese give the lie to Beijing's claims that democracy is inimical to Chinese culture, and that

the Chinese people must be ruled by the strong hand of benevolent men (*renzhi*) rather than by impersonal concepts such as law or democracy (*fazhi*).

The clash between the Mainland and Taiwan is not simply one between the center and a "renegade" province, but between two conceptions of what it means to be Chinese: one that assumes that Chinese must be ruled by an autocracy, the other that believes that modern, educated Chinese can participate in their own government. It is also a clash between two concepts of a republic: one, the People's Republic, authoritarian and top-down, and the other the Republic of China, democratic and populist.

In March 2005 the Beijing government brought in a law that made "splitism" (*fenlie zhuyi*) illegal, and at the same time gave out veiled threats of military action against Taiwan. This belligerence alternates with conciliatory gestures, and with what are known as "united front" activities: the winning of support by the promise of future favors. A short time later Beijing showed a kinder, gentler side when China welcomed two pro-unification politicians from Taiwan, Lian Zhan and Song Shuyu. They toured China separately, both reiterating that all Chinese are "children of the Yellow Emperor," and that Taiwan is an integral part of China. But, thanks to the internet and to the reception of Taiwanese television in the South, many Mainlanders were aware that both were yesterday's men, presiding over parties that had been unsuccessful at the ballot box. The elections in Taiwan at the end of Song's visit confirmed this; his party came in last.[16]

Taiwan's relations with the Mainland are mirrored in the complexity of the island's relations with the rest of the world. In the 1950s and 1960s most Western countries maintained the polite fiction that Taiwan still represented all China. Mainland China's foreign relations were with Soviet bloc countries, while in Taipei there were embassies representing most of the major powers, led by the United States. In the late 1960s the united front of the Western countries started to crumble. France opened diplomatic relations with the PRC in 1965, Canada in 1970. Other countries took longer, but by the 1980s there was a growing wave of enthusiasm for the new China as the country emerged from decades of Maoism into the capitalist world. As countries recognized the PRC, so they broke off relations with the Republic of China (ROC), closed their embassies in Taipei and asked the ROC to close theirs in foreign capitals.[17] International organizations followed suit. The United Nations gave China's

[16] Song's decline is rather unfair, given that he, as Chiang Ching-kuo's personal secretary in the 1980s, was one of the architects of Taiwan's democracy.

[17] In Ottawa the ROC representatives were informed early enough of Canada's intention to switch its diplomatic recognition to the Mainland that the ROC was able to sell its

seat to the PRC in 1971. Taiwan was consigned to a state of international limbo. Many countries continued their representation in Taiwan, but took away the title of embassy – the USA Representative Office, the Institut Français, the Canadian Trade Office. The question of representation remains fiercely contested. Beijing has succeeded in keeping Taiwan out of some international organizations, notably the World Health Organization, which even during the SARS outbreak in 2003 refused to deal directly with Taiwan. Some international organizations have come up with ways round Beijing's opposition. Taiwan competes in the Olympics and other sporting events as "Chinese Taipei," and is a participant in the WTO under the same name. "Miss Chinese Taipei" competes in the Miss World competition. Beijing regards the use of the term "Chinese Taipei" as a subterfuge, and regularly complains about its use.

Beijing gets even more upset with people who cannot keep the "real" China and the "renegade province" separate. An unwary visitor to China who refers to the country as "the Republic" instead of as the "People's Republic" will be rebuked. Taiwan is more sanguine. Apart from opening diplomatic relations with some obscure countries, to make up for the loss of relations with major countries, Taipei is philosophical about Beijing's attitudes. So long as Taiwanese businessmen can work on the Mainland, and so long as the Mainland does not attack Taiwan, Taipei responds to Beijing's tough words either by brushing them off – or with a verbal barrage of its own.

In Taiwan popular opinion about the Mainland is complex, no longer a straight division between the GMD and the DPP. Those in business, from both sides of the political divide, favor closer connections with the Mainland, and oppose any "provocations." Others oppose any concessions to the Mainland, a fragmented consensus that includes hard-line anti-Communist GMD people and equally hard-line independentists. The most heated discussions take place in the soft middle.

Taiwan has allies, cautious ones but still real. The most important is still the United States, where anxiety over China's growing economic might and continuing dedication to autocracy equates to support for Taiwan. Taiwan has achieved all the fundamental ideals that the Western democracies embrace: elected politicians, a free press, an open market, the rule of law. It would be easy to praise these achievements were not so many politicians and business leaders afraid of "upsetting China."

embassy, rather than hand it over to the PRC. The PRC purchased a disused convent, the austere cells of which were ideal quarters for diplomats so long as the Maoist period lasted, but they became a liability in the 1980s and 1990s when diplomats started to demand greater comfort.

Taiwan's other ally is Japan. Taiwanese show a continuing attachment to Japanese culture, through the occasional use of the language and through eating Japanese food – as, for instance, the popular *shabu shabu* restaurants that serve Japanese-style hotpots, and Japanese sweets and desserts. Commercial, intellectual, political connections are flourishing, often encouraged on the Japanese side by an unstated aim to promote the image of Taiwan as Japan's model colony; at a time when Japan is under attack in China and Korea for unresolved wartime issues, and when Japan shows a continuing reluctance to apologize or to compensate victims of the occupation in China, having friendly relations with Taiwan is consoling.

The Taiwan situation is in constant flux. Predictions for the future range from a full-scale invasion of the island to peaceful independence for Taiwan. On the record of past predictions, both are likely to be wrong.

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Films

The Puppet Master (*Ximen rensheng*) Hou Hsiao-hsien, 1993
Lyrical portrayal of rural life in Taiwan in the 1930s through a traveling puppet show. Quite heavy allegory on puppets and their controllers.

Eat, Drink, Man, Woman (*Yinshi nannu*) Li Ang, 1994
The story of a family of a father and three daughters in which the father shows his love and concern for his children by cooking wonderful food.

Conclusion: the end of the Republic?

The Republic of China is now in its ninety-fifth year. The scope of its rule is limited to the island of Taiwan, it has few international friends, and a major enemy less than 100 miles away often threatens it. The Republic has internal enemies, some of them at the highest level of government, who would like to see it disappear. And yet it survives, as it has for the last nine decades, against the odds.

Disjunctions and continuities

Political transitions

At its foundation, the Republic of China was heir to one of the longest-surviving political entities in the world. The efforts to introduce a new regime of modern, civilian government, to replace the imperial system, were preempted by warfare; the first four decades of the Republic were a bitter struggle through military rule and full-scale warfare.

In 1949 the Republic collapsed on the Mainland, but it survived on Taiwan. Within the nearly six decades since the loss of the Mainland the Republic has achieved much of what the GMD set out to do on the Mainland – the establishment of democracy, a strong economy, a free media, and the rule of law. The Republic on Taiwan has shown that it is possible to break the tradition of authoritarianism and to bring about a transition in political power without revolution. It has shown that a government can reform itself, and that political evolution is viable.

The post-1949 Republic survived and then prospered with a great deal of outside help, mainly from the United States. Money, political support, government advice, and a range of private support, from scholarships to students to religious fellowship, poured into the front line against the Red peril. All this outside support would have been nothing without the efforts of an energetic people stimulated by stark reality: the constant threat of invasion and takeover.

While the Republic on Taiwan went through its slow evolution from autocracy to democracy, the Mainland, in the dominant pattern of change in Chinese history, came under a potent despot, Mao Zedong. After so many years of chaos and warfare, many Chinese welcomed a strong leader. Mao became much more than a strong leader. He was transformed into a demigod: "The East is Red from the rising sun, China has produced a Mao Zedong" – these are the opening lines of the anthem of the Mao era. The excesses that Mao promoted led to disaster; China has still not come to terms with the ocean of sorrow that his rule brought. Three decades on from the end of the Mao era it is hard to find a self-confessed devotee of Maoism, but his portrait still hangs over Tiananmen and his party has over 65 million members. The CCP now practices "socialism with Chinese characteristics," a version of capitalism. Authoritarian rule continues; the CCP has changed its ideology, but not its system of government. Unless one accepts that autocracy is the natural order for China, the Republic has to be seen as ahead of the People's Republic in terms of political evolution.

The Mainland government depends for part of its legitimacy on the promise to reunite China. The main item on this agenda is to bring the "renegade province" Taiwan back into the fold, a clarion call of nationalism that few people on the Mainland would argue against. The question is how to achieve reunification. A military "solution" to the political impasse between the Mainland and Taiwan is as possible now as it has been for fifty-five years, but it has powerful opponents; those most opposed to this solution are economic interests, on both sides of the Straits.

Economic transitions

In the economic world, Taiwan's trajectory clearly involves greater involvement with the Mainland, where the economy is booming, as the pent-up energy of five decades of decline and stagnation creates rapid growth. The boom relies on cheap labor, and on foreign investment, much of it from ethnic Chinese, above all from Hong Kong.

The economic integration of Hong Kong with the Mainland was prefaced by political moves. In the 1980s Deng Xiaoping came up with an inspired formula for Hong Kong to permit its reunification with the Mainland – "one country, two systems" (*yiguo liangzhi*). The physical connection to the Mainland, the fear of force, and the lack of popular participation all contributed to the decision for reunification when the ninety-nine-year lease on the New Territories expired in 1997.

Taiwan is less integrated with the Mainland economy. Half a million Taiwanese business people now work on the Mainland, but, unlike Hong

Kong, economic participation has not been inspired by political changes. Taiwan is offshore, and the people have a greater say in their future. The current goal of Taiwanese business seems to be to keep economic activity and political integration separate.

Unity and devolution

The PRC is a threat to Taiwan, but so is Taiwan a threat to Beijing. The threat is insidious: regional devolution. Taiwan's autonomy would be a precedent for other regions, not only the ethnically distinct border regions, but also prosperous provinces that might like greater autonomy; provinces such as Sichuan, with over 120 million people, or Guangdong, the export powerhouse, or Fujian, the outward-looking coastal province. These provinces would like to retain more of their tax income, to appoint their own officials, to make some of their own policies.

These ambitions derive from strong regional identities that have deep historical and cultural roots. At the same time that China is becoming a world power, Beijing has to deal with these regional identities, now strengthened by economic success and bolstered by regional histories and dialects. Two of the most potent regional identities, the Shanghai and Cantonese, are fully engaged in the business and political world. A third major regional identity is still fragmented – the Minnan identity, which includes the peoples of southern Fujian, the Overseas Chinese communities in Southeast Asia, and much of the population of Taiwan. If these people came together politically, they would wield enormous power; they are already welded together by common inheritance, a common dialect, and a feisty character that pays little attention to higher authorities.

The divisions within China may push Beijing toward developing new political relationships between the center and the regions. This could be "one country, many systems" (*yiguo duozhi*), an extension of the policy used for Hong Kong. The does not mean federalism, the administrative solution that most large countries use. Federalism is an inherently stable system; it involves constant negotiation between the center and the regions, and is ideally suited to bureaucratic government, because the sharing of powers is best dealt with in arcane and complex negotiations between bureaucrats. In Mainland China, the word "federalism" may not be mentioned. In Beijing, federalism is equated with division and disunity: devolution equals dissolution. The idea has a long pedigree in China, and the pressure for revamped center–regional arrangements is growing, not receding. With it may come a redefinition of what being Chinese means.

Chineseness

Since 1949 the Mainland and Taiwan have been locked in a battle for the control of the authentic China, the "real" Chineseness. For the first three decades Taiwan, the bulwark of tradition, came out ahead, but in the last two the PRC, with its turn away from radicalism, and its burgeoning economic power, has won. In cultural, if not political, terms Taiwan is more Chinese than the Mainland. Taiwan went through none of the attacks on the tradition that blighted the Mainland. In Taiwan the fusion of religion and society, the ubiquity of shrines, the constant religious observances, the belief in the presence of the supernatural are marked; all were crushed on the Mainland, as feudal superstition. The dedication to good food, and eating with friends and family, dominate Taiwan;[1] for decades such practices were attacked as bourgeois on the Mainland. The written language was protected in Taiwan while it was simplified on the Mainland, and distorted by socialist accretions. All these aspects of the Chinese tradition are now reestablished on the Mainland, but the effects of the thirty-year break are obvious.

Taiwan is traditional in its social structures. Chinese society's glue has always been the family. The family system was terribly damaged in China, by class struggle and by political movements that pitted the young against their elders. In Taiwan the strong social cohesion founded on the family unit has never been threatened. Family size has been limited not by government policy (one child per family) but by the choice of more prosperous parents, with easy access to birth control, to limit the number of their children. The inheritance system in Taiwan locks families into close (and sometimes quite fraught) relationships; partible inheritance means that every member of a family has an interest in family property. On the Mainland the inheritance system is still disrupted, after decades in which it did not function. On the welfare front, the PRC announced in 2006 that 35 percent of urban residents and 45 percent of peasants could not afford medical care in the "marketized" world of medicine. Taiwan's combination of government, private, and religious healthcare gives good protection to the whole population.

The preservation and adaptation of the Chinese tradition mean that Taiwan may be a model for China's social and political future. China needs political and social reform to match her rapid economic development. The absence of an autonomous legal system presents barriers to further development. China needs, by her own admission, to control a phenomenon once well known in Taiwan, bureaucratic corruption, now

[1] Mouth-wateringly shown in Li Ang's film *Eat, Drink, Man, Woman*.

the greatest cause of discontent in China. Taiwan was placed twenty-ninth (out of 102 countries) on the leading transparency index in 2002, thirty places above the PRC.[2]

The battle for the control of authenticity has been compromised by the default of one of the contestants – Taiwan no longer claims hegemony. The question to watch for the future is whether Beijing will continue to insist on it, or whether it will allow more definitions, multiple forms of authenticity. And, if this happens, will it allow for greater autonomy for those parts of the Chinese world that want it?

Independence

Over the past century Taiwan has been through many forms of political rule. The island has been a province, a colony, an autocracy, a democracy. The one thing it has not been is an autonomous state. In a world in which many new states have come into being (some revived old ones: Ukraine, Latvia, Lithuania, Estonia; others that have not been states before: Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan), Taiwan is forbidden to think of itself as an independent state, by China and by China's allies, who toe the official "one China" line. There are shades here of China's own situation during the period of imperialist domination, when China was not allowed to decide her own fate because the Powers wanted to do that themselves.

The desire for independence is strong in Taiwan, founded on an identity shared now by native Taiwanese and by the children and grandchildren of *waisheng*. In the era of post-colonialism the Mainland is seen as the potential new colonial master, while the former colonial master, Japan, is seen as friendly and helpful. The lack of antipathy toward Japan in Taiwan is a further wedge between Taiwan and the Mainland, where officially encouraged attacks on Japan have become a commonplace of international relations.

Beijing subscribes to impassioned irredentism, the ideology of the big nation, which lays claim to all areas that have ever been Chinese, for however short or long a period, however far in the past.[3] This was the ideal of the early nationalists, and it is one that no Chinese leader, including Chiang Kai-shek, has ever abandoned. Its targets included regaining

[2] *Transparency International Corruption Perception Index 2002*. On the same list the United Kingdom came in at tenth, Hong Kong at fourteenth, and Canada at seventh.

[3] Irredentism is one of the thorniest political problems to resolve, whether it is parts of a nation feeling they belong in another (such as Südtirol/Alto Adige, part of Italy but feeling it belongs to Austria), a land that two countries claim (Alsace/Elsass), or a detached part of a once united entity (Ulster).

the territories taken from China by the imperialists (in order of return: Qiaozhou, Weihai, Manchuria, Hong Kong, Macao). The sticking point is Taiwan, which *did* come back, in 1945, but since 1949 has been beyond the control of the central government.

The independence movement in Taiwan is strong, but not overwhelmingly so. Many people who vote for the DPP do not support independence. Even the President, Ch'en Shui-pien, is cautious about independence. There is no official talk of a unilateral declaration of a new state, or of winding up the Republic.

An enduring republic?

The Republic of China has now lasted ninety-five years. How much longer will it endure? If Taiwan were to declare independence, that would mean the end of the Republic. Independence is not the only option. If an accommodation with the Mainland were reached, and Taiwan became part of China, with a high degree of autonomy, the PRC would not accept the continuation of the Republic. In May 2005, during his visit to the Mainland, Song Shuyu referred to the Republic of China; this reference was censored from accounts of his visit carried by the Mainland media. The third possibility is a continuation of the status quo – a difficult, rancorous, but surprisingly workable system.

If the status quo does not continue, and the Republic is wound up, it would not be dead. The ideals of Sun Yat-sen, the father of the Republic, would survive. His *Three Principles of the People* called for nationalism, democracy, and a decent livelihood for all China. The Mainland has achieved the first, shuns the second, and is striving to achieve the third. Taiwan has achieved the last two, and a local version of the first. Sun's *Principles* lack the panache and apocalyptic thrill of Maoism, but they have worked in Taiwan; even the most ardent independentists have not turned away from them. They may yet work on the Mainland, where "socialism with Chinese characteristics," the official interpretation of Marxism today, is light years away from the radicalism of Maoism, and Sun Yat-sen is the only widely acclaimed Chinese political thinker. Once democracy is introduced, the ideals of this modest, idealistic, and determined man will be achieved.

Further reading

Dru Gladney, *Dislocating China*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004.
Elizabeth Remick, *Building Local States: China during the Republican and Post-Mao Eras.* Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2004.

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