

alive, the Peiyang Army remained a highly cohesive force, even though some rivalry might have existed among his chief lieutenants. After Yüan's sudden departure from the scene in 1916, there was no one military leader capable of inheriting his mantle. In the search for a formula that could both preserve the power of the Peiyang Army and subdue the southern rebels, a schism gradually developed between Tuan Ch'i-jui and Feng Kuo-chang which in time involved most of the leading Peiyang members. Thus, ironically, what began as an effort to restore Peiyang's political paramountcy ended in its hopeless division into opposing factions.

**I**N THEIR discussions of the early Republican period, all writers employ the terms "faction" or "clique" to describe the broad lines of conflict among politico-military groups. But their definitions are often vague: misidentifications are made, and misconceptions go unchallenged. Clearly, a term or concept is not very useful unless its full meaning has been explored. Since a political analysis of the early Republican period must rely heavily upon an analysis of factional struggle, common sense requires that we seek information in four basic areas: First, we should provide a chronological interpretation of the origin of the major factions. Second, we should examine the immediate causes prompting militarists to form factions, and how they actually did it. Third, we should identify as possible the constituent membership of major factions. Fourth, we should identify the basic sources of cohesion of the factions or their lack thereof.

A detailed historical review of the period becomes necessary in order to provide the factual basis for a better understanding of the issues raised in the first two areas. The composition and cohesiveness of the factions will be analyzed in subsequent chapters. The purpose of this chapter is to lay the ground for a more detailed analysis of the strength and weakness of the military factions in early Republican China. The first part of the chapter traces some of the developments of the role of the military under the Ch'ing dynasty that might have precipitated the rise of military power in the Chinese polity. The second part examines the events from 1911 to 1920 that led to the emergence of military factions. In the story told here we shall see that while Yüan Shih-k'ai was

## CHAPTER 2

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### The Emergence of the Military Factions

*Historical Background*

In order to understand the historical as well as the social and political factors that produced modern Chinese militarism, it is necessary first to review briefly the origin and structure of the military in the Ch'ing dynasty.

The forerunner of the Ch'ing military was the Banner armies created by Nurhaci in 1601. Another type of military forces, the Green Standards, so called because they used green-colored flags, came into being somewhat later. From the beginning of the Ch'ing empire until the 1850's, these two forces constituted the bulwark of imperial defense, and together they were called the *chin chih ping*, or national army. But by the early nineteenth century both forces had outlived their usefulness. The hereditary system of the Banner forces, which was created to monopolize military power in the hands of a small elite and to make its members feel that their personal interests were intertwined with those of the empire, in the long run contributed significantly to the Banners' undoing. Their exclusiveness gave them a distorted sense of importance and complacency. They became reluctant to innovate and were slow to respond to new challenges. Since the job usually came as a birth-right, there was no particular incentive to work hard for advancement. The creeping influence of a civilian style of life in the barracks also led to a more relaxed atmosphere and made it all but impossible to enforce military discipline.

For the Green Standards, corruption became a major problem. It became a usual practice for officers to conceal vacancies in their units in order to pocket salaries for nonexistent soldiers. The situation deteriorated so much that by the middle of the century it

was not uncommon for units to have only half or even a sixth of the authorized manpower, while drawing full pay from the empire.<sup>1</sup> Furthermore, both the Banners and the Green Standards suffered from the lack of competent officers. In the Green Standards, a person could obtain a position by simply making a financial contribution to the empire. The Green Standards and a large portion of the Banners were stretched thin throughout the empire. This dispersion made the units less responsive to rapid mobilization to cope with a large-scale threat. In addition, it made centralized supervision more difficult. Irregular practices were easily concealed from the authorities in Peking.

The T'ai-p'ing Rebellion of 1850 provided an acid test of the strength of the Ch'ing military establishment, and both these forces proved to be totally unequal to the task. Within a short time they were routed, and they nearly caused the empire to crumble with them.

In this crisis there emerged a new breed of military forces, chiefly the Hsiang-chünn created by Tseng Kuo-fang in 1853, the Ch'u-chün of Tso Tsung-t'ang (1860), and the Huai-chünn of Li Hung-chang (1862).<sup>2</sup> Together, these armies defeated the T'ai-p'ings and gave the Manchu regime a new lease on life. However, the rise of these armies also radically changed the distribution of political and military power within the empire and laid the foundation for the subsequent development of militarism. For these were regional armies organized by local gentry and scholars. When they first came into being, they were actually looked at with suspicion by the Imperial Court. Only after they had conclusively demonstrated their ability to deal with the rebels did the Ch'ing government begin to give them limited financial support. These factors made it difficult for the Ch'ing government to exercise stringent control over them after the defeat of the rebels in 1866. The victory enabled these ethnically Han Chinese forces to supersede the Manchus and become the major military power. This fundamental alteration of the imperial military power structure also had far-reaching political ramifications: after the beginning of the T'ai-p'ing Rebellion, there began to be a marked increase in Chinese, particularly those who had distinguished themselves as military commanders, occupying key imperial positions.<sup>3</sup>

In time, however, these regional armies, referred to collectively

as Braves (Yung), also began to deteriorate, once the T'ai-p'ings had been suppressed. Despite attempts to modernize them, the Braves continued to suffer one defeat after another in a series of engagements with foreign armies, and they were roundly beaten in the first Sino-Japanese war of 1894-95.

The defeat and humiliation of 1895 finally caused the Manchu Court to embark on a sweeping reform of the military establishment. Immediately after the war, Chang Chih-tung, then Viceroy of Liang-chiang, began to advocate the training of a new army, and proceeded to form a Self-Strengthening Army of about three thousand men. He adopted the German army model, engaged German officers as instructors, and used Chinese graduates of military schools as assistants. In October 1895, the Imperial government formally declared the inauguration of a new pilot training program for the army. Hsiao-chan, a town southeast of Tientsin, was selected as the training base, and the original size of the army was set at ten battalions, about four thousand men. Within a few months, a 37-year-old official by the name of Yüan Shih-k'ai was placed in charge of the entire program, and the force was redesignated the Newly Established Army. Under Yüan's vigorous management, the program offered instruction in infantry, cavalry, artillery, and scouting under the supervision of German officers. Foreign equipment was used. Soon the force was expanded to seven thousand officers and men, many of whom were to play prominent roles in Chinese politics in the next two or three decades.

In the meantime, the Imperial government also tried to create a new type of provincial force called the *Hsün-fangying* and encouraged provincial governors to train their own new armies. Because the Hsiao-chan program was under the supervision of the Minister of Peiyang, and because Yüan himself later served in that capacity, the armies that were in one way or another related to Hsiao-chan or to Yüan personally came to be known as the Peiyang Army. In the south, the provincial army training program following the lead of Chang Chih-tung also produced a number of provincial armies, which sometimes were referred to as the Nanyang Army. Actually, the latter was less than an army, because these southern programs were not integrated under a single command system as the northern armies were.

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Newly Established Army made serious efforts to use the talents of foreign instructors, to introduce modern weapons, to improve the provisions and living conditions of the soldiers, and to upgrade their combat skills and discipline. When the Manchu prince, Jung Lu, inspected Hsiao-ch'an in February 1899, he was enormously impressed and reported back to the Empress most enthusiastically about Yuan's undertaking. Soon afterward, a larger army, the *Wu-wei-chün*, was formed by imperial decree, and Yuan became the commander of one of its four armies, each with about nine thousand officers and men. Although all the armies were organized and trained according to the example set by Yuan, the other three armies were slow in responding to the new regulations and the new spirit, and the reorganization proceeded rather lethargically. During the Boxer Rebellion, the majority of this new force was either broken up or completely decimated, with the exception of Yuan's army, which did not participate in the campaign.

In January 1901, the Yangtze viceroy petitioned the emperor to create a modern army. This brought forth an imperial decree ordering reorganization of the army. Yuan's army, now called the Peiyang Standing Army, was ordered back once again to Hsiao-ch'an for training. Not long afterward, Li Hung-chang died, and Yuan succeeded him as viceroy of Chihi as well as Minister of Peiyang.

At Hsiao-ch'an, in addition to further reorganization and intensification of training, Yuan established the Peiyang Military Academy, and he created a short-course military school at Paoting in 1903. Now, his domination of military power in the north was enhanced, for he not only had the best trained force in the north, but also educated his own corps of officers to lead them. By 1905 the Peiyang force had grown to six divisions (*cheng*), each with 12,500 men. At least five of them were under the command of Yuan's trusted subordinates.

Such overwhelming power inevitably caused alarm. In 1905, the Imperial government announced a scheme to create 36 divisions of a new army. Each province was to set up its own training office for new armies. In 1907, the Ministry of War, which had been established the previous year to oversee military affairs for the whole country, promulgated regulations governing the completion of the training programs for the 36 divisions. In that same year, Yuan

lost the viceroyship of Chihi, and at the end of 1908 he was forced into semi-retirement. But by then, Yuan had already established a considerable military following. On the eve of the 1911 revolution, there were some sixteen divisions and sixteen mixed brigades in the country. Of these, about seven divisions and four mixed brigades were considered to be loyal to Yuan personally. The rest were scattered in the empire under separate provincial commands.

#### *The Role of the Military, 1911-1917*

The establishment of the new Republican political order bears testimony to the power of the militarists, because its success can be directly attributed to the machinations of Yuan Shih-k'ai in collaboration with the top-ranking line commanders of the Newly Established Army, especially those who petitioned for the abdication of the infant emperor on January 26, 1912. During Yuan's presidency, the Peiyang military faction began to assert itself more aggressively and to intrude increasingly into the political arena. Peiyang officers received favored treatment in appointments, promotions, and financial rewards. As the Peiyang structure became more expansive and powerful, however, internal strains and conflicts slowly emerged.

In the first five years of the Republic, Yuan's personal prestige and status within the Peiyang Army, together with his presidential powers, served as a temporary restraint upon the ambitions of the militarists. But even Yuan was not always successful in curbing their constant interference in national and local affairs, partly because Yuan himself was never reluctant to use military support as his trump card in dealing with other political groups. In reaction, the political opposition also resorted to force to resist Yuan's pressure, as evidenced by the Second Revolution of 1912-13. The propensity to use force to resolve political conflict brought about a phenomenal increase in the number of men under arms and a resurgence of regional armies. It also whetted the militarists' appetite for a more active role in national politics.

So long as Yuan was alive and his Peiyang machine was the dominant military power, a semblance of national unity was preserved. When Yuan died in 1916, the restraining hand was removed. Almost instantly the militarists plunged into the vortex of national politics. Militarists of various statures began to contend for terri-

tories as well as resources. The central government, under the presidency of General Li Yüan-hung, who was not a Peiyang man, rapidly lost its grip on the country.

On the national political level, the cleavage between the Peking government and the KMT opposition was sharpened by differing opinions over which of the constitutions should be honored. The disputes over the president's tenure and the advisability of convening the old parliament further complicated the situation. Within the Peking government, there was also the rivalry between President Li and Premier Tuan Chi-ju because of differences in personality and differences over whether China should declare war against Germany. Consequently, the political system was thrown into utter confusion.

It was during this interval that great destructive forces began to work on the provincial and local levels to accelerate the tendencies toward disintegration. The country was divided into many separate, independent or semi-independent areas, each with a militarist as the supreme power. Increasingly, national politics lost its impact upon the people, and the national government receded into the background while the militarists thrust themselves to the fore in various areas.

In the absence of a new commonly accepted leader, the first reaction of the Peiyang militarists was to try to preserve the solidarity of the group by collective effort. Nobody could dictate order as Yuan had. Commanders now enjoyed greater autonomy in their own units; at the same time they tried to introduce a new form of collective leadership in lieu of a single dictator within the established Peiyang system. They remained loyal to the Peiyang group and they regarded the group's interests as paramount, but the decision-making power became more diffused among the local militarists. The foremost of the local militarists were, of course, the provincial military governors. They jealously guarded their newly acquired political autonomy, and they also attempted active intervention in national politics with increasing boldness.

The most prominent intermilitarist decision-making body at this time was the Association of the Provincial (Military) Governors (*sheng-ch'i lien-ho-hui*), formed in September 1916. More and more, important political issues were discussed and decided in the periodic conferences of this association rather than in Peking. The

most famous of these conferences were those called by General Chang Hsün at Hsüichow. The first Hsüichow conference, held only four days after Yuan's death on June 9, 1916, was attended by representatives from seven northern provinces. Because of the trauma of Yuan's passing and the resulting uncertainty about the future of Peiyang, the conference was called to solidify the group and map a strategy for political survival.<sup>4</sup>

Only three months elapsed before the second Hsüichow conference was called on September 20, 1916. It was expanded to include the military governors or their representatives from twelve provinces, as well as many division commanders and district defense commissioners. The most important accomplishment of this conference was the emergence of the concept of a "grand alliance." In addition to electing Chan Hsün the "Great Leader" of this alliance, the participants also declared their readiness to use force collectively against anyone attempting to disrupt national unity or making unreasonable political demands. The language employed was so sweeping that it could be interpreted to apply not only against the parliament, the KMT, and the southwest, but also against elements in the Peking government, since the alliance now claimed the power to decide what was good for the central government.<sup>5</sup> And in fact, on September 25, a circular telegram was signed by 34 militarists (including practically all the important military governors, civil governors, and division and brigade commanders), opposing the central government's appointment of the new foreign minister, Tang Shao-ji. As a result, Tang was forced to resign.<sup>6</sup>

The third Hsüichow conference was held in January 1917. Now the participants felt ready to thrust themselves into politics; their specific demands included the dismissal of undesirable members of the president's personal staff, restrictions on parliament, and the dismissal of unworthy cabinet ministers.<sup>7</sup> As the feud between President Li Yüan-hung and Premier Tuan Chi-ju escalated, Tuan invited a number of militarists to congregate at Peking on April 25, 1917, to lend support to his advocacy of war against Germany. When they were rebuffed by Li, they went to Tientsin and precipitated the crisis that produced the monarchical fiasco engineered by Chang Hsün.

In addition to the Hsüichow conferences, there were a number

of smaller and more frequent conferences held by the militarists to discuss points of common interests. Together these conferences represented a provisional arrangement for making decisions at a time when the militarists were groping for a new alignment of power.

It is worth noting that the provincial military governors seldom exercised complete control over their domains. There were many other lesser local militarists, division commanders, district defense commissioners, or even brigade commanders who were anxious to grab a piece of territory. With or without formal declarations, these lesser militarists became practically independent of both the central government and the provincial government. Thus, in 1916–17, national policies could not be made without the concurrence of the provincial militarists, and provincial decisions could not be made without the cooperation of the local militarists. This state of affairs was apparently intolerable to the militarists in general. While the majority of them had no objection to having autonomy themselves, they opposed the exercise of autonomy by others, especially those under their nominal control. Order had to be reestablished. Whereas everybody hoped to improve his own position against the others, nevertheless he would agree that unity should be restored and authority reestablished.

#### *The Emergence of Military Factions, 1917–1920*

As we have seen, the primary concern of the Peiyang group during 1916–17 was undoubtedly to stay together as a group and to continue its dominance in national politics. No militarist in the Peiyang group objected to the perpetuation of the group's influence, but differences of opinion existed on how the group could best preserve that influence. The main barrier to Peiyang's search for hegemony was the dissident movement in the southwestern provinces, which established its own rival military government in September 1917, thus presenting the Peking government with a constitutional challenge.

Early in July, in anticipation of trouble in the south, Tuan had made his first move to extend Peiyang control by dispatching a northern division into Hunan. Tuan's selection of Hunan as his first target was by no means accidental. The best route to attack the south was the Peking–Hankow railway, which reached Kwangtung through Hunan. Most of this line ran through provinces con-

trolled by military governors who were either friendly to Tuan or could be won over. In addition, Hunan was weak militarily and was outside the Peiyang group. An attack on Hunan would not jeopardize the interests of any Peiyang members. A final advantage was that Hunan was adjacent to the province of Szechwan, which had been troubled by the presence of Yunnan and Kwei-chow troops. The conquest of Hunan would thus enable Tuan to send troops directly from Peking to the border of Kwangtung and also to send another expedition into Szechwan and invade the southwestern provinces from the rear.

With these considerations in mind, Tuan's cabinet announced on August 6, 1917, the appointments of Fu Liang-tso to replace T'an Yen-k'ai as the military governor of Hunan and Wu Kuang-hsin as the commander in chief of the Upper Yangtze Valley as well as commissioner of Szechwan. Fu was a native of Hunan, although he had spent most of his adult life in the north and had closer connections with the Peiyang militarists than with his native provincials, including a marital relationship with Tuan's family. (The other appointee, Wu, was Tuan's fellow provincial and brother-in-law.) Tuan's choice of Fu, a man with a Hunan background, showed his desire to placate the Hunanese and to conceal the significance of this move. As a further gesture of assurance to the Hunanese militarists, Fu announced that he would not bring with him any northern troops and that he did not intend to change the internal military structure of Hunan.<sup>8</sup> However, once he assumed office, the northern troops that had been concentrated on the border immediately began to pour into the province. In the meantime, the Hunanese had not been idle. When Fu's appointment was announced, the incumbent governor, T'an Yen-k'ai, showed no sign of resistance, and he even sent a personal representative to Peking to welcome the new governor. However, he lost no time in secretly deploying troops within the province for a showdown. When the necessary arrangements had been completed, two Hunanese militarists declared independence on August 16, and fighting broke out right away. Thus unfolded the first major war of the militarists, during which the Peiyang group came apart. Various militarists reacted to this war with different perceptions and definitions of self-interest and group interest, and these differences slowly replaced old identities with new ones.

Available evidence indicates that Tuan's expedition failed to

receive President Feng Kuo-chang's cooperation from its very inception. According to Ts'ao Ju-lin, the leader of the Communications Clique and a close associate of Tuan, when the fighting in Hunan broke out, Feng refused to issue the proclamation for a punitive expedition and encouraged the military governors of the three Yangtze provinces—Li Shun of Kiangsu, Ch'en Kuang-yüan of Kiangsi, and Wang Chan-yüan of Hupeh—to voice their opposition by circular telegrams.<sup>9</sup> It is also reported that he revealed his displeasure at the war to the commanders of the 8th and 20th divisions, causing them to use slowdown techniques in their fighting.<sup>10</sup>

Feng's opposition to the Hunan campaign was undoubtedly motivated partly by personal rivalry and jealousy.\* If Tuan succeeded in subduing Hunan and the south by military force, he would inevitably overshadow Feng and become the new leader of the Peiyang group. It is also possible that Feng's opposition was based partly on a genuine difference in views. Feng had been in the Yangtze area for a few years; he knew more about the regional sentiments and the leaders of the southern provinces; he had some firsthand knowledge of the problems of regional administration. Thus he probably was more tolerant toward demands for local autonomy and believed that the national political authority did not have to assert itself dictatorially. There might even have been some truth in the charge (leveled by Tuan's men in 1918) that Feng was prepared to see a country divided between the north and south. Tuan, on the other hand, had been involved in politics on the national level for years and had witnessed at close range the political evils of the division of the country. He tended to value unity and authority more than anything else and would not hesitate to crush any obstacles standing in the way.

In any event, Feng's noncooperation, and sometimes obstruction,  
 \* Their difference on the Hunan question was but part of a larger conflict of personality that had developed over the years. This conflict was first reflected during the controversy over the declaration of independence sponsored by the military governors. *North-China Herald* (hereafter referred to as *NCH*) May-June, 1917. When Feng found himself in line for the presidency after President Li's flight, he would not leave his Kiangsu base until he appointed Li Shun to succeed him in Kiangsu, and Ch'en Kuang-yüan to be governor of Kiangsi. Li Chien-nung, 2: 501.

soon caused Tuan's campaign a lot of trouble. His victory in the first few weeks of the campaign in October 1917 proved to be short-lived. By early November, the northern troops had suffered several losses, and the commander of the 8th (northern) division, Wang Ju-hsien, boldly petitioned the central government to proclaim a cease-fire. Wang's refusal to fight forced Governor Fu Liang-tso to flee from the provincial capital. In the meantime, Ts'ao K'un (military governor of Chihli) and the military governors of Kiangsu, Kiangsi, and Hupeh also declared themselves in favor of seeking a peaceful solution. To compound Tuan's predicament, the expeditionary force he had dispatched under the command of General Wu Kuang-hsin to expel the Yunnan-Kweichow troops from Szechwan also suffered a series of reverses.<sup>11</sup> Facing the prospect of the total bankruptcy of his first major military adventure and personal bid for Peiyang leadership, Tuan resigned from the premiership on November 15, accusing President Feng of double-dealing.<sup>12</sup>

Tuan's resignation did not mean he had abandoned the Hunan campaign, however; it was only a tactical retreat to prepare for a renewed offensive from a different base. In December, Tuan moved to head the newly established Bureau of War Participation, ostensibly to supervise preparations for China's eventual participation in the European war against Germany. Barely three months later, Tuan was back in the premier's office (March 23, 1918). During this interval, Tuan engineered a number of maneuvers that completely changed the political atmosphere that had been unfavorable to his military policy. A brief account of the events during this interval shows his strategy.

Among the military governors presumably inclined toward a peaceful solution of the Hunan question, only Li Shun and Ch'en Kuang-yüan fervently shared Feng Kuo-chang's antipathy and were hostile to Tuan from the very beginning.<sup>13</sup> The others were not nearly as committed to a position. On December 1, 1917, two Hupeh militarists declared their independence from the provincial government and raised the prospect that they might march east and occupy sections of the Peking-Hankow railway, thus severing General Wang Chan-yüan's line of communication with the north and making his position in the province untenable. Although Wang had previously spoken for peace in Hunan, the northern

reverses in Hunan had caused him to reassess the whole situation. The southern allied forces entered Hunan not only to help the local people drive out the northerners, but also to push as far north as they could. Besides, even within Hupeh, many local units nominally under Wang's command had shown signs of unrest, and some had actually gone over to the Hunanese side. If these challenges were not dealt with sternly, the Hunanese and the Hupeh militiamen might enter into an alliance to drive him out altogether. Confronted with this new situation, Wang modified his previous stand and urged the Peking government to send reinforcements to Hupeh.<sup>14</sup> During the period December 1917–January 1918, Wang moved closer to the war party, as fighting in Hunan was renewed and intensified after a brief respite following Tuan's resignation. By the end of January 1918, Yüehchow (Hunan) was recovered by the allied Hunan-Kwangsi forces, and the rebellious Hupeh militiamen were fighting northern troops in western Hupeh to a standstill.

The Hupeh rebellions and the reopening of hostilities in Hunan alerted other Peiyang militarists to the possibility that these joint southern efforts might cut off the Peking-Hankow railway and leave the northern troops stranded in Hunan. To counter this threat, the northern militarists called a conference at Tientsin on December 3, 1917. The conference was sponsored by Ni Tzu-ch'ung of Anhwei, Chang Huaichih of Shantung, and T'sao K'un of Chihli and was attended by representatives from ten other provinces. The most important result of the conference was that T'sao K'un abandoned his peace policy and became an ardent war advocate.\*

The participants resolved to continue the Hunan campaign, to pledge a number of troops from each province, and to request Feng Kuo-chang to issue a presidential mandate for a punitive expedition. Apparently the conference was a victory for Tuan, for on December 22, T'sao K'un started sending a detachment of troops to reinforce Wang Chan-yüan in Hupeh. President Feng, however, still tried to stand by his peace policy. On December 25, he issued

a presidential mandate reaffirming the need for peace and urging a general cease-fire and reconciliation. The next day, the three military governors of the Yangtze provinces responded with a circular telegram supporting the president and indicating that they had indeed been seeking diligently to arrange a settlement with the south.<sup>15</sup> That Wang Chan-yüan also signed the telegram seems strange in light of what had happened to him. The only plausible explanation is that he was trying to use both sides to maintain his own position.\* The attitude of Li Shun and Ch'en Kuang-yüan, however, was consistently intransigent. Thus, for instance, at the end of December, when Shantung planned to transport some contingents south to Hupeh, both Li and Ch'en denied them transit rights.<sup>16</sup>

Both these attempts to frustrate the new war fever proved futile once T'sao K'un added his weight to the war party. After mid-December 1917, Tuan began to enlist the military governors of Feng-tien, Shansi, Shensi, Chekiang, Anhwei, and Kansu to put pressure on Feng to appoint T'sao K'un to head the expedition. On January 30, 1918, after his alternatives were exhausted, including an alleged attempt to escape from Peking and return to his Yangtze base, Feng bowed to reality and appointed T'sao K'un, Chang Huai-chih, and Chang Ching-yao commanders of the expeditionary forces with orders to proceed to the south. On the same day, T'sao was also made Pacification Commissioner of Hunan and Hupeh and civil governor of Chihli. The first assignment gave T'sao full power to direct the campaign at the front, while the second one further strengthened his hold within Chihli, where he had already been the military governor.

T'sao's conversion to the war party accomplished only one of the three major tasks that Tuan had set for himself. The presence

\* The opportunism and fence-sitting of Wang Chan-yüan is best illustrated by the following report made by Hsü Shu-cheng. In late January 1918, Li Shun of Kiangsu approached Wang Chan-yüan and Ch'en Kuang-yüan with a proposal for joint action. Specifically, the three provinces would (1) resolutely refuse right-of-way to any northern troops through Pukow or Hankow, (2) adopt coordinated action in an emergency, and (3) institute joint defense measures. Wang put his signature to the document. At the same time, he also dispatched a secret report to Hsü Shu-cheng about the whole episode and affected to be very upset at Li Shun's audacity. If Hsü's report is true, as it seems to be, then Wang Chan-yüan was obviously engaged in a lot of double-dealing. *HSTCK*, no. 21, Feb. 3, 1918.

\* This conversion might have been facilitated by some political horse-trading between T'sao and Tuan. Possibly T'sao was promised the consolidation of his position in Chihli and his election to the vice-presidency in the next election. See *Hsü Shu-cheng tien kao* (hereafter referred to as *HSTCK*), no. 135; T'sao

of Li Shun in Kiangsu and Ch'en Kuang-yüan in Kiangsi and their collusion with Feng meant that his policy might still be sabotaged. In addition, the control of the cabinet by Wang Shih-chen, who was sympathetic to a peaceful solution, was viewed by Tuan with suspicion. Therefore, in order to carry out his policy smoothly, Tuan had to eliminate the Kiangsu-Kiangsi axis as well as to take over the cabinet from Wang.<sup>17</sup> Since Tuan at this time did not command sufficient force of his own to force his opponents' removal, he had to rely on other militarists. Ts'ao K'un's force was already assigned to the Hunan front; the only other nearby source of support was Chang Tso-lin of Fengtien. When Tuan learned that Li Shun was contemplating a more formal alliance with Kiangsi and Hupeh to act in coordination against Tuan and to refuse Tuan's troops passage through their respective territories, a deal was quickly worked out between Tuan and Chang.\*

On February 25, 1918, Chang Tso-lin ordered Fengtien troops into Chihi to take up strategic positions around the capital. In the meantime, he presented President Feng with four demands and implied that his continued loyalty to the president would depend on their acceptance. In essence, Chang asked for the dismissal of the three military governors in the Yangtze area, the reconstruction of a new cabinet under Tuan, the appointment of himself as inspector general of Manchuria, and the training and equipping of an additional Fengtien division to be underwritten by the central government.<sup>18</sup>

Tuan was, to say the least, greatly elated by the timely Fengtien help. Even before the Fengtien troops moved in, Tuan began reprisals against Kiangsu and Kiangsi. On February 5, Ch'en Kuang-yüan of Kiangsi was stripped of his military rank by official order.

On February 21, Chang Hsai-chih was appointed high commissioner for Hunan and Kiangsi (*chien-yüen-shih*) and was directed to divert a part of the expeditionary army into Kiangsi to prepare for Ch'en's ouster. Nor had Tuan forgotten the other thorn in his side—Li Shun. However, Chang Tso-lin's intervention in February shifted the political balance so much in Tuan's favor that it was

\* On January 28, 1918, Tuan caused the information to leak to Chang Tso-lin that a shipment of Japanese arms would arrive at Ch'ing-huang-tao on February 3. With Tuan's connivance, Chang intercepted the arms and expropriated them. See *HSCTK*, nos. 15, 19, 21, 41, 58, 60, 64.

no longer considered necessary to remove Li before the Wang cabinet could be toppled.<sup>19</sup> The presence of Fengtien troops in the backyard of the central government apparently made the difference, and on March 6, premier Wang retired from his office. Meanwhile, the expeditionary force was making headway in Hunan and had regained much lost ground. In mid-March, the bond between Tuan and Chang Tso-lin was further strengthened when Chang appointed Hsü Shu-cheng, Tuan's righthand man, as his deputy commander of all Fengtien forces inside the Great Wall. On March 22, representatives of northern militarists gathered at Tientsin for another conference and decided to ask Feng to reappoint Tuan as premier and to recapture Ch'angsha, the capital of Hunan, before offering peace again.<sup>20</sup> The next day Tuan was reinstated as premier. Tuan had now fulfilled all three tasks and could turn his full attention to the prosecution of his policy of unifying China by military power.

Four days after assuming office, Tuan named Chang Ching-yao to be the new military governor of Hunan in anticipation of a total victory. This in the long run proved to be a costly political blunder. For the brunt of the fighting in Hunan had been borne essentially by Ts'ao K'un's 3d Division, under the leadership of Wu P'ei-fu as its acting commander. Since Wu had almost single-handedly saved the northern troops from disaster and defeated the Hunanese in battle after battle, it was natural for him to expect to be rewarded. In contrast, Chang Ching-yao was an incompetent leader who had suffered many humiliating defeats, but he had seniority in Peiyang and a closer personal relationship with Tuan.<sup>21</sup>

There were other aspects of Tuan's policies that might have created the doubts and anxieties in the minds of his military allies that brought about a gradual erosion of the united front. The most important case was the gradual alienation of Ts'ao K'un from the war party.<sup>22</sup>

Ts'ao K'un's alienation was brought about by a number of factors. The first factor was his anxiety about his long absence from his home base, Chihi. In late March and early April, 1918, there were newspaper reports that Tuan was about to give Wu full charge of directing the Hunan campaign, keep the 3d Division in Hunan, appoint Ts'ao K'un the high commissioner of Hunan and Hupeh, and appoint Hsü Shu-cheng to succeed Ts'ao as military

governor of Chihli. This would mean that Ts'ao would lose direct control of the 3d Division and his base in Chihli, while assuming a seemingly prestigious new position with little political power. Although Hsü Shu-cheng strenuously denied these rumors, Ts'ao's mind was apparently quite unsettled.<sup>23</sup>

On June 15, 1918, an incident of enormous political implications took place that must have had a strong impact on Ts'ao's attitude toward Tuan's party. This was the assassination of Lu Chien-chang. General Lu was a senior member of the Peiyang group. He was also an uncle of Feng Yü-hsiang, then commander of the 16th Mixed Brigade. According to Ts'ao Ju-lin's testimony, Lu, who was anti-Tuan, had prevailed upon Feng to stall in his march against the south and to plan instead a surprise attack against Ni Tz'u-ch'ung, Tuan's most ardent supporter.<sup>24</sup> As Lu was traveling in the north promoting anti-war sentiment among the troops, he was lured to Hsü Shu-cheng's residence in Tientsin and summarily executed. Lu's execution touched off a wave of indignation in military circles. Ts'ao was reported to be particularly enraged that a Peiyang comrade of such long standing was so cruelly dealt with and that this criminal act took place in territory under his jurisdiction.<sup>25</sup>

Last but not least, Ts'ao's attitude was affected by his apprehension of the rapid growth of Tuan's military and political power. It must be remembered that the Hunan campaign was not an ultimate objective in itself, but a prelude to the conquest of the southern provinces leading to eventual national reunification. But Tuan's experience had clearly taught him that the northern militarists could be just as defiant as the southerners. He could not forget that the cooperation of the northern militarists in the Hunan campaign had been secured at considerable financial and political cost. Therefore, in Tuan's view, the hope for national unification by force lay not in continued cooperation with other militarists but in establishing a separate army that would be absolutely loyal to Tuan personally. Chang Tso-lin, Ts'ao K'un, and others were only temporary allies who might turn into enemies in the future. As Tuan himself once put it, a unified country meant that all local centers of power would have to be circumscribed, and military power would definitely have to be eliminated from politics.<sup>26</sup> Therefore, at the same time that Tuan cooperated with the various

militarists in the Hunan campaign, he also laid the groundwork for the creation of an independent military force.

Less than two months after Tuan was reinstated as premier, the Sino-Japanese Mutual Defense Pact was signed. According to its provisions, Japan was to help furnish instructors and equipment to China for the establishment and training of three divisions and four brigades. According to a contemporary report, the Chinese General Staff and the Ministry of War would each send ten students to the highest military college in Japan and appoint them to important duties after their return; the Chinese arsenals would manufacture all rifles and ammunition upon Japanese models and all arms currently required would be supplied by Japan.<sup>27</sup> Although Tuan and his associates insisted that the purpose of these new forces was to prepare for China's participation in the First World War, President Feng and other knowledgeable militarists must have known that this was only a smoke screen; the government had never seriously planned active participation in the European war on such a gigantic scale.\* It was obvious to them that such a large force was being raised with the suppression of internal enemies in mind. Tuan guarded this force jealously, appointing his most trusted lieutenants as commanders, and gave it preferential treatment.

In order to carry out his policy of forceful unification, Tuan also needed money, but most of the local sources of revenue had slipped under the control of local militarists. Here, again, Tuan found the Japanese willing lenders. According to Li Chien-nung, in the seven months after he assumed office (March–October, 1918), Tuan negotiated at least six different loans with Japan totaling 120 million Chinese yuan. A few other loans were reportedly negotiated at the same time, but their exact amount cannot be ascertained.<sup>28</sup>

With the war chest filled and a huge army under training, Tuan made his next move to control the machinery of the central government. The Anfu Club was the political arm created for this purpose in May 1918. The nominal leaders of the Anfu Club were Wang I-f'ang, Liu En-ko, and Tseng Yun-p'i, but the real power behind the scenes was the ubiquitous Hsü Shu-cheng. Its base of operation was the parliament. When the new parliament convened

\* Foreign diplomats were told that China planned to send between 500,000 and one million men to Europe. Reinsch, *An American Diplomat in China*.

in August 1918, the Communications Faction (including both the Liang Shih-yi wing and the T'sao Ju-lin wing) won about 100 seats and the Research Faction only 20 seats, while Anfu Club members gathered nearly 330 seats.<sup>29</sup> Tuan clearly intended to use this parliamentary majority to dictate the coming presidential election and to dominate the central government.

These ominous signs of the rapid growth of Tuan's personal power were not lost upon his enemies and allies. After the 3d Division had captured Ch'angsha and seen the fruits of victory snatched away by Chang Ching-yao, T'sao and Wu began to show their apathy to the war. In mid-April, T'sao had protested to Tuan that the 3d Division was too exhausted to fight on and should be sent back to the north for rest and training. He also complained that he was ill and asked to be given a leave of absence. On April 18, the 3d Division occupied Hengchow, which gave it a stronghold away from the shadow of Chang Ching-yao. There it halted operations against the Hunanese. T'sao's differences with Tuan had obviously developed to serious dimensions, for Tuan made a hasty visit to the front to assure T'sao that sufficient provisions had been made for the prosecution of the war and to urge him to take the complete victory that was in sight. T'sao was unmoved.<sup>30</sup>

Soon afterward, Wu began negotiating with the Hunanese generals for an informal truce. By May 30, T'sao had lost all interest in the war, and he went back to Chihli for its duration.

Having failed to entice T'sao's continued support with honey, Tuan's party tried to subvert T'sao's following. At the cabinet meeting of June 4, Hsü Shu-cheng reportedly proposed that if T'sao and Chang Ching-yao did not attend to their duties immediately, Wu P'ei-fu should be made commander in chief of the whole expeditionary force against the south.<sup>31</sup> He also reportedly told Wu that he could expect rapid promotion, since the senior Peiyang members were getting old.<sup>32</sup> To Tuan's exasperation, however, Wu remained loyal to T'sao. The upshot of all the manipulations was that Chang Huai-chih, who now had little military power, was ousted from the military governorship of Shantung, an incident that further confirmed T'sao's belief that Tuan was too treacherous to be trusted. The departure of T'sao and Wu from the war party was dramatized on August 21, when Wu led his commanders to issue a circular telegram openly advocating an immedi-

ate cessation of all civil war. The southern military government in Canton promptly endorsed Wu's proposal. A month later, the commanding generals of all the northern and southern units at the Hunan front issued a joint statement calling for a general cessation of hostilities and the convening of a peace conference.

During the same period, T'sao received still more evidence of Tuan's lack of good faith. One of Tuan's primary purposes in forming the Anfu Club was to use the parliament to replace President Feng when his term expired. The animosity between Feng and Tuan became more acute as the September election drew near. There was, however, no indication that T'sao would fight for Feng's cause. On the contrary, he, Chang Ts'o-lin, and Hsii Shu-cheng had met at Tientsin at the end of July and agreed that Hsü Shih-ch'ang should be nominated for the presidency. The Tientsin conference also reaffirmed Tuan's previous pledge that T'sao would be elected vice-president. The Anfu-controlled parliament elected Hsü Shih-ch'ang president on September 1 on the first ballot with an overwhelming majority. Yet the same parliament, which earlier had also given the speakership and vice-speakership of both houses to Anfu leaders, could not muster even a simple quorum to vote on the vice-presidency, and the office was left unfilled. Under these circumstances, it was natural for T'sao to suspect that Tuan was deliberately reneging on his promise. Thus T'sao's withdrawal of support from Tuan became irrevocable.

Deprived of T'sao's fighting instrument and faced with a universal demand for peace, Tuan found the political atmosphere impossible, and he resigned as premier on October 10, 1918. As soon as Tuan left the cabinet, the peace forces gathered momentum. By November preparations were under way for a peace conference between the north and the south. Under the urging of T'sao K'un and the military governors of the three Yangtze provinces, it was finally convened in Shanghai on February 20, 1919. No sooner had the conference begun, however, than it bogged down over a number of differences between the two sides. But the basic stumbling block was Tuan's determined opposition to any conciliation with the southern rebels.

It is very likely that up to this time T'sao and Wu were merely trying to force Tuan out of office so that the southern campaign would die a natural death. There is no evidence to suggest that

they were contemplating at this point the elimination of Tuan as a political force. But they soon discovered their error. For Tuan stayed on as the director of the War Participation Bureau, by virtue of which he kept his hold on the new forces being trained with Japanese assistance. Even after the conclusion of the First World War in November 1918, Tuan managed to preserve the War Participation Army, by changing its name (first to National Defense Army and then to Northwestern Frontier Army) and by making Hsü Shu-cheng its commander on June 24, 1919. In order to continue Japan's participation in the army training program after the world war, Tuan and Japan also signed, in February 1919, an agreement extending the Mutual Defense Pact until both China and Japan had signed the Peace Treaty with both Germany and Austria and until all Allied forces were evacuated from Chinese territory.<sup>33</sup>

Tuan's action was in clear defiance of the peace effort, and the expansion of his military power was obviously aimed at the south when the time was ripe. Consequently, on May 14, the southern delegate to the peace conference presented eight demands, which among other things demanded the repudiation of all secret agreements between China and Japan and the punishment of the officials responsible for such agreements.<sup>34</sup> The northern delegate refused to accept the demands, and both delegates then resigned. Since the northern chief delegate now refused to serve, Tuan seized this opportunity and pressured the prime minister into appointing the leader of his Anfu Club, Wang I-t'ang, as the new chief delegate on August 11. This was interpreted quite correctly by the south as a thinly veiled attempt either to dominate or to sabotage the peace movement. Consequently, the southern delegate refused to meet with him, and the peace conference came to a standstill.

The failure of the peace conference undoubtedly antagonized Ts'aо and Wu and made them realize that Tuan's resignation from the premiership had not ended their troubles. It also made them move closer to Li Shun and Ch'en Kuang-yüan in a concerted effort to check the influence of Tuan. Thus it was about this time that Ts'aо, Wu, and the military governors of the Yangtze provinces found an identity of interests in opposing Tuan, and the term Chihli faction, which had been loosely used for some time, began

to have a more definite meaning. After Feng's death on December 29, 1919, Ts'aо's forces became the backbone of the Chihli faction.

At the same time, Tuan's relationship with his other ally, Chang Ts'o-lin, had also turned sour. The Tuan-Chang alliance had been a marriage of convenience from the beginning. Altogether, Chang sent some six thousand men to the capital and some additional brigades to Anhwei to check Kiangsu, in order to boost Tuan's position.<sup>35</sup> On the other hand, Tuan paid high prices in both arms and money, which enabled Chang Ts'o-lin to consolidate his rule within Manchuria and to improve his army.<sup>36</sup> By the summer of 1918 Chang was already looking for new territorial gains. As Chang's position became more secure, his need for Tuan declined correspondingly. His relations with Hsü Shu-cheng deteriorated, and he removed Hsü from the Fengtien army in mid-August, charging him with embezzlement. A new dimension was added to the friction when Hsü was appointed in June 1919 to command the Northwestern Frontier Army. The inclusion of the vast territories of Inner Mongolia under the jurisdiction of a new administrative organ, the Office of the Supervision of the Frontier Affairs, posed a roadblock to Chang's expansionist scheme, and he viewed the presence of the Northwestern Frontier Army in Fengtien's vicinity with great apprehension. These events pulled Chang progressively away from Tuan and toward the emerging Chihli faction.

Throughout the autumn and winter of 1919, Wu P'ei-fu kept up an intensified barrage of circular telegrams against Tuan and his political cohorts and their policies. The warm public responses caused Wu to become bolder in his telegraphic warfare, and in January 1920, he formally requested the Peiping government to permit the return of the 3rd Division from the Hunan front. After his requests had been repeatedly ignored or rejected, Wu began to evacuate the families of his officers.<sup>37</sup>

At the same time, the alliance against Tuan was boosted by the entry of Honan. During the month of February, reports were circulated to the effect that Tuan was about to remove the military governor of Honan, General Chao T'i, and replace him with Wu Kuang-hsin. Chao and his brother reacted by mobilizing their forces, and they declared that they would fight rather than quit. It

was reportedly due to the intercession of T's'ao K'un that the Pe-king government agreed to keep Chao as military governor, and only replaced his civil governor.<sup>38</sup> As a result of this episode, Chao, who had previously been friendly with Tuan, decided to join hands with the militarists of the Chihili faction.

By the spring of 1920, an alliance between the Fengtien and Chihili factions was being forged against Tuan's Anhwei faction. On April 9, 1920, a conference was called at Paoting, the provincial capital of Chihili, where an eight-province alliance was entered into by Chihili, Kiangsu, Kiangsi, Hupeh, Honan, and the three Man-churian provinces. By this time the pattern of opposition was clearly set, and a war seemed inevitable unless Tuan gave in. Specifically, Tuan's opponents demanded (1) the reorganization of the cabinet to rid it of Anfu domination; (2) the appointment of a more satisfactory delegate and the reopening of the peace conference; (3) the abolition of the Northwestern Frontier Bureau; and (4) the transfer of the command of the Northwestern Frontier Army from the Northwestern Frontier Bureau to the Ministry of War.<sup>39</sup>

These demands, of course, were totally unacceptable to Tuan. Thereupon, on May 20, 1920, Wu began to evacuate from Hunan, which was promptly taken over by local forces, resulting in the flight of Chang Ching-yao from the provincial capital. Wu marched along the Peking-Hankow railway toward Paoting. In June, after discussions with President Hsü and with Tuan, Chang Tso-lin went to Paoting, where he conferred with T's'ao K'un, Wu Pei-fu, and a delegate of Li Shun. Presumably, Chang delivered the ultimatum to Tuan and tried to dissuade him from pursuing his policy, while at the same time he made some final arrangements with T's'ao in case Tuan was recalcitrant. Tuan stood his ground. On July 4, Hsü Shu-cheng was relieved by presidential order of his position as chief of the Northwestern Frontier Bureau and commander of the Northwestern Frontier Army. The army was to be placed under the command of the Ministry of War. In defiance of this order, the Northwestern Frontier Army was mobilized on July 6 and declared war against T's'ao. The opposing armies came into contact on July 14, and by the 19th all hostilities had ceased. Tuan was roundly beaten, and took refuge in the Japanese concession in Tientsin.

### *Conclusions*

Our historical review suggests that the atomization of the country after Yüan Shih-k'ai's death caused general alarm among the Peiyang militarists, who had been accustomed to privileged positions and enormous power. In contrast to the wave of independence movements that swept southern China, the northern militarists at first stayed together and tried to preserve their political influence. As an interim device, during 1916-18 they resorted to collective leadership exercised through the intermilitarist conferences. While political decision-making power was being shared by a larger number of people, however, everyone was aware that power must be decentralized and the rebellious areas taken back into the fold. Over the question of how this could best be achieved, the rivalry between Feng Kuo-chang and Tuan Ch'i-ji emerged; Feng was in favor of the peaceful resolution of conflict, while Tuan was in favor of uniting the country by force. At this stage, the rivalry provided merely the skeleton of factional struggle but not yet the factions proper, because many of the main actors were yet to enter the stage.

Tuan was the more forceful of the two main antagonists, and he built up a powerful personal following. On the political front, he created the Anfu Club. With a plentiful supply of arms and money from Japan, he succeeded in creating a relatively cohesive group or faction. Tuan's opponents, on the other hand, were not nearly as energetic or powerful. At best, Feng could rely on the support of Kiangsu and Kiangsi, and the qualified support of some divisional commanders, notably from the 8th and 20th divisions. From the evidence, Wang Chan-yüan of Hupeh looks very much like an opportunist, ready to shift sides with the political wind. Throughout the four years between 1916 and 1920, his stand on war or peace remained vague and contradictory, probably intentionally so. As far as I know, he never openly rebuked Tuan or his lieutenants, nor did Tuan ever display any significant anger against Wang. In the 1920 war, he played a passive role. Thus, although most writers describe all three military governors of the Yangtze Valley as forming the backbone of Feng's faction, I believe that Wang's adherence is extremely doubtful. The best evidence of Wang's detachment from the Chihili faction is the fact that the faction gave him no

spoils in the aftermath of the Anhwei-Chihli war and stood by when Wang was driven from Hupeh by local militarists.

Our review further demonstrates that it is inaccurate to identify Ts'ao K'un and Wu P'ei-fu with the Chihli faction from the very beginning, as some writers have done.<sup>40</sup> If we take a close look at history, we find that Ts'ao took a personal position on the war issue, not a factional position. Ts'ao probably was still thinking in Peiyang terms: he did not want to see Tuan's power as Peiyang power challenged by the southern rebels; he did not want to see Wang Chang-yüan's position in Hupeh endangered. At the same time, he also did not want to see Li Shun penalized for his opposition to the war, and he certainly was disgusted by Lu Chien-chang's "execution." A plausible explanation for this seemingly contradictory behavior is that Ts'ao was more concerned with the solidarity of the Peiyang group against external challenge and internal division than with factional gains or losses. Thus we see Ts'ao exerting full energy to help Tuan win the Hunan war, but also repeatedly expressing concern that Li Shun be treated magnanimously lest the Peiyang group break up.<sup>41</sup>

The Chihli faction did not become a genuine faction until Ts'ao K'un sealed his friendship with the followers of Feng Kuo-chang and ushered in a pattern of permanent opposition against Anhwei. The followers of Feng Kuo-chang had provided the skeleton of an opposition, but it was a very muted opposition. After Ts'ao's break with Tuan, which clarified the issues, events began to gather momentum and the political forces were moving toward a confrontation. Ts'ao brought to the faction military muscle and aggressive leadership. It was Ts'ao's forces who dared Anhwei to a test of strength and dealt it a shattering blow from which Anhwei was never to fully recover.

In the end, it was Tuan's arrogance that precipitated the crystallization of the Chihli faction. Tuan believed that the Peiyang lineage of authority could be reasserted only with organization and force. However, the Peiyang Army was in fact decentralized like the rest of the country. In order to resurrect Peiyang, Tuan was even willing to create a faction within Peiyang with separate political and military arms (the Anfu Club and the Northwestern Frontier Army), which later came to be identified as the Anhwei faction, and to silence Peiyang dissidents by dismissal, isolation, or

execution. But Peiyang members were not accustomed to high-handed treatment; even Yuan had employed more diplomatic methods when discipline was necessary. Members of Peiyang tended to regard it as a family. The head of a Chinese family was supposed to be stern and magnanimous at the same time; he must not be acrimonious or vengeful. Above all, the Chinese family valued harmony and frowned upon open divisions. It was incumbent upon Tuan, as a claimant to the Peiyang leadership, to fulfill these requirements. When it became evident that Tuan intended to persist in his high-handed style, others began to join forces for self-preservation. Thus, what started as an attempt to restore Peiyang's harmony and hegemony ended by splitting it hopelessly asunder.