

PREPMUN 2020 ONLINE CRISIS



**Qing Dossier**

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# Letter of Welcome

From the  
Qing Dais

To our most esteemed Cabinet Members,

The dire times have arrived upon us! Oh what do we do but to trust the fate and future of China in your capable hands. Welcome to the 1911 Qing Cabinet. This crisis is one of many twists and turns, just like our glorious Great Wall Of China. This crisis holds an engaging event for delegates regardless of their experience levels.

On behalf of the Dais and Backroom of the Qing, we are thrilled to have you all here tackling the revolution at its peak and we hope that all of you will leave this experience with a wealth of knowledge and lq7rtb8hqRgfLOexb2nX4pppHfICocvb86gb2UYYkwJ69x RWqiFxyuGE629zi42hil0XeKZ7KJmefyeAAcZqSVFqo9

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Rest assured that we will do our best to make this experience as immersive and educational as possible.

Yours Sincerely,  
Qing Dais

*\*The Rebels have intercepted and garbled parts of this message. Get it back by restoring balance in China.*

# The 1911 Revolution

## Introduction to the Qing Cabinet

The Qing Dynasty has ruled China since 1644. The Qing were preceded by the Ming Dynasty, and under the former's rule, the population grew threefold, along with the establishment of an integrated economy which saw the reduction of trade barriers and unification of economic policies between the states. The Qing experienced prosperity for some time, until the looming issues of overpopulation and concentration of land ownership started to create wrinkles in the Dynasty's reign. These eventually led to the Taiping rebellion where the Taipings lost and Zeng Guofan and his disciples were adored as saviors of the Qing empire as well as the Nian rebellion which was also unsuccessful but caused huge economic devastation and loss of life that contributed as major long-term factors in the collapse of the Qing regime. Moving forward, efforts at modernisation and westernisation were met with resistance from conservative officials. Corruption and bureaucratic inefficiencies resulted in financial mismanagement such as the misappropriation funds to build ornamental marble warships outside Beijing rather than upgrading the Chinese Navy as intended.

Such blunders came at a price; the loss of the first Opium War (1839-42), The Anglo-French War (1856-58), The Sino-Japanese War (1894-95) as well as the Boxer Rebellion (1900) all clearly demonstrated the weakness of Qing rule over China, forcing it to agree to a series of humiliating and embarrassing demands by the victors. These events prompted widespread unrest across the country.

# Background Information

## Growing Western Influence

The British East India Company had successfully monopolized the opium trade in 1779 and began engaging in a 'triangular trade' network by selling the opium to traders in India who would covertly have it transported to buyers within China. By 1819, the negative effects of opium began to surface in the form of a mass addiction to the drug amongst the Chinese population, an increase in corruption and a rapid decline of China's economy. Silver was used as currency under China's monetary system, hence its rapid decrease in supply practically stagnated the Chinese economy. Subsequent attempts to ban opium only exacerbated the issue as it prompted more corruption amongst officials for the coveted and now prohibited substance.

Ultimately, after diplomacy proved incapable of resolving China's fast-growing Opium problem, war was declared. Thus began the First and Second Opium Wars, as the British in the First, and British and French in the Second, invaded and defeated China. As a result, China agreed to humiliating treaties that ceded territory and granted privileges to the foreigners. These notably included allowing foreigners extraterritoriality within Beijing (effectively recognising Western sovereignty on Chinese territory), and permitting evangelists to promote Christianity amongst the Chinese population.

The propagation of Christianity within Chinese society undermined Confucian values, which the Qing government greatly valued as it had long formed the backbone of Chinese society, mandating the role of the individual as subservient to the emperor. Hence, the introduction and perpetuation of a new 'foreign' religion was perceived as a direct threat to the imperial system. Additionally, the previously established tributary system between China and other nations was tarnished by the Qing providing permanent accommodation for foreigners within Beijing. This collapse of the tributary system was interpreted by the populace as a loss of the emperor's virtue, as it had historically served to solidify China's dominance over East Asia.

## Uprisings

In addition to defeats at the hands of foreigners, the Qing experienced several close shaves from domestic threats. The Taiping Rebellion, Nian Rebellion and Muslim Rebellions in the late 19th century all indicated the rapidly deteriorating relationship between the Qing government and the populace as well as the government's dwindling prestige following the Opium Wars. The rebellions also exhibited the increasing religious-conflicts between the Chinese population likely brought about by the introduction of western culture i.e. Christianity.

Moreover, Qing corruption proved a catalyst for some of these Rebellions. As Qing officials siphoned funds from state coffers into their personal expenses, critical infrastructure like dykes

went without maintenance, allowing natural disasters like floods to occur as China's rivers underwent seasonal swelling. Superstitious Chinese interpreted natural disasters such as famines and floods as evidence of divine anger against the Qing dynasty. To them, the Qing had lost the Mandate of Heaven, the divine authority to rule, and the time had come for a new dynasty.

By the skin of their teeth, the Qing managed to put down these rebellions, but only through significant effort. During the Taiping Rebellion, the worst of the Rebellions saw anywhere from 20 to 70 million dead, the old capital of Nanjing was occupied by the Taipings and remained under rebel control for 11 years before the Qing finally managed to recapture it. One reason the Qing faced such difficulty in fighting the Rebellions was the state of their army. Although the Manchus had once been a proud martial culture, sharing ancestry with the Huns and Mongols who once ravaged Eurasia, decades of indolence and corruption had dulled their edge, with many appointed to military command on the basis of nepotism rather than meritocracy. In the face of a determined army like the Nian and Taiping forces, the ineffective Qing crumbled.

In response to Qing failures, provincial governors like Li Hongzhang and Zeng Guofan saw the need to raise an effective army. The Qing, lacking any effective forces, authorised the creation of provincial militias, raised locally and commanded by provincial governors. These militias proved significantly more effective in beating back the rebels, and contributed significantly to the ultimate Qing victory. However, this proved a major watershed in Chinese politics. By the end of the Taiping Rebellion, the major military forces, and by extension, those with the most power, were the provincial governors who commanded victorious and experienced militia armies, and not the central Qing government whose own forces had proven comparatively ineffective. Although the governors would not attempt any armed rebellions of their own, the balance of power had shifted from the central government to the provinces. This process of decentralisation would continue for decades to come, and its consequences, such as the military pledging its loyalty to its commanders or provincial governors rather than to Beijing itself, would plague China.

## **Self-Strengthening Movement**

From 1865–66, the British made concerted efforts to attempt to convince the Qing to undertake reforms to adopting Western technology and practices in order to strengthen their military and deploy more diplomatic envoys to western countries. However, the clash between the introduction of western religions, specifically Christianity, and the more dominant antiforeign Confucian orthodoxy alongside the Christian evangelists' attempts to westernize the Chinese society, sparked a furious nationalistic reaction from the Chinese people who still viewed the West as imperialists, which threatened the Chinese's Sinocentric worldview. By the end of the 1860s, western influence had seeded enmity and tension within the populace and had further tarnished the prestige of the Qing Dynasty and the Confucian doctrine.

The Self-Strengthening Movement's primary goal was to utilise western technology to effectively

consolidate Qing power and influence. Unfortunately, the Qing only realised much later that the western practices and their Sinocentric worldview were fundamentally incompatible when it came to implementing reforms for the military and economy. The Sinocentric worldview assumed that Chinese culture was inherently superior to all others which had a direct and negative impact on how the Chinese carried out reforms. Since they viewed Western cultures as inferior, they sought to merely adopt Western practices whilst retaining major aspects of Chinese culture which ultimately undermined any reforms made.

For instance, from 1861 to 1872, although the Qing were initially focused on adopting industrialization and manufacturing western firearms and machines, the outcome turned out to be very underwhelming. This was due to the Chinese merchants being undervalued by the government, which limited their ability to carry out free enterprise, stunting China's economic growth as western economic practices were simply incompatible with traditional Chinese culture at the time. This issue also plagued military reforms, where the Chinese adopted Western equipment and training, but kept to their old ways of locally-organised forces, resulting in defeats like in the Sino-Japanese War, where the Nanyang Fleet did not assist the Beiyang Fleet, causing the latter's defeat to the Japanese.

From 1872 to 1894, the Qing focused on manufacturing a wider range of products under individual companies, in which operations were 'government-supervised' and 'merchant-managed'. Unfortunately, company management was often ridden with corruption and nepotism, and the government heavily exploited these enterprises, causing enterprises to ultimately wane.

Aggravating the issue were compradors - Chinese agents employed by foreign companies based in China - who accumulated vast wealth through exploiting their role as middlemen between Chinese enterprises and foreign companies. They often resorted to embezzlement and irresponsible money management due to their lack of technical training and experience. Additionally, the compradors had their individual loyalties to their own exclusive familial or regional networks and hence prioritised their community over national interests when making financial decisions, ultimately aiding the foreign enterprises in their exploitation of China.

Moreover, while encouraged by the central Qing government, the main agents of the Self-Strengthening Movement were provincial governors. A vast majority of reforms took place on the provincial level rather than the national one, such as the construction of industrial and mining infrastructure. This served to heighten China's decentralisation as what little modernisation was achieved primarily benefited, and was organised by, provincial governors.

## **Hundred Days' Reform**

After 1885, some low-ranking officials and compradors began to demand for institutional reforms, the opening of a parliament and for the Qing government to focus more on the economic aspect

of China's development. Thinkers like Kang Youwei and Liang Qichao gained prominence, as Qing officials who saw the need for radical reform. Rather than the limited reform of the Self-Strengthening Movement that only aimed to adopt Western technology but preserve a Chinese outlook, Kang and Liang called for a total re-examination of Chinese culture and practices. They called for, among other things, a constitutional monarchy as practiced in Japan, Britain and Germany, a radical move for a country that had long believed that the Celestial Emperor's authority should be absolute.

By 1898, Kang had gained the trust of the Guangxu Emperor, and pushed for the implementation of his reforms. The Emperor agreed, issuing a series of radical and impromptu decrees for reform soon after that came to be known as the Hundred Days' Reforms. Some of these decrees called for abolishing the Confucian Imperial Examination system and a move from an absolute monarchy to a constitutional one; however, they failed to give rise to any significant result due to intense opposition from the mostly conservative elites, who saw the decrees as far too quick, and preferred a more moderate approach at reformation. The conservatives were later provoked into action when a reformist plot to dethrone the arch-conservative Empress Dowager Cixi, a major player in Chinese politics, was uncovered. In response, the Empress Dowager launched her own coup, detaining the Emperor and taking control of the Qing court, temporarily ceasing the reform movement. Kang and Liang were branded as outlaws and forced to go into hiding.

Although the direct cause of the movement's failure was the power struggle between the emperor and Cixi, it should be noted that the possibility of significant reform was already small from the start as most high-ranking officials were neutral or even opposed the radical pace of reforms. Additionally, the conflict between the reformists and the conservatives was deeply intertwined with the Han-Manchu rivalry, as the Manchus believed that the Chinese-sponsored reform movement would yield disadvantageous outcomes for them.

Though unsuccessful, the movement did make some semblance of progress by allowing some degree of freedom of speech, furthering the propagation of Western ideologies, and kickstarting the growth of private domestic corporations. It also laid the groundwork for the "conservative" imperial reforms made by the Manchu court following the Boxer rebellion.

## **Boxer Uprising**

In 1900, an antforeign uprising erupted in Shandong, in which a group known as the Yihequan (referred to as Boxers by the West) primarily targeted Christian converts and foreign missionaries, whom they felt had forsaken long-established Chinese traditions for an 'alien' religion. Arising from mass anti-Christian hysteria, the Boxer Uprising was simply a futile attempt to eradicate all traces of foreign influence from the country.

After annual flooding of the Yellow River and a northern drought which lasted from 1899–1900,



the number of starving commonfolk increased exponentially. The Boxer ideology provided them a scapegoat in the form of foreign imperialists, whom the Boxers claimed were to blame for the famines that occurred, an example of divine wrath.

Worsening the issue was the support many local authorities' showed for the Boxers' cause and their refusal to fight against them, with some going as far as incorporating the Boxers into their local militias. The Manchu court originally assumed a neutral policy towards the rebellion but began covertly supporting the Boxers by May 1900. Finally, when Empress Dowager Cixi called on all Chinese to attack foreigners in June 1900, the Boxers' began their siege of the foreign embassies within Beijing.

Swiftly, a coalition of foreign powers including all manner of troops from United States Cavalry to Austro-Hungarian Warships and Japanese Marines converged on China, bringing the Boxers and the Qing government to heel. The swift Allied victory was due in part to the decentralisation of China, which reached its peak during the Boxer crisis. Upon receiving the Empress Dowager's decree to attack the foreigners, provincial governors like Li Hongzhang and Zhang Zhidong, veterans of the Taiping Rebellion, refused to abide by the decree and declared the "Mutual Protection of Southeast China", an agreement among the provinces of Southeast China from Guangxi to Shandong to remain neutral in the Uprising. This decision could only have been taken in a political backdrop that had allowed the provinces to become nominally self-sustaining, allowing them to maintain legitimacy despite subverting Beijing's authority, and remaining somewhat economically independent from the rest of the country.

After the rebellion started to subside, estimates suggest the death toll for military personnel was up to 3000, most of which included the Boxers, making the need for modernisation apparent to the Qing. The Boxer Protocol between the Qing and foreign powers was signed in September 1901, detailing the indemnity of 450 million taels to be paid over 39 years and more significantly, the dismantling of forts between Beijing and the sea, another nail in the coffin of Qing prestige. Moreover, arch-conservatives such as Prince Duan, who had encouraged Qing support for the Boxers, were to be exiled or executed. This sudden removal of the loudest conservative voices in the Forbidden Palace created an environment where significant reforms could be considered more seriously, along with an impetus to implement them in light of China's humiliation. Following the settlement, Empress Dowager Cixi declared that the Manchu court would begin undertaking reforms, a decision that was in sharp contrast with the previous attempt to suppress the 1898 reforms.

## **Growing Demands for a Constitution**

After the Boxer rebellion, the calls for democracy within the government and the people became even more resounding and resolute. The Qing believed that constitutionalism would legitimize their rule, especially after Japan's victory in the Sino-Japanese War and Russo-Japanese War

soon after their adoption of constitutionalism, making a constitutional monarchy appear superior to autocratic governance. The populace were drawn towards ideas of constitutionalism due to influence from Western ideas of democracy, alongside a growing dissatisfaction with life under Qing rule.

The rising demand for a constitution led to the establishment of the “Principles of the Constitution” in 1908 which was heavily based on Japan’s Meiji Constitution. Although this was not a constitution itself, it acted as a precursor to one and it underscored the Qing’s intentions to eventually establish a constitutional monarchy. However, it should be noted that although adopting a constitutional monarchy would involve some transfer of power from the Qing to the people, the Qing were willing to make this sacrifice given the assumption that constitutionalism would win them the support of the people, allowing them to retain power in the long run. By 1909, China had organised provincial and national elections, an important first step in allowing for the decentralisation of power from the Qing to the people. Provincial assemblies had some power in checking & approving governors’ policies whilst the National Assembly had significantly less power as decisions were still made by the Qing. This led up to 1910 when the Advisory Council started implementing a Constitution, projecting to release a full Constitution by 1912 and establishing a parliament by 1913.

## **Railway Protection Movement**

After 1905, the Qing government allowed provinces to organize their own local railway construction projects in an attempt to kickstart economic activity within the regions. These railways were primarily funded by private investors, largely composed of merchant gentry, although they were occasionally nationalised and built by the Qing using loans from foreign banks. They were located across the country, but were concentrated in central China within the Sichuan, Hubei and Hunan provinces. The main proponents for the construction of these railways were Zaifeng and Sheng Xuanhuai within the Qing cabinet.

The Qing had three primary intentions for building the railways. First, they believed that the railways could help bring about economic development through enabling the easier transport of goods and people throughout the country which could potentially revitalise trade and other economic activity within China. Second, the railways would allow for better military control of the peripheries as it enabled faster deployment to outer regions like Mongolia that were under threat of Russian or Japanese influence. Third, the Qing identified an avenue for revenue generation through the nationalisation of the railway construction projections, and intended to use the money earned from the sale of the rights of the projects to foreigners to pay off the crushing indemnities incurred from the Boxer rebellion.

Unfortunately, the Qing poorly compensated shareholders of the project, who were primarily merchants leading to mass outrage amongst the gentry. When railways were sold, the

surrounding land also came under the control of foreign firms and banks, and therefore, foreigners. Following the Boxer protocol which left many cities in foreign control, this move to nationalise the railways made it appear as if the Qing were giving way to imperialism, reigniting long-standing feelings of mistrust and anger in both the Qing and foreigners within the populace.

These feelings of mistrust and fury at the Qing's actions erupted into what is known as the Railway Protection Movement which involved widespread protests primarily within the cities, organised by gentry to prevent nationalisation of the railways. The people sought to fight back against the Qing, who thought that nationalising the railways would grant them stronger control of the provinces, in order to retain their control over these projects. There were also rising sentiments of Han nationalism as more and more of the populace felt that the Qing government had no care for the provinces, which could be directly tied to ideas that the Manchu ruling elites had no care for the majority Han common folk, furthering igniting the people's anger against what they felt was a government that had betrayed them by submitting to imperialists.

### **Formation of the New Army**

In the 1800s, China's military was relatively weak as its Imperial Army was led by inept officers and the men were poorly trained and under-funded. The inadequacy of the Imperial Army coupled with the multiple uprisings which arose over the course of the 19th century, forced the provincial governments to form their own local armies to protect the people and maintain order.

Even after several provincial-level reforms were carried out during the Self-Strengthening Movement, the local leaders still retained the newly modernised armies' loyalty and trust. This persisted after the formation of the New Army through a series of reforms in the 1900s based on the German military. These reforms included educating the current officers and setting up military academies to train recruits and were meant to allow the Qing to consolidate their control over the military through the reorganisation of the military from a provincially-based force to a nationally commanded one.

The Qing encountered two major issues from the creation of the New Army. First, there was rampant infiltration of revolutionary ideas within the army, particular amongst the junior officers who had been educated abroad and were often influenced by Western ideas of democracy, leading to many harbouring revolutionary and democratic sympathies. These junior officers frequently formed "study groups" that became hotbeds for the organisation of revolutionary discussions and activities. Second, despite the Qing's best efforts, central control over the army remained highly unstable as many officers were still loyal to the generals and provincial governors who had trained them and led them in previous conflicts.

# Key Stakeholders

## Overview

The Qing cabinet's main aim is to maintain its influence and power over the Chinese economy, society and military which would be done by reversing the process of decentralisation, while silencing voices of rebellion. In the cabinet, there is a spectrum of extent of anti-foreign and nationalistic sentiments but cabinet members understood the importance of ramping up industrialisation to keep on par with other major countries.

## Supporters of the Monarchy vs Constitution

Certain members of the cabinet, mostly members of the Royal Family, were initially adamant about retaining power through their monarchical system of governance which effectively allowed for the centralisation of power within the Manchu ruling elite.

By 1905, seeing Japan defeat the Russians in the Russo-Japanese War which was attributed mainly to them having a constitution, made the Qing see the importance of having a constitution. This made constitutionalism appear superior to autocracy. Thus, many officials recognised the importance of forming a constitution, however there was still debate on what to include in the constitution given the ostensibly conflicting goals of legitimising Qing rule and granting more power to the general populace, which certain officials were apprehensive of.

## Foreign Powers

Foreign powers can mainly be divided into immediate neighbours such as Russia and Japan as well as countries further away such as Britain and Germany. For immediate neighbours, they had more access and proximity to China and hence, were more likely to engage in conflict with China in order to expand their territory. However, larger empires like Britain and Germany were more neutral as their main goal was to maintain their influence and the status quo. Hence, a power vacuum may not be in their best interest as it would cause disorder in Asia. However, if China was to take any action that would negatively affect their empires, they would interfere and put China in its place.

Inside the Qing cabinet, sentiments about foreigners also varied. After China's humiliating defeat during the First and Second Opium War and during the Boxer Uprising, it became apparent to the Qing that the Chinese military were no match for the western forces. The technological and tactical advancement of these foreign armies compared to the Chinese allowed the foreigners to force China into unfair treaties and trade deals, resulting in more leverage against the Qing. The growing western influence was met with increasing anti-foreign sentiments amongst some the cabinet members and the populace, who heavily resented the increasing amounts of control these 'foreigners' were exerting over their country. However, the Qing did recognise that there

was an undeniable need for their armies to be upgraded if they wanted to gain equal footing with the western forces in the future. This created a rift between the members of the cabinet who sought to denounce any further involvement with European powers, and members who believed in utilising western technology to improve their military.

# Central Concepts

## The Constitutional Debate

The constitutional debate gained momentum after the Russo-Japanese and Sino-Japanese War where the Chinese believed that having a constitution was vital in Japan's win. Hence, in 1908, the Qing published the "Principles of the Constitution" which was based on the Japanese constitution. While not a constitution itself, it was a major step in that direction. By 1909, China had also organised provincial and national elections and provincial assemblies had some power in checking & approving governors' policies. However, the National Assembly had much less power in making decisions and the bulk still lay in the hands of the Qing. In 1910, the Advisory Council to start implementing a Constitution and to release a Constitution by 1912 and have a parliament by 1913.

## Centralisation of Power

The Qing cabinet also placed major importance on centralising their power in China. The Qing wanted stronger control of the provinces while the people hoped for provincialisation instead. Its subordinates, the governors, had to choose or balance between appeasing the Qing and appeasing locals. The imperial court attempted to centralise power through the New Policies. These New Policies, or Qing Late Reforms, included Education, Military Constitutional and Cultural reforms, among others, to win popular support of the people as well as centralise power. In the education reforms, Academies were converted into Western style schools and regulations for school administration were modelled after the Japanese. However, some of these new schools which replaced the Confucian examination system started becoming breeding grounds for revolutionary ideas. Under military reforms, the New Army was set up to improve the military strength of China which had the potential to attract patriotic youth and improve respect for the military.

These attempts at centralisation were being undertaken rather fast by the young Manchu nobles. In May 1910, Zaifeng took control of the Salt Administration, to unify salt policies throughout the country. In August 1910, the Army Ministry assumed control of the Beiyang Army's six divisions, which required local governors to first contact the Department of the Army through telegram before deploying troops, even in emergency situations. Shortly after, the Naval Ministry was established. The following year, the provincial bureaucracy was reorganized and finally in May, the "Princes' Cabinet" was established and the court announced the nationalization of railway trunk lines. This shows the urgency of the Qing in forming a central government with greater power over all the provinces. As a consequence of these reforms, both **Prince-Regent Zaifeng** and **Prime Minister Yikuang** possessed significant control over Qing imperial decrees. This allowed them a **veto vote over all council directives** passed by the Qing.

One limitation to the centralisation of power was the size of the empire which made enforcing rule of law difficult. With a large land area to rule over, transporting troops from one part of the country to another would have taken time and be an expensive undertaking in terms of resources and manpower. Additionally, a larger number of troops would be needed to enforce rule of law within the country whilst protecting China's borders. This would present a dilemma to the Qing government, as its resources were becoming increasingly scarce, particularly due to the internal turmoils plaguing the country. An effective Qing government would hence need to centralise power cautiously and strategically through reforms.

## **Need for Reforms and Modernization**

The need for modernization in the Qing Empire was clear, with indications that such reforms would deter further uprisings, and aid China in standing up against the increasing western influences. Modernization was particularly relevant in terms of the economy, as well as the military. The Qing needed to find new and more efficient ways to carry out trade and commerce to ensure the empire and its economy would not become crippled. For the military, the Qing needed better equipment and more relevant training for troops that would allow the Empire to crush rebellions decisively and face Western invaders firmly.

The Qing Dynasty's military, with the exception of the New Army, still had the majority of its troops using traditional weapons and tactics which were obsolete and ineffective in dealing with conflict. Such glaring weaknesses also led to worsening morale among troops, as there was a growing perception that the government was ignorant and nonchalant towards troop safety and training.

Even though the self-strengthening movement in the late 1800s led to some improvements, the reforms were mainly at the provisional-level, which meant many militias and troops were locally organised and hence, loyal to local leaders as compared to the larger Qing government. As such, the Qing cabinet needed to factor this into consideration when looking at further attempts at modernizing their troops.

## **The New Army**

The New Army was the fully modernised and equipped army corps under the Qing Dynasty, operating under the purview of the Minister of War. Trained in modern warfare with modern equipment, these soldiers were a formidable force to be reckoned with. The New Army was modelled after Germany's military. Officers of the New Army were reasonably educated, particularly due to the establishment of Military academies. However, this modern education paved the way for the greater exposure to Western ideologies, resulting in some soldiers harbouring democratic or revolutionary sympathies. This resulted in cliques being formed within the New Army to discuss revolutionary ideas.

Despite the New Army being more centralised as opposed to the provincially organised forces many soldiers held their loyalties to generals who have trained them such as Yuan Shikai. When the New Army was deployed to quell the rebellion that rose as a result of the Railway Protection Movement, weak loyalties and burgeoning revolutionary ideas resulted in certain soldiers defecting to aid with the rebellion. Hence, even though the New Army is a crown jewel of the Qing's Military forces, whether the Qing manage to retain their loyalty is a question time will answer.

## **Manchu-Han Disparity**

The Manchu-Han disparity ran deep in China where the vast majority of Chinese people regarded themselves as 'Han Chinese' while the majority of the cabinet was made up of Manchu Chinese. The Manchus enforced separation from Han people, forbidding Han people from settling on Manchu land or marrying into Manchu families. Such rules caused friction to develop between individuals of the two ethnicities. While this certainly divided the commoners and the cabinet, further sparking anti-Qing sentiments and giving fuel to revolutionary movements, it also caused segregation within the cabinet as the few Han officials often found themselves sidelined by the Manchu majority and would have to fight for issues affecting the Han commoners.

The buildup of ethnic tensions would surely play a vital part in the resentment towards the governing body. Since the Manchus are concentrated in positions of power while the Han had to suffer for the wrongdoings of the Manchus, this sense of injustice is left open to be exploited by rebels. This should be taken into account by the ruling body, to alleviate ethnic tensions amongst the populace which would reduce the amount of internal turmoil that the government has to tackle.

## **Railway Protection Movement**

The Railway Protection Movement was a political protest movement that rose as a retaliation to the government's efforts to nationalise the national railway and transfer control over to foreign banks. To assist local economies, the Qing government granted the provinces the right to organize their own railway construction ventures resulting in foreign powers to plan, construct and manage nearly all railways in China from 1890s to 1905. The Sichuan-Hankou Railway Company was established in 1905 in the Sichuan Province. The company sold shares to the public and the provincial government levied a special 3% tax on harvests paid by land owners, who were also given share certificates to raise funds for the 1,238 km railway from Chengdu to Wuhan. Much of the Sichuan gentry and merchant class became shareholders of the railway venture. The company had raised 11,983,305 taels of silver of which 9,288,428 or 77.5% came from tax levies, 2,458,147 taels from public investments and 236,730 taels from government by 1911. However due to corruption within the administration, and mismanagement of resources by government appointed company managers, there was little progress with the construction of the railway with



only 16km of railway completed in 1911. Impatient with the progress of locally funded railway projects, the Qing government, returned to foreign lenders. Under the financial pressure of having to pay back huge debts to Great Britain, Germany, France and the United States under the terms of the Boxer Protocol, nationalizing the local rail ventures and then selling the rights to those ventures to foreigners allowed for a solution for the Qing government to raise the money to pay debts owed.

However, this order drew strong opposition across southern China, especially Sichuan, which had the largest public shareholding in the Sichuan-Hankou Railway venture. Being only partially compensated with government bonds, rather than silver, investors were extremely unhappy. To add on, the amount offered to Sichuan was much lower than all other provinces which made matters worse. More than 10,000 protesters held a rally against the proposal in Chengdu and organized a series of strikes and boycotts by students and merchants in retaliation from August 11 to 13, 1911. The Sichuan-Hankou Railway Company adopted a shareholders' resolution calling on the Sichuan public to withhold the payment of grain taxes to the Qing government as a continuation of retaliation against the Qing's decision on September 1st, 1911. When the Governor-General of Sichuan, Zhao Erfeng had Pu Dianjun and other leaders arrested and closed the company on the 7th of September, protesters were enraged and marched on the Governor-General's office in Chengdu demanding Pu's release, resulting in Zhao Erfeng ordering troops to open fire and dozens of protesters being killed. In Chengdu alone, 32 civilians were killed. This bloodshed further inflamed the protests giving rise to underground anti-Qing groups including the Tongmenghui and Gelaohui to initiate armed clashes with Qing troops in and around Chengdu. On September 15, Wang Tianjie, head of the Gelaohui in Rong County south of Chengdu organized the Comrades' Army and led 800 followers to march on Chengdu, vowing to topple Zhao Erfeng and as tensions escalated in Sichuan, despite the Qing government removing Zhao Erfeng from the governorship and offering full compensation to investors, armed groups numbering as many as over a hundred thousand were overwhelming government authorities in Sichuan.

This massive governmental debacle resulted in an increased number of gentries, middle class civilians as well as merchants sympathising with anti-Qing sentiments. This sympathy towards rebels could be seen spreading to the army as well.

# Conclusion

With a lot of moving pieces and past mistakes accumulating, the Qing cabinet has to find ways to satisfy its various stakeholders. The Qing aim to be in power regardless of the short term consequences. All in all, it is instrumental for the Qing to economically stabilize itself and ensure the loyalties of its troops. With Foreign and Domestic threats growing, the Qing needs to be able to rely on its troops should the need ever arise. For a strong military, a stable economy and domestic peace is necessary. Members of the Qing cabinet should explore ways to ensure they retain power whilst not losing track of the obstacles that may arise in the short term.

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