Not Out of the Blue: Sun Yat-sen and the ROC-PRC Paradox

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NOT OUT OF THE BLUE:
SUN YAT-SEN AND THE ROC-PRC PARADOX

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“…let’s always remember this moment; let’s always remember to value and feel gratitude for it, because the fruits of democracy did not come out of the blue.”

—Chen Shui-bian (May 20, 2000)
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J.T.
A Note on Romanization

Generally speaking, I have utilized the Pinyin system of Romanization, with the exception of several names—including people such as Chiang Kai-shek (Jiang Jie Shi—蔣介石) and places such as Taipei (Tai Bei—台北)—where other Romanizations have become widely accepted.
The National Assembly of the Republic of China...in accordance with the teachings bequeathed by Dr. Sun Yat-sen in founding the Republic of China...does hereby establish this Constitution, to be promulgated throughout the country for faithful and perpetual observance by all.

—Preamble to the Republic of China (ROC) Constitution

The Chinese people waged wave upon wave of heroic struggles for national independence and liberation and for democracy and freedom...The Revolution of 1911, led by Dr. Sun Yat-sen, abolished the feudal monarchy and gave birth to the Republic of China. After waging hard, protracted and tortuous struggles, armed and otherwise, the Chinese people...founded the People’s Republic of China.

—Preamble to the People’s Republic of China (PRC) Constitution

If one were to examine the constitutions of the Republic of China (last revised in 2005) and the People’s Republic of China (2004), the respective preambles would, perhaps of little surprise, read quite differently. The ROC Constitution features a brief preamble that makes no mention of political parties, but rather enumerates several justifications and expectations for the document that follows. That of the PRC, meanwhile, is substantially longer and speaks more to a victory of the people, under the explicit guidance of Mao Zedong and the Chinese Communist Party. Regardless of these differences, there is one major common element: Dr. Sun Yat-sen. Both documents recognize the work of Sun Yat-sen, as well as the establishment of the Republic of China in 1911, as a major boon to the livelihood of the Chinese people. Both convey, to a certain extent, a sense of gratitude for what Sun did for China. His promotion of a nationalist spirit and a desire for modernization contributed to the existence of both the Kuomintang (KMT) and the Chinese Communist Party (CCP), as well as the Republic of China and the People’s Republic of China each established.

Hence, seeing as how the leadership of both the Republic of China and the People’s Republic of China have claimed a sense of inheritance and legitimacy from the political philosophy of Sun Yat-sen, it seems a paradox how different the political situations—one a
developing democracy and the other a single-party authoritarian state—are in their respective domains. To resolve this dilemma, one must consider the different political and historical realities endemic to those regions, as well as the impact these had on the application of political theory. It is thus the intent of this thesis to discern how prioritizing different elements of Sun Yat-sen’s political theory resulted in divergent decisions made by the leaders of the Kuomintang and the Chinese Communist Party, which in turn help explain conditions found today in the Republic of China on Taiwan and the People’s Republic of China.

Historiography

In this thesis, the proposed subject matter crosses several streams of historiography. First, the figure of Dr. Sun Yat-sen is a contentious one, as both his personage and his political philosophy has been adopted and adapted by many, especially after his death in 1925. This gave rise to the situation, highlighted in subsequent chapters, where both the Kuomintang and the Chinese Communist Party used Sun Yat-sen to further their own ends. Thus, the pursuit of objective Sun-related sources is a frustrating one. I have, consequently, chosen to read several of Sun Yat-sen’s works in the original Chinese, rather than rely on a potentially biased translation. Secondary sources have been consulted mostly to contextualize Sun’s thoughts. This is also the case for the description of the restructuring of the KMT, as well as the First United Front.

No less contradictory are the accounts of Chiang Kai-shek and Mao Zedong. Again, I have attempted to focus most of the research on primary sources, or at least secondary sources that quote them. When it comes to these sources, the original Chinese sources are much more difficult to come by, so I have been forced to accept the translations available. Thankfully,
many of the primary sources in question, including the diaries and writings of these men, have a single official translation in circulation.

Finally, the account of Taiwanese democratization draws heavily upon secondary sources, as few primary sources appear to have been made available. In fact, even secondary sources are sparse. The intellectual community appears to still be reconciling the so-called third wave of democratization, referring to the rise of democracy in the post-Cold War world.

* * *

Tracing the legacy of Dr. Sun Yat-sen with respect to both the Republic of China and the People’s Republic of China requires a back-and-forth walk through history. In an attempt to alleviate some of the confusion that could result from a strictly chronological approach, I have instead opted to use the power of hindsight and work more thematically. First, Section I will focus squarely on Sun Yat-sen, first his life and teachings and then with a particular focus on the First United Front and its legacy. From there, Section II will discuss Chiang Kai-shek and Mao Zedong, the two men who would battle over both the legacy of Sun and control of China, itself. A similar time frame, between the end of the First United Front and the end of the Chinese Civil War, will be considered when developing the similarities between the two enemies. Finally, Section III will attempt to explain the political divide between the ROC and the PRC. More explicitly, this section will attempt to explain what brought about democracy in Taiwan by considering Taiwan’s historical development, the effects of KMT rule, and its ties to Dr. Sun. We will close by asking what, if any, lessons Taiwan’s political transformation has for the People’s Republic of China. Seeing as how Dr. Sun Yat-sen called upon the establishment of democracy in China, I believe it a fitting tribute to discuss the possibility of such an occurrence.
Section I: Father of the Nation

In this section, we will discuss Dr. Sun Yat-sen, father of the Chinese nation. In order to fully cover the multi-faceted figure that was Sun Yat-sen, we will first discuss his life and teachings before detailing the First United Front. It is the intent of this section to present how and why Sun Yat-sen came to be such an important figure in modern Chinese history.
CHAPTER ONE: SUN YAT-SEN: THE MAN WHO WOULD BE GUO FU

…the danger of dissension and disintegration has become graver with the passing of time. Our urgent duty is to discover the causes of this deteriorating situation and find a remedy. The aim of the revolution is the realization of the Three Principles of the People, and to put them in practice requires employing certain means and taking certain steps. Whether they have beneficial effects depends upon the way and manner in which they are carried out.

—Sun Yat-sen (April 1924)

Thus, Dr. Sun Yat-sen, Western-educated doctor-turned-revolutionary, issued forth a rallying cry to the people to continue the fight for a free and powerful China. For Sun, China could be brought to realize such hopes through the successful application of his political philosophy. The most important component of this was the so-called Three Principles of the People, which were presented, modified, and represented in both print and lecture several times under the same name (San Min Zhu Yi—三民主義). In addition, practical considerations were discussed several times in treatises like the Five-Power Constitution (Wu Quan Xian Fa—五權憲法) and Fundamentals of National Reconstruction (Jian Guo Da Gang—建國大綱), among others. Viewed in conjunction, the works of Sun Yat-sen provide a basis for his political philosophy. If modern Western theories could be properly blended with traditional Chinese beliefs, Sun believed there was still a chance China could be rescued from imperialism and dissolution.

Before one can begin to consider the political ideology espoused by Sun Yat-sen, though, it is necessary to first review the life and times of the man, especially the circumstances that contributed to his prominent position in early modern Chinese history. Much of Sun’s political philosophy was inspired and influenced by his experiences in Japan and the West, as well as the state of world affairs at the time. If it not were for these, it is doubtful that Dr. Sun would have ever produced such a remarkable body of work that blends the ideas of both East and West. Consequently, one gains insight into the essential components of Sun’s political system by
examining the many factors that lead to their development. Any study of Dr. Sun Yat-sen’s doctrine should, therefore, provide a history of the man, rather than debate the merits of his ideas in a vacuum.

To this end, this chapter will be presented in three parts, namely Sun Yat-sen: The Man, Sun Yat-sen: The Ideas, and Sun Yat-sen: The Essentials. The first of these will entail a brief biographical sketch of Sun, including the circumstances and environment in which he carried out his work. With a clearer understanding of the man whose philosophy was meant to improve the situation in China, the second section will then convey an understanding of what those principles really were. A number of Sun’s major themes will be discussed, as well as their evolution through time. Finally, having considered the world in which Sun lived and the ideas that he formulated, this chapter will close with an attempt to distinguish the fundamental components of Sun Yat-sen’s philosophy. As will be discussed later, Sun’s ideas proved largely influential in modern Chinese history, so it is important to take note of the key themes. By the conclusion of this chapter, I hope to have established a concrete analysis of Dr. Sun Yat-sen’s arguments, as well as a conceptualization of his view of modernity and its relation to China.

**Sun Yat-sen: The Man**

The figure of Sun Yat-sen hangs high above the politics of greater China, including the People’s Republic of China and the Republic of China that both lay claim to its territory. As the founder of the Republic of China, Sun Yat-sen—or “father of the country” (*Guo Fu—國父*), as he is also known—commands great respect for his contributions to China and the livelihood of its people. While Sun Yat-sen spent considerable time abroad, his belief in the Chinese people ultimately had a profound impact on both the mainland and Taiwan. Through his role in the
Republic of China in the early 1900s, his theories on the democratization of a Chinese state, and
the transplantation of his system to Taiwan, Sun Yat-sen was instrumental in the eventual
democratization of the Republic of China on Taiwan. Meanwhile, the Chinese Communist
Party adopted the same philosophical pedigree when establishing its own system in the
People’s Republic of China.

By the turn of the twentieth century, years of strife and defeat had made it clear that
China was in need of reform. Loss to the Japanese during the First Sino-Japanese War was just
one of many setbacks to befall China in the latter half of the nineteenth century. A combination
of war\(^a\) and disasters (both natural\(^b\) and manmade\(^c\)) plagued the land. As the nineteenth
century came to an end, it was clear that these factors had “weakened China’s economy,
endangered the empire’s security, and threatened the legitimacy of [Qing] governance.”\(^1\) It
was obvious that action needed to be taken in order to save China and bring it into the modern
world. The Qing rulers attempted to take up the call of reform, but their “poorly conceived”
efforts “produced few tangible results.”\(^2\) Despite the best efforts of the Qing dynasty, the
Chinese system made it apparent that reform needed to come from the outside.

As this occurred, a young Sun Yat-sen was studying in Hawaii and Japan, where he
learned about ideas that would impact both him and the Chinese world. Originally from a rural
community in Guangdong province, Sun was a gifted student and graduated from Hong

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\(^a\) After fighting Western imperialist nations—including Great Britain, France, and the United States—in
the First and Second Opium Wars (1839-1842, 1856-1860), among others, China was left in a dire situation.
The peace treaties of these many wars entailed massive reparation payments to the Western powers, in
addition to allowing Western traders and missionaries into China.

\(^b\) In 1842 and 1887, floods killed an estimated 300,000 and 900,000 people, respectively.

\(^c\) Several peasant rebellions, the largest of which was the Taiping Rebellion (1851-1864), killed massive
numbers of Chinese people and ravaged the country.
Kong’s College of Medicine for Chinese at the top of his class in 1892. While abroad, Sun was exposed to political ideas like self-determination and democracy. Believing these principles were the keys to saving China, in 1894, Sun Yat-sen founded the Society to Revive China (Xing Zhong Hui—興中會), whose mission was to “expel the Manchus,\(^d\) restore Chinese rule, establish a republic, and equalize the land.”\(^3\) Taking this mission as his own, Sun labored for much of his life for the overthrow of the Qing dynasty. To this end, Sun spent a considerable amount of time fundraising outside of China to support “his revolutionary front as well as to ferment uprising in China to topple the Manchu leadership.”\(^4\) While it did not occur without its own setbacks, Sun’s goal ultimately came to fruition in 1911, when the Chinese United League (Tong Meng Hui—同盟會)—the successor to the Society to Revive China—led a revolution that quickly toppled the Qing dynasty and established the Republic of China in 1911. Moving from a group at war to a political party in peace, the Chinese United League turned into the National People’s Party (Guo Min Dang—國民黨).\(^e\) The Nationalists elected Sun provisional president of the Republic of China in 1912. Vested with national control, Sun Yat-sen had the chance to build a government in accord with his expectations, but despite his best intentions, this was not to be.

In the years following the Nationalist revolution in 1911-1912, Sun Yat-sen and the KMT attempted to establish a government in his image, but it did not come easy. China was simply too divided by infighting between the powerful warlords of the time. Almost immediately after assuming office, Dr. Sun was forced to resign from the presidency to allow the powerful Yuan

\(^d\) It was a popular critique of the ruling Qing dynasty that it was not controlled by the Han people, the major ethnic group of China, but rather the Manchu, an ethnic group from Manchuria in northern China.

\(^e\) Hereafter I will refer to the party as the Kuomintang, or KMT, according to the official Romanization adopted by the party, itself.
Shikai into the position. Yuan’s political ambitions\(^1\) created much political turmoil. Meanwhile, the Chinese Communist Party (founded in 1921), despite legitimate claims to be following Sun’s ideas, produced much political turmoil and divided the already contentious revolutionaries. Realizing his own mortality\(^2\) during a time of political crisis in China, Sun spent his final years updating and redelivering his ideas in hopes that they would find a suitable audience. What follows is an overview of the theories Sun espoused on these topics, as well as their evolution between the early twentieth century and until his death in 1925.

**Sun Yat-sen: The Ideas**

The theoretical foundation for much of Dr. Sun Yat-sen’s political philosophy, the Three Principles of the People\(^3\) represented the three “saving tenets” (Jiu Guo Zhu Yi—救國主義)\(^4\) that Sun believed would deliver China from its ills: Nationalism, Democracy, and the People’s Livelihood. Nationalism, while similar to the Western concept, took on certain connotations Sun believed unique to China. Democracy concerned the people’s ability to regulate themselves through government. Finally, the People’s Livelihood dealt with the promotion of the people’s general well-being. The rest of Sun’s theories grew out of these three concepts. Thus, it was through successfully advancing them that Sun believed China could be elevated from the desperate position he saw it to that of the world’s leading powers.

The Principle of Nationalism

Johns Hopkins University Professor Paul Linebarger noted in 1937 that while the Western view of nationalism was an “intensification of the already definite national

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\(^1\) Yuan Shikai declared himself Emperor of China in December 1915 and served as such until March 1916.

\(^2\) Sun ultimately died of liver cancer on March 12, 1925.
consciousness,” in China such a concept merely represented “the introduction of such an awareness of nationality.”7 When Sun Yat-sen first began formulating his ideas during the early-twentieth century, China was still ruled by the Qing dynasty. The Manchu rulers of the Qing dynasty were greatly resented by many of the Han majority, who—as Sun stated in 1906—“would certainly not mistake them for fellow Han.”8 This reality gave rise to Sun Yat-sen’s early take on the Chinese nation and Chinese nationalism. The overthrow of the Qing dynasty in late 1911 prompted Sun to claim China’s spirit had been “revived”9 and the call for nationalism realized. Unfortunately, reality proved this sentiment rash and naïve. By the time Sun gave his final lectures on the Principle of Nationalism in 1924, he suggested any sense of nationalism in China had been lost centuries ago.10 With a revised sense of what nation and nationalism meant, Sun issued a final plea for the people of China to take up his vision.

Defining the Chinese Nation

That concept of the “nation” was a sticking point for Sun. Even in his final talks on the subject in 1924, the term he used for “nation” (Na Xun—哪遜)11 was simply a transliteration that would, if taken literally, mean “where/which modest.” Regardless, Sun chose to interpret a “nation” as one of two things: “race” or “state.”12 The difference between the two lay in how they developed. States formed out of the struggles of men, both in the political realm and on the battlefield. Meanwhile, nature gave rise to races, through five commonalities between peoples: blood, livelihood, language, religion, and customs.13 During the time of the Qing dynasty, Sun lamented that the Han were “a people without a nation” because they were under the control of another race, the Manchu.14 Hence, Han nationalism could only exist after they were expelled. Following the overthrow of the Qing, Sun boldly declared in 1912 that Chinese
nationalism had been “attained” and subsequently cut the Principle of Nationalism from his agenda. When it came time to replace the Qing governance, anger and resentment against the Manchus divided China’s leaders. Realizing this, Sun revised his earlier claims and demanded that his followers “sacrifice the separate [Han] nationality, history, and identity that they are so proud of and [merge] in all sincerity with the Manchus, Mongols, Muslims, and Tibetans in one melting pot to create a new order of Chinese nationalism. [emphasis added]” Ultimately, a uniform view of China was essential to Sun’s Principle of Nationalism.

After identifying the peoples of China as being of a single race, Sun suggested that this made China a unique nation in the world. Some nations (Sun chose England as his example) were of more than one race, and some races (Anglo-Saxons) were from more than one country (England and the United States). But according to Sun, the Chinese nation was different. It was at once a single state and a single race, and it had been that way since the beginning of the Qin dynasty. Consequently, the fact that the Chinese nation was unique meant that Chinese nationalism would, in turn, be unique as well. Simply put, Sun believed that the Western view of nationalism did not apply to China and vice versa. Without an appropriate model, then, it was necessary for Sun to describe what he believed nationalism meant for China.

In attempting to define nationalism, Sun Yat-sen drew a parallel between a nation and a family. Nationalism was a familiarity between members of the same nation much like one “always recognizes his parents and never confuses them with strangers.” Just as one recognizes parents as loved ones, one cares for their wellbeing. In the case of China’s nationalism, this would manifest itself as a consideration for the nation, both the race and the

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h The first of China’s many dynasties, the Qin united the seven warring Chinese states in 221 BC.
state. With this concern in the hearts of the people, Sun believed that nationalism in China would result in benefits for both race and state, alike. The nagging question, though, was how to inspire the Chinese people to take hold of this passion for their nation.

**Revealing the Love of Country**

In light of Sun’s changing view of the Chinese nation, it stands to reason that his beliefs regarding the manifestation of nationalism would also shift. When the Qing dynasty was still in control of China, Sun believed nationalism would entail the rising up and expelling of those perceived foreigners. With the passing of time and shifting of realities, Sun expanded his perspective from a fixed gaze on China alone to a wider view encompassing China’s position in the world. This general broadening was indicative of Sun’s increasing ambitions for China.

Taking note of the many problems to befall the Qing dynasty during its later years, Sun Yat-sen first proposed that the realization of nationalism would come through the overthrow of such rule. The nineteenth century saw China marked up by both European and Japanese imperialism, the establishment of treaty ports and extraterritoriality, years of costly and fruitless wars of defense, and a general crumbling of the Chinese state. Many around Sun saw this foreign incursion as a threat to China, and Sun agreed it was dangerous to allow “people of a different nationality” to “seize...political power.” To Sun, though, the greater threat was a different non-Han group: the Manchu rulers of the Qing dynasty. It was Sun’s fear that they would “extinguish” the Han nation by depriving the Han race of their state. The internal threat was far greater than the external one: “There is no way the foreigners can partition China. Our only fear is that the Chinese will partition the nation themselves, in which case there will be no hope!” Thus, it was impera
Han] nation by liquidating [the Qing] regime.” Sun’s early take on Chinese nationalism entailed the expulsion of the non-Han rulers of China and the establishment of a Han nation.

With the Wuchang Uprising on October 10, 1911, sparking a revolution that quickly toppled the Qing dynasty, Sun Yat-sen joyously exclaimed that his plans were being realized. When a bomb being stockpiled by Sun’s supporters went off in the Wuchang district of Wuhan, the ensuing fight between revolutionaries and Qing officials sparked a “mighty turbulence” that rippled through the country. In December of the same year, Sun extolled the uprising for setting in motion the Xinhai revolution, which called for “the nation [to] be returned to the Han people.” Two days later, on January 1, 1912, the Republic of China was formally established; Emperor Puyi of the now-defunct Qing dynasty abdicated on February 12. Sun Yat-sen served briefly as the Republic of China’s president. On April 1, he resigned under the claim that his principle of nationalism had been “attained.” Believing that his demands had been realized, Sun put his faith in the just-established Republic of China.

Despite the high hopes born of the Xinhai revolution, reality proved otherwise for Sun Yat-sen, his supporters, and China as a whole. When Sun Yat-sen stepped down from the presidency, it was done in order to allow Yuan Shi-kai, a military strongman who had thrust himself into Republican-era politics. As summarized by Peter Zarrow, criticism of his rule came for a number of reasons:

- taking loans from the foreign banks and governments (instead of reforming the tax system), crushing parliamentary politics, repressing the so-called Second Revolution;

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1 Peter Zarrow is Associate Research Fellow at Academia Sinica’s Institute of Modern History in Taipei.
2 The Second Revolution was an attempt to overthrow Yuan Shi-kai’s rule in the light of his failings. It was suppressed and its leaders, including Sun Yat-sen, were forced to retreat (many to Japan).
ruling by decree, yielding to most of Japan’s “Twenty-one Demands,” and finally attempting to establish a new dynasty in his own right. No wonder why many Chinese judged the 1911 Revolution a failure.²⁷

These failings, especially Yuan’s attempt to establish his own dynasty in 1915, must have been greatly troubling for Sun. Unfortunately, this would not be the only disappointment. When World War I broke out in Europe in 1914, the Republic of China was initially neutral but moved toward the side of the Allied Powers. Trying to help out, Chinese men were sent to work in understaffed British and French factories. Seeing an opening, in November 1914, Japan launched an attack on China and seized the Shandong region. This was quickly followed, in January 1915, by the Twenty-One Demands, which ordered China to recognize Japanese possession of Shandong, as well as its interests in Manchuria and Mongolia. Yuan Shi-kai had no choice but to accept. The one chance at retribution came at the end of the war, when the Chinese made demands for the return of Shandong. The drafters of the Treaty of Versailles did not make such concessions, and the treaty called for Shandong to become Japanese territory. Feeling wronged by the great powers of the world, China refused to sign the treaty. Less than a decade after overthrowing the Qing dynasty, Chinese nationalists again found their country threatened by forces both foreign and domestic.

Having seen his suggestions blatantly ignored, Sun was forced to change partners in diplomatic affairs. Sun Yat-sen spent a considerable portion of his life attempting to curry favor from powerful nations of the world, especially the United States and Great Britain, as he believed these countries were the strongest and richest in the world.²⁸ Unfortunately, Sun was

²⁷ The Twenty-one Demands were a series of demands made by the Japanese concerning Japanese interests in Chinese territory, as well as extending Japanese diplomatic and economic influence.
frequently met with failure. This, along with the troubling realities of the Versailles treaty talks, marred Sun’s view of these nations and their allies. Eventually, Sun gained an audience with the Soviet Union, a power purporting to be thoroughly anti-imperialist. In January 1923, Soviet politician Adolf Joffe met with Sun; the two issued a joint manifesto (today known as the Sun-Joffe Manifesto) on the situation in China, the question of communism there, and Soviet guarantees to help Sun’s cause. Overall, it was agreed that at that time, communism was not relevant to China. China first needed to deal with its “most pressing” issues, namely “national unification” and “full national independence.”

A witness to the ills of imperialism, Sun Yat-sen ideologically allied himself with the Soviet Union. This would ultimately have a major impact on later Chinese history. Having secured a powerful ally, Sun Yat-sen moved to issue his final demands for the propagation of his ideas.

Culminating from his experiences following his resignation from power in April 1912, Sun Yat-sen reinterpreted his own views of the manifestation of nationalism before he died in 1925. Though earlier he decried the Manchus as the greatest threat to the Han nation, his revised take on nationalism was far more pan-Chinese and anti-imperialist. For Sun, the First World War had been brought about by the poison of imperialism. While that time was full of horrors for most, Sun believed something positive had, in fact, developed: Woodrow Wilson’s principle of self-determination. Taking this and his anti-imperialist sentiments, Sun finally knew what Chinese nationalism should look like. It was time for China to stand up for itself, secure its borders, push out the imperialists, and stand amongst the great powers of the world. This was to be China’s nationalism: a securing of and taking pride in the overall Chinese nation in the face of other great powers in the world.
Chinese Nationalism

Based on the evolution of Sun’s thoughts about nationalism, I propose a definition of Chinese nationalism that will become of increasing relevance in later discussions: Chinese nationalism, in the view of Sun Yat-sen, is a prideful view of a unified China—a unique nation that is at once both a single race and single state—that belongs amongst the world’s great nations, as well as a willingness to work for the promotion of such a sentiment.

The Principle of Democracy

In order to encourage this sense of Chinese nationalism, Dr. Sun Yat-sen claimed the people should be better incorporated into the functioning of the nation. To facilitate this, Sun incorporated ideas both old and new, Chinese and Western, into a completely novel form of government of his own design. In so doing, he was forced to debate the merits of equality among people, as well as ask if such a thing can truly exist. He also gave his view of liberty and the rights he deemed unalienable. Over time, Sun slowly refined his proposition in order to best meet the demands of a nationalistic China. By the time he spoke on the subject for the last time, Sun Yat-sen had given a fairly clear picture of what he wanted in the government that would control his modern China.

The Question of Equality

In a lecture on the Principle of Democracy in 1924, Dr. Sun Yat-sen made mention of the French rallying cry of Liberté, égalité, fraternité. To Sun, this set of ideals was not incompatible with his own program of Nationalism, Democracy, and the People’s Livelihood. Intriguingly,

\[^1\] Dr. Sun’s meaning is debatable. The term (Min Quan—民權) is often translated as “democracy,” but it can also mean “civil rights” or “civil liberty.” The two characters mean “the people” and “authority.”
Sun claimed that his Principle of Democracy was “identical” to the French ideal of equality because his principle promoted the people so that they were political equals. Meanwhile, despite the fact that Sun made references to equality, his idea of equality was quite different from the altruistic concept promoted by the Enlightenment thinkers that so affected the Western world. Thus, Sun crafted his government with the notion that all men were not born equal, but they deserved what he considered to be political equality.

Early on, Sun Yat-sen presented his view of democratic equality in direct opposition to the inequality of monarchical rule. In general, the monarchies of the world had taken the natural differences in the abilities of people and institutionalized them with fixed ranks that were based on birth rather than merit. To illustrate this during a lecture given in 1924, Sun drew a diagram of society entitled “Inequality” (Figure 1), which showed the King at the top with other people of rank in steps moving all the way down to the people at the bottom. This, as Sun boldly described while the Qing remained in power, was the system at work in dynastic Chinese society. Overall, it was an “intolerable” system that needed to be done away with after the “overthrow [of] the Manchu regime.” If this were to occur, as it ultimately did during the Xinhai revolution, the question remained of what to do instead.

Figure 1.1 – Inequality (1924) [adapted from Franklin W. Price’s San Min Chu I]
In pursuit of an answer to this question, Sun start with historical precedent and refined it to better meet his expectations and views of society. To counter an inequality similar to that which Sun saw in dynastic Chinese society, eighteenth-century French revolutionaries overthrew the monarchy and imposed their belief that all men—regardless of background, skills, and talents—were equal. Sun Yat-sen believed this belief was foolish and just as harmful as monarchical inequality. For Sun, nothing in nature—especially man—existed on a level plane, save the surface of water. Men were born with greater and lesser talents and should be allowed to benefit from these talents. Hence, imposing any sense of equality on the people was not genuine. Sun drew another figure and titled it “False Equality” (Figure 2). The line at the top signified the level at which all men were to be supposedly “equal,” and the steps represented how far each man would be subjected in order to achieve this so-called equality.

![Diagram of False Equality]

This would be avoided by simply allowing nature to take its course and allow the superior man to profit from his superiority. As Professor Linebarger described Sun’s theory:

The far-seeing men, the geniuses that Sun saw in all society, owed their superiority not to artificial inequality but to natural inequality; by their ability they were outstanding. Laws and customs could outrage this natural inequality, or conceal it behind a legal façade of artificial inequality or equally artificial
equality. Law and customs do not change the facts. The superior man was innately the superior man. \(^{35}\)

Considering the fact that Sun Yat-sen viewed China as a single entity, it stands to reason that the success of a portion of the population would be of benefit to the entire population. Then, according to his belief that improving the situation of the population—the race—was an expression of nationalism. A system that would grant the superior man superiority (Figure 3) was an expression of the Principle of Nationalism. Over time, Sun worked out what such a system would look like and how such a system would operate.

![Figure 1.3 – True Equality (1924) [adapted from Price]](image)

**Political Equality and the Five-Power Constitution**

While Sun Yat-sen’s view of Chinese nationalism evolved over the course of time, his antipathy for the promotion of inequality and false equality remained constant. To ensure that this did not occur, Sun proposed a government composed of five branches—based on both theories adopted from the West and ancient China—with the express intent of protecting the political rights of the people and, in turn, ensuring his view of political equality. The formulation of such a system is a topic of considerable discussion in Sun’s later lectures, as well as a 1921 writing entitled *The Five-Power Constitution* and a number of illustrations. Seen as a
whole, this body of work presented some of Sun’s most concrete, visual plans for his vision of the future for modern China.

The baseline on Sun’s diagram of “True Equality”—the common point from which all people were to carry forward—was predicated on Sun’s concept of political equality. In Sun’s society, all people were to be guaranteed four basic rights: suffrage (Xuan Ju Quan—選舉權), recall (Ba Mian Quan—罷免權), initiative (Chuang Zhi Quan—創制權), and referendum (Fu Jue Quan—複決權). Suffrage and recall were the rights to elect people into office and to remove them from it. Initiative and referendum were essentially the powers to propose new laws by petition, as well as to amend old laws. As a crucial component of the Principle of Democracy, ensuring these rights was, as Sun described at the end of 1911, one of his “ultimate goals” for the nearly-established Republic of China. By 1924, as self-determination spread and he gained the support of the Soviet Union, Sun moved away from such wishful terminology and called upon a concerted effort to realize this ambition. It would be up to the establishment of an appropriate form of government to carry out this effort, and this, Sun had prepared as well.

By studying the structures of the roles of government both foreign and domestic, Sun Yat-sen was able to construct a system he believed would protect the political rights of the people. Over the course of his travels to the West and Japan, Sun came across a plethora of ideas and institutions meant to protect the rights of the people. In most of these systems, Sun observed five powers key powers exerted by the government. In addition to the Legislative (Li Fa—立法), Executive (Xing Zheng—行政), and Judicial (Si Fa—司法) powers overtly wielded by many governments, Sun also identified the powers of Examination (Kao Shi—考試) and Control (Jian Cha—監察) held more subtly. The power of examination concerned the government’s
ability to determine the best people to hold office; meanwhile, the power of control consisted of the government’s ability to regulate its members after taking office. Of the systems he encountered, the United States, in Sun’s estimation, had the best constitution. It displayed all five of these powers. The first three were the legislative, executive, and judicial powers explicit in the names of the respective branches (Yuan –院). In addition, Sun saw Congress’ power to impeach as the power of control, and the president’s power to name his advisors as the power of examination. Sun believed, though, that the system employed by the United States could still be improved upon. Since the dynastic period, these powers were also wielded by the Chinese government, through grouped differently. The emperor wielded the legislative, executive, and judicial power as one; the remaining powers were held by their own branches. Most notably, the civil service examination system was employed in order to determine the best of society to hold office. Both systems were illustrated during a July 1921 lecture with a diagram (Figure 4).

Figure 1.4 – A Comparative Study of Constitutions (1921) [adapted from WQXF]
Hence, the people of Sun’s society held four political powers to control their government, and the government held five forms of power to manage both itself and the people. During a lecture on the Principle of Democracy in 1924, Sun drew another diagram (Figure 5) to summarize these powers. Taking these as the basis for the construction of his government, Sun Yat-sen conceptualized a five-branch government of considerable size and centralized power that would demonstrate and ensure the Three Principles of the People.

![Figure 1.5 – Powers of the People and Government (1924) [adapted from Price]](image_url)

For Sun, government was similar to a machine, and that which he proposed was a piece of new, high-efficiency machinery. As developments of the nineteenth century had brought about ever greater technical achievements, early twentieth century political developments in China and abroad—the overthrow of the Qing dynasty, the Bolshevik revolution, the promotion of self-determination—had set in motion a series of advances in governance around the world. For China, this presented the perfect opportunity to put in place a government that made good on all the mistakes made by past governments. At the top would be The People’s Congress, populated by representatives of the people. Beneath that would be a national government divided into the five branches, one for each power of the government. Ministries would be established within the national government to provide for the nation’s needs (including, but not
limited to, education, finance, and military affairs). Further down would be direct provincial
governments which would protect the four political rights. In 1924, this was all illustrated with
a drawing (Figure 6). All that remained for discussion were government programs as part of
the Principle of the People’s Livelihood.

Figure 1.6 – Component Parts of the *Five-Power Constitution* (1924) [adapted from Price]

**The Ultimate Goal of Sun’s Government**

For Sun, the Principle of Democracy naturally followed the Principle of Nationalism and
both informed the structure of his proposed government. Sun’s political equality stemmed
from a realistic view of the world and a Nationalistic desire to see the nation prosper.
Establishing political equality would allow equally Nationalistic citizens to defer to the superior
men of society, who would still be held accountable by the people’s political rights. Ultimate
authority “was to rest with the people of the Chinese race-nation, united, self-ruling, and determined to survive.” Hence, Sun’s Principle of Democracy, especially as it defined political equality and how it ensured the preeminence of the people in government, was the constructive result of the Principle of Nationalism.

The Principle of the People’s Livelihood

In addition to the lecture series overtly devoted to the topic of the People’s Livelihood, Sun Yat-sen spoke on the Three Principles of the People, the Principle of the People’s Livelihood in particular, in an April 12, 1924, lecture entitled Fundamentals of National Reconstruction for the National Government of China (Guo Min Zheng Fu Jian Guo Da Gang—國民政府建國大綱).

During that lecture, Sun began by stating that the foundation for the national government of the Republic of China would be based on the Three Principles of the People and the Five-Power Constitution. Furthermore, of his three principles, the most important to the establishment of the country was the Principle of the People’s Livelihood. The realization of this principle would come through the establishment of several social programs.

The Root of the Social Problem

Speaking in 1924 on the recent, seemingly-universal push to solve the world’s many social issues, Sun Yat-sen asked, “Why have modern times raised this question?” The root of society’s ills was an issue nearly as contested as the means to eradicate such ills. Sun believed that many of the problems in the world could be blamed on the world’s rapid industrialization. The dramatic social changes brought by the Industrial Revolution impacted each and every person by rendering individual human life increasingly less significant. Hence, in evaluating

Hereafter I will refer to it as Fundamentals of National Reconstruction (Jian Guo Da Gang—建國大綱).
the flaws in the world society, Sun Yat-sen identified mechanization and industrialization as factors that needed to be appropriately handled.

While the changing political climates caused Sun Yat-sen to reevaluate his feelings on many issues, his feelings toward the root of society’s ills were gradually refined through time. In 1906, when Sun was still blaming the Manchus for many of China’s problems, Sun felt the universal quality of social issues made them more “difficult to explain” than simply blaming the government.48 He noted that “[the] more civilization developed, the more pressing its social problems became.”49 Six years later, in 1912, Sun voiced concerns that capitalists may have something to do with the social problems. He noticed that fixing society was difficult in England and the United States, where “capitalists [had already] emerged, bringing with them many hindrances.”50 In 1919, Sun singled out “[economic] advances and the invention of machinery” as the cause of “[unequal] distribution of wealth and exploitation by the strong and arrogant.”51 It became increasingly clear to Sun, in light of the 1917 Bolshevik revolution, that the emergence of the people’s livelihood issue had coincided with the rise of these issues. By 1924, inspired by both his own narrowing opinion and the support of the Soviet Union, Sun Yat-sen blamed society’s ills on the world’s rapid industrialization and increasing materialism.52 Of course, industrialization was good for society, but Sun hoped there would be some way to enjoy the benefits of industrialization without forcing society to suffer its attached ills. In 1912, Sun called for social revolution as an “easy” solution to the problem, but the Russian experience and his own weariness to continue waging revolution changed his opinion.53 By 1919, Sun called for the propagation of the Principle of the People’s Livelihood to “preclude a social revolution.”54 Promoting such a principle would come through a body of social programs.
Promoting the People’s Livelihood

To promote modernization in China while still combating the extant social problems and preventing future ones, Sun Yat-sen called for the government to implement several social programs. These programs focused largely on the issues of economic disparities, land distribution, and taxation. The increasingly extreme measures proposed by Sun—which coincided with his demands for an increasingly large government to carry out such programs—can be accredited to his disillusionment with the Western powers and increasing ties to the Soviet Union. Hence, Sun Yat-sen called on government to aggressively eliminate social issues and take proactive measures to prevent any further issues.

The most obvious marker of economic disparity for Sun was the fact that many in the country were hungry. At the heart of society’s toughest questions was simply the people’s survival. Obviously, in order to survive, the people needed to eat. Hence, Sun believed the question of food was of “utmost importance to the question of the people’s livelihood.” The government should take it upon itself to ensure that all of China’s people had access to an abundant food supply sold at an affordable price. While China had been an almost purely agrarian nation for the extreme majority of its history, food was still not always easily come by. This issue would only become worse if food production was allowed to “[fall] completely into the hands of the capitalists.” This would be mean failure to meet the needs of the people, and thus, in conflict with the Principle of the People’s Livelihood.

During a 1924 lecture, Sun listed his propositions to eradicate the food problem as it existed at the time. Sun proposed the seven aspects he believed crucial aspects of the issue: heavy machinery (Ji Qi—機器), fertilizers (Fei Liao—肥料), crop rotation (Huan Zhong—換種),
pesticides (Chu Hai—除害), manufacturing (Zhi Zao—製造), transportation (Yun Song—運送), and natural disasters protection (Fang Zai—防災). The first four should all be adopted from Western agricultural science and employed to increase agricultural output. Manufacturing implied the use of canning and other preservation techniques during times of surplus. Promoting transportation would entail a system of canals, railways, and paved roads to facilitate the spread of different food products—and people—around different parts of China. Finally, the ability to limit the damage of natural disasters, as well as the ability to respond in a time of need, was crucial to the both the food problem and the general promotion of the Principle of the People’s Livelihood.

While Sun believed these programs would go far to eliminate the problems present in China, he had still more proposals on how to eliminate such problems in the future: tax reform and land redistribution. In 1906, Sun Yat-sen proposed that taxes be eliminated so that “private individuals [would] never again have to pay taxes” and “land revenues alone” would pay for the expenses of the nation. Six years later, as it became increasingly obvious that government cannot survive without tax revenue, Sun chose to revise, rather than eliminate, the country’s tax system. Instead of taxing people according to the size of their land holdings, the people would be taxed “according to the price” of their land. This still was not enough, though. By 1924, Sun called for a graduated tax scale where the tax rate would be heavier on the rich than the poor. In addition, the poor would be given land so that they could personal deal with their own food problem. Sun’s ultimate proposal for land and taxation reform called for land redistribution to allow people enough land to meet personal production needs, and taxes would be levied according to the value of one’s land on a graduated scale heavier on the rich than the poor.
It is obvious that Sun Yat-sen called for an increasingly large government to provide an increasingly large number of programs for the people. In order for such a government to take shape, Sun called for a three-staged transition away from the dynastic system that controlled China for so long. First, a period of military rule would occur with the aim of eliminating opposition to the government and spread the word to the people of what was occurring. With order established, military rule would end and a period of political tutelage would begin. During this phase, necessities like taking a census, surveying and evaluating the land, and constructing roads would be carried out; in addition, government-trained people would be sent out to educate the people on their new rights under this government. After the establishment of self-government, every district would elect a single representative to serve in a national assembly. Any officials in either local or national government would first have to pass the civil service examination. When all counties had a representative in the national assembly, the constitutional period would finally begin. Once this occurred, the five-power government, along with ministries of the Executive Yuan, would be implemented according to Sun’s designs. With the five Yuans established, the Legislative Yuan would draft a constitution. Upon completion of the constitution, national elections would be held to decide who would hold the new positions. Thus the Nationalist cause would finally be realized.

The Culmination of the Three Principles of the People

When attempting to define Sun’s Principle of the People’s Livelihood, Professor Linebarger proposed a three-part definition:

More briefly, [the Principle of the People’s Livelihood] may be said to be the thesis of the indispensability of: 1) a national economic revolution against
imperialism and for democracy; 2) an industrial revolution for the enrichment of China; and 3) a prophylactic against social revolution.

This essentially captures the multiple goals of Sun’s principle. More than just a means to prevent social unrest, the Principle of the People’s Livelihood was to be a culmination of the first two principles. By following the progression implied by the order of the *Three Principles of the People*, Sun Yat-sen believed that China could be a strong, prideful country controlled by an equally strong government that listened to the people and cared for their general wellbeing.

**Sun Yat-sen: The Essentials**

While this is by no means a complete account of the works of Dr. Sun Yat-sen (he was simply too prolific a writer and orator to make such a claim), I believe this provides an overall summary of his major ideas. For the idealistic Sun, the modernization of China was not something to be accomplished for individual power or glory. He feared that if it could not move past its strict reliance on tradition and the dynastic cycle, China would be swallowed up by foreign powers. This was why he believed his Three Principles were “saving tenets,” and he worked so hard to convince other people to accept them. This issue was greater than just one man: the nation was at stake.

In Sun’s thinking, modernization could be had through the proper incorporation of the *Three Principles of the People* into society. The most important principle was that of the People’s Livelihood, which required state involvement in a whole host of programs meant to improve the lives of every person, especially tax reform and land redistribution. Additionally, the rights of suffrage, recall, initiative, and referendum should be guaranteed as means of advancing democracy. All this would be accomplished through a three-stage transition from military rule.
to political tutelage to constitutional government. The ultimate goal would be a substantial five-branch national government, composed of the Executive, Legislative, Judicial, Examination, and Censor Yuans. For Sun, the ratification of a constitution written by the Legislative Yuan would mark the culmination of his work.

In reality, the adoption of all these ideas was an idealistic hope, but the complete disunity of the early Republic of China prevented their success. In the next chapter, I will highlight this disunity by discussing the period immediately following Sun’s death in 1925 until 1927. This narrow period of time would ultimately have a major impact on the history of modern China.

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1 Julie Lee Wei, Ramon H. Myers, and Donald G. Gillin, eds., Prescriptions for Saving China: Selected Writings of Sun Yat-sen (Stanford: Hoover Institution Press, 1994), xiii.

2 Ibid., xiv.

3 Quoted in Wei, Myers, and Gillin, xiv.

4 Ibid., xv.

5 It should be noted that the Chinese text cited as the word of Dr. Sun is taken from two publications: the 2003 San Min Chu I Society edition of Three Principles of the People—a transcript of Sun’s 1924 lecture series—and the 1953 Taiwan Chinese Cultural Service edition of Fundamentals of National Reconstruction—a compiled body of works written or inspired by Sun’s ideas. Lacking means to accurately cite these, I have improvised a system in which I give the name of the work (abbreviated by its Romanization). After that, I cite the paragraph number with an Arabic numeral. Additionally, because the lectures on The Three Principles of the People were delivered in three series, one for each principle, I cite that with a capital Roman numeral (I, II, or III), followed by a lowercase Roman numeral to signify the number of the lecture within that series (between i and vi). These appear before the Arabic numeral, which still signifies the paragraph number. I have included translations of terms not explicitly defined in the text.

6 SMZY I. i. 1


8 Sun Yat-sen, “The Three People’s Principles and the Future of the Chinese People (December 2, 1906),” in Wei, Myers, and Gillin, 42.

“並且不止失去了一天，已經失去了幾百年。”（*[Nationalism has not been for more than just one day; it was already lost a few hundred years ago.*]（SMZY I. iii. 2）

12 “哪遜”這個字有兩種解釋：一是民族，一是國家。（*[The word “nation” has two interpretations: one is race; the other is state.*]（SMZY I. i. 3）

14 Sun Yat-sen, “The Three People’s Principles (December 2, 1906),” in Wei, Myers, and Gillin, 42.

15 Sun Yat-sen, “The Principle of the People’s Livelihood and Social Revolution (April 1, 1912),” in Wei, Myers, and Gillin, 63.


17 我說民族主義就是國族主義，在中國是適當的，在外國便不適當（*[The Nationalism of which I speak is a national principle; it is suitable within China, but unsuitable outside of China.*]（SMZY I. i. 3）

18 Sun Yat-sen, “The Three Principles of the People (December 2, 1906),” in Wei, Myers, and Gillin, 42.

19 民族主義這個東西，是國家圖發達和種族生存的寶貝（*[Nationalism is the treasure that allows the state to develop and the race to survive.*]）（SMZY I. iii. 1）

24 Sun Yat-sen, “Statement on Proposals by the T’ung-meng-hui (December 30, 1911),” in Wei, Myers, and Gillin, 55.

28 現在世界上頂強盛的國家，是英國美國。（*[Right now, the richest, most powerful nations of the world are Great Britain and the United States.*]）（SMZY I. iii. 14）


33 鄭重之言，歐洲民族都受了帝國主義的毒。（*[Before the war in Europe (World War I), the nations of Europe were all poisoned by imperialism.*]）（SMZY I. iv. 3）

34 除了水面以外，沒有一物是平的。（*[Besides the surface of water, nothing is equal.*]）（SMZY II. iii. 2）
40 基本上講，每個國家的憲法都是世界上最好的。（“Nearly everyone says that the American constitution is the best in the world.”）(WQXF 3)
41 由兄弟研究結果，美國憲法需要許多地方是不足，而且流弊也很不少（“According to my research, I believe the American Constitution still has many imperfections and defects.”）(WQXF 3)
42 憲法在政府中的作用，好比是一架機器。（“The constitution of a government, in practice, is like a machine.”）(WQXF 20)
43 這個五權憲法不過是上下反一反（“The Five-Power Constitution is thoroughly different from governments of the past.”）(WQXF 23)
44 Paul Linebarger, 120.
45 國民政府本革命之三民主義五憲法以建設中華民國。（“The National government's revolution takes the Three Principles of the People and the Five-Power Constitution as its foundation in establishing the Republic of China.”）(JGDG 1)
46 建設之首要在民生。（“The most important aspect of establishing rests in the people's livelihood.”）(JGDG 2)
47 民生問題，今日成了世界各國的潮流；推到這個問題的來歷，發生不過一百幾十年。為何近代發生這個問題呢？（“Today, the question of the People's Livelihood has been an issue in every country, but this is just recently the case. Why have modern times raised this question?”）(SMZY III. i. 2)
48 Sun Yat-sen, ‘The Three People's Principles (December 2, 1906),” in Wei, Myers, and Gillin, 45.
49 Ibid., 44-45.
50 Sun Yat-sen, “The Principle of the People's Livelihood (April 1, 1912),” in Wei, Myers, and Gillin, 64.
51 Sun Yat-sen, “The Three Principles of the People (1919),” in Wei, Myers, and Gillin, 229.
52 簡單言之，就是因為這幾十年來，各國的物質文明極進步，工業很發達，人類的生產力忽然增加。（“Put simply, it is because during the last few decades, every country's culture has become increasingly material, industry developed, and humanity's productive capacity has suddenly increased.”）(SMZY III. i. 2)
53 Sun Yat-sen, “The Principle of the People's Livelihood (April 1, 1912),” in Wei, Myers, and Gillin, 64.
55 社會問題中又以生存問題為重心（“Survival is at the heart of the social problem.”）(SMZY III. i. 15)
56 吃飯問題就是最重要的民生問題 (SMZY III. iii. 1)
58 SMZY III. iii. 6
60 Sun Yat-sen, “The Principle of the People's Livelihood (April 1, 1912),” in Wei, Myers, and Gillin, 66.
61 行這種方法，就是用累進稅率，多徵資本家的所得稅，和遺產稅等。（“We will apply a graduated tax scale, with more heavy taxation of capitalists' incomes and inheritances, and other similar assets.”）(SMZY III. i. 20)
62 照道理來講，農民應該是為自己耕田，耕出來的農品，要歸自己所有。（“It only makes sense that farmers should plow their own fields and claim what comes of that labor.”）(SMZY III. iii. 5)
63 在軍政時期，一切制度悉隸於軍政之下，政府一面用兵力以掃除國內之障礙，一面宣傳主義以開化全國之人心（“During the period of military rule, everything will be placed under the control of the military; meanwhile the government will on the one hand use military force to remove domestic obstructions, and on the other hand teach the people civility.”）(JGDG 6)
64 在訓政時期，政府當派會經訓練考試合格之員，到各縣協助人民，籌備自治。（“During the period of political tutelage, the government will send out trained and qualified men to every county to help the people prepare for self-rule.”）(JGDG 8)
65 每縣地方自治政府成立之後，得選國民代表一員，以組織代表會，參預中央政事。（“Every county, after establishing its local government, must first elect a representative to serve in a representative body which will deal with national issues.”）(JGDG 14)
66 無論中央與地方皆須經中央考試銓定資格者乃可。（“Regardless of if it is for a national or a local position, the candidate must first pass the examinations to prove his qualifications.”）(JGDG 15)
皆達完全自治者，則為憲政開始時期。（“Once all are under self-rule, this will mark the beginning of the constitutional period.”）（JGDG 16）

在憲政開始時期，中央政府當完成設立五院，以試行五權之治。（“In the beginning of the constitutional period, the central government will establish the five branches of the Five-Power Constitution.”）（JGDG 19）

憲法草案當本於建國大綱及訓政憲政時期之成績，由立法院議訂。（“The drafting of a constitution is the basis of founding a country, as well as the point of the constitutional period; thus, the Legislative Yuan must prepare a constitution.”）（JGDG 22）
CHAPTER TWO: THE FRAGILE BOND OF THE FIRST UNITED FRONT

All citizens of the Republic of China are our respected comrades as long as they accept Dr. Sun Yat-sen’s doctrine and platform and devote themselves to the national revolution for the benefit of the country and the people. We pledge to cooperate with them sincerely to accomplish the enterprise of revolutionary reconstruction. On the contrary, all those who work against the revolution or obstruct its progress...will be regarded as our enemy.

—Kuomintang Manifesto on Accepting Dr. Sun Yat-sen’s Will (May 16, 1925)

On March 12, 1925, Dr. Sun Yat-sen passed away on a goodwill trip to Beijing. Prior to Sun’s trip, infighting within the Kuomintang and divided loyalties had torn the country into multiple warlord domains. Almost immediately after the Republic of China’s founding, Yuan Shi-kai had turned his back on the Kuomintang and banned its existence in November 1913. Sun and his supporters were forced into retreat to Japan before they were eventually able to establish a foothold in the southern province of Guangdong. Yuan Shi-kai’s death in 1916 only invited more contention. From Guangdong, Sun Yat-sen ventured north to Beijing to meet with several warlords in a desperate attempt to reunite the Republic of China before he died. Unfortunately, not only did his journey fail to achieve such goals, but a few of Sun’s decisions made before this journey proved more lasting and divisive. They, in fact, had set the scene for the long and difficult civil war between the Chinese Nationalists and Chinese Communists.

Thanks in no small part to the Soviet Union, the Chinese Communist Party was able to substantially elevate its position during the 1920s. Prior to his goodwill mission, Sun Yat-sen and Adolf Joffe met and worked out an alliance between the Kuomintang and the Soviet Union. Such an arrangement carried a number of conditions. The Soviet Union agreed to provide material support, both weapons and money, for the KMT’s efforts. In addition, Mikhail Borodin, a political advisor, was deployed to help Sun Yat-sen restructure the Kuomintang to provide stronger centralized leadership. In turn, Sun Yat-sen in turn agreed, in addition to
several financial concessions, to allow members of the Chinese Communist Party to join the Kuomintang “as individuals” to form the First United Front. While not a formal alliance between the Kuomintang and the Chinese Communist Party, the First United Front in essence functioned as such during its brief five-year existence (1923-1927). This would prove to have major consequences for all those involved.

Hence, the period of the First United Front would prove to have a major impact on the continued development of modern China during the early-twentieth century. Sun and Borodin’s restructuring of the Kuomintang along Leninist principles led to the formation of the First United Front. This alignment brought together two seemingly-opposed groups that, in fact, found common ideological ground in Sun’s teachings. These teachings would prove to have a major impact on the continued development of both even after the First United Front’s end in 1927. Out of the alliance’s bloody end came two political parties violently at odds but still very much connected by their use of Sun’s theories. By means of this chapter, I hope to tie together the teachings of Dr. Sun Yat-sen, the critical alterations made in his final days, and the political bodies that would wage war to succeed him in the fight to unite China.

**Restructuring the Kuomintang**

The decision to restructure the Kuomintang cannot be accredited to any single cause but rather a confluence of several contributing factors. In China, the gradual leftward push of Sun’s theories has been noted in his writings and lectures. Meanwhile, in the Soviet Union, the effects of Leninist reform can be seen in both the decision to aid the Kuomintang and the types of suggestions made as part of that aid. These suggestions would prove to have a major impact on the structure of both the Kuomintang at the time and the political parties born out of the failure
of the First United Front. Overall, the decision to reform the party was just as complicated as the results of the reform, itself.

Sun Yat-sen’s Slide to the Left

When observing the suggestions of Sun Yat-sen through time, it becomes clear that he exhibited a gradual push toward the political left. With regards to the Principle of Nationalism, Sun’s original view was clearly a pro-Han, anti-Manchu sentiment that made little mention of the world outside of China. He observed that other nations looked at China with “covetous eyes,” but he said little beyond that. But by the time he delivered his final comments on nationalism, Sun Yat-sen was speaking out against the imperialist powers of the world—which he no longer feared to specify—and pleading for a single, united China to rise up against them. French Sinologist Marie-Claire Bergère notes that Sun’s movement toward anti-imperialism is “generally attributed” to the impact of the Soviet Union. As noted in the previous discussion of the Principle of the People’s Livelihood, Sun also called for an ever-increasing number of government programs. In light of such developments, it appears that Sun increasingly favored a more socialized society.

A number of reasons could be given for this transformation of Sun’s thought. Regent’s College Professor of Politics Audrey Wells accredits it to Sun’s need of foreign aid. Bergère, meanwhile, Early on, when Sun sought Western support, it was necessary for him to downplay any socialist sympathies to sound more appealing to those powers. When it became clear that the only support he would be able to garner would come from the Soviet Union, Sun then had to similarly overstate such feelings. Some of Sun’s final words lend credence to this notion. In his will, signed a day before his death, Sun Yat-sen noted:
…my object has consistently been to secure liberty and equality for our country. From the experience of these forty years, I have come to realize that, in order to reach this object, it is necessary to awaken the masses of our people, and to join hands with those countries which are prepared to treat us as equals in our fight for the common cause of humanity.

These words point to a resolute acceptance that bringing the Soviet Union into China’s political situation was both necessary and proper. The mention of “the masses of our people” also rings of socialist sympathies. Attempting to provide another explanation of Sun’s apparent shift, Brigham Young University Professor Michael G. Murdock also cites that Sun was worried about how his policies would be acted upon by his supporters. The impassioned masses were “hard to control” and could pose just as much of a threat to Sun’s movement as his enemies could.

Regardless of the reasoning behind Sun Yat-sen’s leftward push, it is important to accept that such a push occurred, and the Soviet Union would come to play a large role in the politics of the Republic of China.

Leninist Views of Imperialism and Party Politics

Around the same time that Sun Yat-sen was proposing reforms in all aspects of Chinese society, Vladimir Lenin was busy bringing about a transformation in Russia. Founder of the Russian Communist Party and its only Chairman, Lenin was highly influential in the world of Russian, later Soviet, politics. It would be foolish to attempt to encapsulate all of Leninism in this limited context, but Leninist ideas regarding imperialism and party politics are relevant to the discussion of the KMT-Soviet alliance and the First United Front. The Soviet Union’s commitment to Sun’s cause was inspired by Lenin’s belief that imperialism was an unfortunate

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* Following Lenin’s death in 1924, Joseph Stalin elevated the General Secretary position to the most powerful in the Russian Communist Party, making the Chairman position unnecessary.
consequence of capitalism that must be eliminated. Meanwhile, Lenin’s perspective on the organization of political parties was highly applicable to Sun’s needs. Hence, Leninism would prove highly adaptable to the political situation in the Republic of China.

A key difference of opinion between Karl Marx and Vladimir Lenin led the Soviet Union to support the struggles of Sun Yat-sen. In The Communist Manifesto, when describing the socialist revolution he believed to be so imminent, Karl Marx proposed that the advanced nations of the world would be most likely to experience it first. This was because Marx believed capitalism to be the highest stage of economic development before the onset of communism. Lenin, however, believed that there was an even higher stage: imperialism. Imperialism arose when capitalist countries were unable to find even cheaper means of production and turned to the acquisition and oppression of colonies to fill that need. This would become so bad for the colonies that, as Lenin proposed in Imperialism, the Highest Stage of Capitalism, the world revolution would, in fact, “begin in the colonies.” Recognizing the differences in economic development, Lenin declared it would be unreasonable to expect colonized nations to undergo a socialist revolution through the efforts of the proletariat alone, as Marx had suggested. The proletariat class of such a country would likely be far too small. Recognizing the differences between his principles and those of different schools of Marxism, Lenin founded the Communist International—abbreviated Comintern and also known as the Third International—to provide for a cohesive worldwide communist agenda in keeping with his particular vision. Lenin called upon the Comintern the objective to reach out to not only local communist parties, but also groups of “bourgeois nationalists” struggling to expel imperialism from their nations. This proved to be an apt description of Sun Yat-sen in China.
Sun was always looking for assistance in the fight to promote his Three Principles of the People, elevate nationalism, and expel imperialism. Thus, common ground was found between Sun Yat-sen and Vladimir Lenin, bringing about an alliance between their respective institutions that would also have a major on the fledgling Chinese Communist Party.

Another concept of Marxism-Leninism that would resonate with Sun Yat-sen was that of the vanguard party. The idea of the vanguard party was that a single political entity would take charge of bringing about the socialist revolution and would, in the process, incorporate all those not deemed an enemy of the revolution. Karl Marx said it was the communists’ object, as the “most advanced and resolute” members of society, to “[push] forward all others.”12 All the while, the communist party would hold “over the great mass of the proletariat the advantage of [clear] understanding” of their role in the revolution.13 Those at the heart of the movement would stand to most gain from it. Later, Lenin reiterated that the “role of vanguard fighter [could] be fulfilled only by a party that is guided by the most advanced theory.”14 While the vanguard would set the course of the revolution, Lenin had faith that the masses could, and should, be brought into the revolution. This was because the “average people” could be brought to display “enormous energy and self-sacrifice” that would ultimately “[determine] the outcome of [the socialist] movement.”15 Hence, the party at the heart of the revolution needed to be strong both in theoretical foundation and in practical manpower.

While the alliance between the Soviet Union and Sun Yat-sen’s Kuomintang was not, at first glance, an obvious pairing, common ground was to be found. The crux of the relationship, as per the Sun-Joffe Manifesto of 1923, was the mutual understanding that “the Communistic order or even the Soviet system [could not] actually be introduced into China” at that time.16
Though the Comintern helped form the Chinese Communist Party just two years earlier in 1921, it was still a small party that needed help to achieve its goals. The need for manpower could be filled by the larger Kuomintang, and the alliance between the two could potentially influence KMT ideology. Thus, the Comintern hoped for a united front between the two parties to bring about revolution. In return for continued access to the Chinese Eastern Railway, the Soviet Union agreed that China first needed to achieve “national unification” and “national independence” and was willing to help Sun Yat-sen make this dream a reality. In late 1923, aid came to Sun Yat-sen’s Guangdong stronghold in the form of an advisor armed with plans to reorganize the Kuomintang.

A New, Leninist Focus

Soviet advisor Mikhail Borodin arrived at a time when the Kuomintang was just beginning to admit it needed reform. In November 1923, the Kuomintang issued its so-called “Manifesto on the Reorganization of the Party.” In it, the KMT frankly admitted that “[in] appraising its past achievements, in order to determine whether it is any closer to [its] goal [of establishing the Three Principles of the People,] the Party...has failed.” The decision was made to draft a new constitution and to take measures “to weed out bad elements and retain good members.” The First National Congress of the Kuomintang met in January 1924, and through its actions, the KMT adopted a new, Leninist focus to handle its issues.

As a result of the First National Congress of the Kuomintang, the KMT made use of language and principles decidedly inspired by their Soviet supporters. In the First National Congress’ manifesto, the Kuomintang used the language of Marxism-Leninism when it referred to itself as the “vanguard of the people.” Similar to Marx’s descriptions of the proletariat,
mention is also made of the peasant class as the class “that has suffered the most” from imperialism’s oppression of China. Just like Lenin, the Kuomintang chose to rest “the success of the national revolution” on the backs of the common people—those peasants and the “overworked” laborers. It was clear that the Kuomintang was attempting to forward the Soviet agenda; all that remained was actions to back up the rhetoric.

As part of the First National Congress of the Kuomintang, the KMT adopted a much more hardline approach to combatting its problems. As decided by the congress, the decisions of the party were to be absolute. When debating an issue, members of the party “were to act as a unit, always voting together.” Members were to follow the orders of their superiors without question. The party took on a decidedly militaristic style. This was no accident, as such a formation promoted “organizational purpose and cohesion.” In keeping with this trend, the party felt it necessary to establish a military force loyal to it, alone. Hence, the congress called upon the creation of the Whampoa Military Academy to ensure “more unified command” of the Kuomintang’s military forces. To run the school, one of the Kuomintang’s most celebrated generals, Chiang Kai-shek was appointed Commandant. He was entrusted with teaching the cadets loyalty to the party and discipline on the battlefield. Notably, the CCP could also claim a fundamental tie to the academy, as Zhou Enlai, a leader within the CCP, served as an instructor of politics. The Kuomintang was reborn out of its congress a militarized, revolutionary party united by Sun Yat-sen’s philosophical principles and Vladimir Lenin’s organizational tactics.

It was this Leninist Kuomintang party that tacitly joined forces with the Chinese Communist Party to rid China of warlordism under the First United Front. Unfortunately for all those involved, Sun Yat-sen passed away soon after the agreements were made. It would be
up to his successors to decide how to handle the alliance and the KMT’s new structure. These, and many other factors, would prove to inspire a new course of events.

**The Northern Expedition and the Short-Lived First United Front**

With the death of Sun Yat-sen, the Kuomintang found itself without the guiding figure of its leader for the first time. While others—from both the political left and right—had served in top leadership roles within the Kuomintang even during Sun’s life, no one could claim to be as much the “face” of the KMT as Sun Yat-sen. Control of the party quickly became contested between leaders from the party’s left and right. Chiang Kai-shek’s control of the KMT armies warranted him some support, but apprehensions toward military strongmen—a takeaway from dealings with warlords like Yuan Shikai—made it less likely he would be seriously considered for such a position of power. The situation became all the more complicated with the incorporation of the Chinese Communist Party and its leaders. In time, Wang Jingwei, leader of the leftist branch of the party, was appointed chairman. The question of party authority would be largely answered within just over two year during the Northern Expedition. Suspicion and collusion would tear the First United Front apart, establish Chiang Kai-shek as the KMT’s sole leader, and incite civil war between the Nationalists and the Communists.

Sun Yat-sen’s goodwill trip to Beijing brought the Kuomintang no closer to reuniting China, so the decision was made to inspire unity with military force. Whampoa Commandant Chiang Kai-shek took command of the Revolutionary Army and set out from Guangdong on July 9, 1926. In addition, Chiang received aid from Li Zong-ren, an “enlightened” warlord from Guangxi who agreed to lead his armies in conjunction to those led by Chiang. Through much effort and strategy, the cities of Nanchang, Wuhan, and Changsha were all taken by January
1927. From there, the plan had been to move straight toward Beijing and leave Shanghai for another time, but this was not to be the case.

April 12, 1927, marked the bloody end of the First United Front and sparked an over twenty-year civil war for control of China. In February and March 1927, Zhou Enlai had led several worker strikes throughout Shanghai that eventually broke the financial backing of the warlord regime controlling the city. Realizing that allowing a continued war against capitalism might jeopardize the alliance with the Kuomintang, the Chinese Communist Party disarmed the striking workers after the city was under control. Unfortunately for them, Chiang Kai-shek was no longer interested in the alliance. Shanghai businessmen had agreed to provide Chiang with a substantial amount of money, as well as arms, along with their support. In return, starting at four o’clock in the morning on April 12, 1927, Chiang Kai-shek violently overwhelmed and arrested protestors before unleashing a total assault on the Communists. Nearly 100 protesting workers were killed on April 13 and thousands were ultimately killed. The First United Front was officially dead.

It would take another year to complete the Northern Expedition, and the Kuomintang, by its own decisions, would have to do it alone. The aftermath of the Shanghai Massacre of April 1927 saw China still divided and at a crossroads. The Kuomintang, while energized by Leninist reorganization and the violent crackdown on communism, still needed a true leader and focus to accomplish its goals. The Chinese Communist Party, though put on the defensive by Chiang Kai-shek’s attack, was kept alive by the desire for revenge and the lessons learned from Borodin’s advisement of the First United Front. Crisis is said to bring opportunity and
men on both sides would use the continuing crisis in China—as well as the teachings of Sun Yat-sen—to gain power and glory.

1 Peter Zarrow, 199.
2 Audrey Wells, _The Political Thought of Sun Yat-sen: Development and Impact_ (New York: Palgrave, 2001), 68.
4 Ibid., 94.
6 Ibid.
8 Ibid.
10 Peter Zarrow, 190.
11 Quoted in Peter Zarrow, 191.
12 Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, 33.
13 Ibid.
15 Ibid., 135.
16 “Joint Manifesto of Dr. Sun Yat-sen and Adolf A. Joffe (January 26, 1923),” in Shieh, 71.
17 Ibid.
18 “Manifesto on the Reorganization of the Party (November 1923)” in Shieh, 73.
19 Ibid., 74.
20 “Manifesto of the First National Congress of the Kuomintang (January 30, 1924)” in Shieh, 75.
21 Ibid., 81.
22 Ibid., 82.
23 Peter Zarrow, 201.
24 Ibid.
27 Ibid.
Section II: Battling Successors

Section II will focus on the two men who would wage war with each other over China: Chiang Kai-shek and Mao Zedong. Both gained much credibility from the image of Dr. Sun Yat-sen. In fact, bitter enemies as they were, Chiang and Mao shared many beliefs and characteristics. Perhaps this is why, regardless of their purported ideology, following the Chinese Civil War, both Chiang Kai-shek and Mao Zedong found themselves serving as the unquestioned leaders of single-party authoritarian states.
CHAPTER THREE: CHIANG KAI-SHEK AND THE FIGHT OVER INTERPRETATION

There are but few left in our party today who have the dual qualities of military expertise and political dedication. Only you...are with us, you whose courage and sincerity are equal to those of [Zhu Zhixin] and whose knowledge of war is even better than his...As you are shouldering the great and heavy responsibility of our party, you should sacrifice your ideals a little and try to compromise. This is merely for the sake of our party and has nothing to do with your personal principles.

—Sun Yat-sen (in a letter to Chiang Kai-shek dated October 29, 1917)

The death of Sun Yat-sen in 1925 created a power vacuum within the Kuomintang that became all the more critical with the end of the First United Front in 1927. Outmaneuvering the many claimants to Sun Yat-sen’s place as leader of the party was Chiang Kai-shek. A general by trade, Chiang would to craft a political ideology based on a number of different influences, not the least of which was Sun Yat-sen, himself. This is not to say that Chiang was the only one to claim a political inheritance from Sun, as Chiang and others all made their own interpretation of Sun’s philosophy to further their own ends. Regardless, it is safe to say the fact that Chiang Kai-shek won out as leader of the Kuomintang gave credence to the political agenda he pursued in that role and his interpretation of Sun Yat-sen.

Hence, it is worthwhile to consider the relevance of Sun’s teachings to the thoughts and actions of Chiang Kai-shek both during his rise to power and after such power was asserted. Before focusing on that period of his life, it is beneficial to explain how Chiang came into the fold of the Kuomintang and Sun Yat-sen’s teachings early on. From there, I will present a few episodes in Chiang’s life, between the end of the First United Front in 1927 and the end of the Chinese Civil War in 1949, which bear relation to the words and work of Sun Yat-sen. By the end of the chapter, Chiang Kai-shek and the Kuomintang will have been forced to a new location with a focused ideology and the same goal of promoting the theories of Sun Yat-sen.

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a Zhu Zhixin (1885-1920) was a colleague of Sun Yat-sen in the Chinese United League.
The Early Years

From modest beginnings rose Chiang Kai-shek, who early in life sought to uphold the family tradition of education. When Sun Yat-sen was a student studying medicine in Hong Kong, the young Chiang Kai-shek was brought into the world in Fenghua, Zhejiang, in late 1887. Both Chiang’s grandfather and father had “local renown” as scholars, and to carry on this tradition, young Chiang was given a thorough education, heavy on neo-Confucian thought.1 Around 1903, Chiang took the civil service examination for the first and only time and failed. His tutor Mao Sicheng noted that Chiang only took the examination “to satisfy his curiosity” but was quickly “disgusted by...the contempt with which the young scholars were treated” by the Qing officials.2 Chiang’s Confucian education had given him a strong sense of hierarchy, self-discipline, duty, courage, and honor.3 From Chiang’s perspective, such poor treatment of scholars seemed counter to those values.

A pivotal move in retrospect, Chiang decided in February 1906 to return home and attend the Dragon River School. There, Chiang was taught by the “neo-Confucian but modern” Gu Qinglian, a teacher well-versed in the revolutionary works of Sun Yat-sen.4 Under Gu, Chiang read many works including Sun Tzu’s classic The Art of War, his first encounter with military science.5 In addition, Gu Qinglian advised Chiang to “go abroad and study in foreign countries” in order to “acquire new knowledge.”6 Chiang must have quickly taken this to heart, as he attended the Dragon River School for only a few months before returning home with an announcement: he was going to Japan to receive military training. Chiang cut off his queue, a ready symbol of Qing oppression, and began preparations for the journey. Chiang’s first journey to Japan was cut short because he did not have the approval from Beijing necessary
to attend any military academies. Therefore, Chiang quickly returned to China in 1907 to attend
the Yuan Shikai’s military school, later known as the Baoding Military Academy, near Tianjin.\^\footnote{7}

Chiang spent a year there, but the academy’s “antiquated, egoistic” style reminded him of the
“old Manchu regime” that still narrowly clung to power.\^\footnote{8} Luckily, Chiang passed an exam that
allowed him to return to Japan and enter the Shimbo Gakko military school. This three-year
period would spark a crucial period of development.

While studying in Japan, Chiang Kai-shek became deeply rooted in the cause of Chinese
nationalism. When not busy with school work, Chiang Kai-shek spent time with Chen Qimei, a
fellow Zhejiang native who Chiang had befriended during his first trip to Japan. Chen was an
active member in Sun Yat-sen’s Chinese United League and helped Chiang become a member.\^\footnote{9}

In addition, Chiang became an active reader of Min Bao, a Chinese revolutionary newspaper
published in Japan, and “devoured” other works such as Zou Rong’s The Revolutionary Army.\^\footnote{10}
He graduated from the academy in November 1909 and was subsequently assigned to a
Japanese artillery regiment as required of students wishing to attend officer training.\^\footnote{11} When
hostilities broke out on the mainland in October 1911, Chiang and other Chinese cadets left
Japan to take part in the coming Xinhai revolution. China’s history had reached a pivotal point.

After leaving the Japanese artillery regiment, Chiang became increasingly involved in
Sun Yat-sen’s cause. Soon after returning to China, Chiang joined the Kuomintang, and in
December 1913, Chiang met Sun Yat-sen for the first time. Over the course of the coming
decade, Chiang would impress Sun with his loyalty to the KMT cause in assignments both in
China and Japan.\^\footnote{12} These assignments largely entailed training and commanding troops in
various campaigns. In 1915, when Japan issued its Twenty-One Demands to Yuan Shikai,
Yuan’s concessions inspired so much ire that Sun Yat-sen called him a greater threat to China than even the Japanese. Sun believed internal threats were more serious than external threats, and this notion would have a large impact on Chiang in the future. Drawing on this in September 1917, Chiang presented Sun with his plans for a northern expedition, a campaign meant to bring about a united China under the banner of the Republic of China. A bold plan, it seemed too ambitious at the time. The Northern Expedition proposal would not come to fruition until after Chiang Kai-shek was appointed Commandant of the Whampoa Military Academy and the First United Front was formed. Despite such cooperation by Nationalists and Communists, Chiang’s diary entries already point to a “turning” of Chiang’s mind “against Marxism” by November 1923. Later, he “began to write critically of the Communists” while the alliance still stood. Chiang, along with others in the Kuomintang elite, saw the Communists as a Yuan-like internal threat that needed to be purged, giving rise to the Shanghai Massacre of April 1927. Continued reliance on the figure of Sun Yat-sen would help push Chiang Kai-shek into the fight for control of both the Kuomintang and all of China.

**Asserting Dominance over the KMT**

After unleashing White Terror upon the communists at Shanghai, Chiang Kai-shek’s next move was asserting himself as the dominant figure within the Kuomintang. This was accomplished through unconventional means that borrowed greatly from previous actions of Sun Yat-sen. With the Kuomintang’s Revolutionary Army moving closer to unifying China, Commander-in-Chief Chiang unceremoniously retired from command. This sparked a panic within the Kuomintang that made his significance to their cause all too obvious. Chiang was then brought back into the fold with an increased air of authority. By drawing on precedents
established by Sun Yat-sen, Chiang Kai-shek maneuvered into the role of the Kuomintang’s central authority.

With the Chinese Communist Party driven into disarray, the Kuomintang proved to be its own toughest competition when the renewed Northern Expedition began in the summer of 1927. Unfortunately, Revolutionary Army forces were immediately checked by the remaining warlords. Such difficulties only served to inspire greater tension between Chiang and his more left-leaning counterpart, Wang Jingwei. Wang identified with Sun’s communist sympathies. Having received such a heavily Confucian education earlier in life, Chiang Kai-shek identified more with Sun Yat-sen’s push to update traditional Chinese values with modern Western ideas. He was also adamantly anti-communist. The ambiguity of Sun Yat-sen’s ideology had left open the possibility of such divergent interpretations and dissention within the party. Prior to the communist purge, Wang and other leftist members of the Kuomintang elite had established a new Nationalist capital at Wuhan. In protest, Chiang had moved the military headquarters to Nanchang and before again moving it to Nanjing after the purge. With the communists driven into disorder, Chiang pushed for reconciliation between the anti-Communist and leftist wings of the Kuomintang, but Wang refused to settle until Chiang had resigned. Remembering Sun Yat-sen’s “painful concession” to leave the ROC presidency to Yuan Shikai, as well as the subsequent elevation of Sun’s image, Chiang Kai-shek acquiesced and surrendered the role of commander-in-chief. Despite Wang’s hopes, the ensuing chain of events would only strengthen Chiang’s position in the KMT.

The decisions made by Chiang Kai-shek, both prior to and during his brief retirement, strengthened both his ties to Sun Yat-sen and his role within the Kuomintang. While retired
from duty in Japan, Chiang Kai-shek married Soong Mei-ling, the sister-in-law of Sun Yat-sen. The marriage gave Chiang a family tie to Sun, as well as access to Soong Mei-ling’s English language abilities and connections to the United States, and her financial mastermind brother, T.V. Soong. Such financial ties became all too relevant to the Kuomintang following Chiang’s departure. Shanghai businessmen who had made deals with Chiang during the buildup to the Shanghai Massacre withheld their money after Chiang left the party. In desperate need of funding to continue the revolutionary cause, the Kuomintang was left little recourse but to bring Chiang Kai-shek back, now with an elevated air of indispensability.

Chiang Kai-shek’s return in early 1928 all but clinched his position as the leader of the Kuomintang. It was in fact Wang Jingwei who proposed that Chiang be brought back and given his old titles without any demerit. Chiang returned to the battlefield and within the year, China was nominally united. To save face before Chiang’s return, Wang Jingwei left for France. This left Chiang without a true rival for power at the top of the Kuomintang, which stood atop a united China. Within the party, the Shanghai purge had “changed the character of the Kuomintang” “equate” leftist sympathies with communism. Chiang’s feelings toward communism were well known, as were his military successes, so members of the Kuomintang had little choice but to accept Chiang’s views and support him as the new leader of the party.

The Nanjing Decade (1928-1937)

Despite many political difficulties, as well as the early stages of the Chinese Civil War, the so-called “Nanjing Decade” saw the Kuomintang attempt to implement the teachings of Sun

\[b\] Like her sisters Ailing and Qing-ling, Soong Mei-ling attended Wesleyan (a private women’s college in Georgia) before transferring to Wellesley, where she received a degree in English literature in 1917.
Yat-sen. Overall, the Kuomintang government was hurt by the “compromised nature of the Northern Expedition.” Chiang Kai-shek’s dealings had helped him come to power, but they also required collaborating with warlords and incorporating their bureaucracies into the KMT. This resulted in a confusing, inefficient mess that proved a breeding ground for corruption. Dishonesty was rampant throughout the system and caused many to lose faith in it. Despite political intrigue, there were concrete victories to be had, as well, as Peter Zarrow describes:

Some scholars posit that the modest but definite successes in unification, political stability, and a variety of modernization projects would in the long run have produced a stable and prosperous country—had not the Japanese invaded in 1937. That the regime had survived the pressures of imperialism up to that point, and weathered the world depression, argues that it was on the right track.

Coinciding with these developments, steps were taken to promote the teachings of Sun Yat-sen. On October 3, 1928, the Kuomintang ratified a plan to “[train] the people during [a] Period of Tutelage.” Public schools began to teach a curriculum with “the Three People’s Principles as the ideological bedrock.” A picture of Sun was placed in every school, government office, and military barracks. Overall, the people were taught “to venerate Sun Yat-sen” as “the father of the country.” In addition, February 1934 saw the beginning of the New Life Movement, Chiang Kai-shek’s campaign to deliver his own interpretation of Sun Yat-sen’s ideology to the masses. Hence, while much can be said about the difficulties experienced by both the Kuomintang and the Republic of China during the time period, Chiang Kai-shek and the KMT were able to preserve a sense of ideology through the period. Of course, ideology cannot fight a war, but when the Japanese invaded in 1937, it did help dictate how the KMT would go about fighting the war.
Deciding How to Best Fight Multiple Enemies

During the Nanjing Decade, Chiang Kai-shek stubbornly upheld a belief that defeating the Chinese Communist Party should be one of the Kuomintang’s main objectives. Ever since the Shanghai Massacre of 1928, the Nationalists and Communists had been at war. Despite the fact that the Communists had been scattered by the massacre and again driven into a costly retreat—the Long March—beginning in 1934, Chiang continued to believe they remained China’s greatest threat. Sun Yat-sen had equated the need for unity within the Kuomintang and unity of the nation; accepting this, Chiang Kai-shek prized national unity above all else. He continued to cling to such a notion even when Japan conquered Manchuria and established the puppet state of Manchukuo in 1932. When it came to ensuring national unity, Chiang believed the Japanese were only a “disease of the skin” that could be removed in time, but the Communists were a “disease of the heart” that would kill the nation. Eventually, increased Communist power and fear of the Japanese would force Chiang to reconsider his opinion.

Increased fear of the Japanese led Chiang Kai-shek to Xi’an, where he would be brought to accept the creation of a Second United Front. Following a year-long retreat that ultimately saw them displaced to Shaanxi province in late 1935, the Chinese Communist Party garnered support by calling for resistance to Japanese incursion. Realizing that continuing his opposition to such a tactic would, at best, further divide the country and, at worst, cause the KMT to “lose leadership of the nation to the CCP,” Chiang Kai-shek agreed to go to Xi’an—the capital of Shaanxi—to meet with Communist leaders and remaining warlords. In an event later known as the “Xi’an Incident,” Zhang Xueliang, the warlord of Manchuria, organized a kidnapping of Chiang Kai-shek and forced him to agree to several terms before being released. These terms
included an immediate end to the civil war and the creation of the Second United Front, a renewed KMT-CCP alliance to fight the Japanese.\textsuperscript{36} This proved to be the order of things over the course of the Second Sino-Japanese War, which broke out in 1937 and later merged into Second World War. As a member of the Allies, China\textsuperscript{c} was given sovereignty over its territories lost in the past to the Japanese, including Manchuria and Taiwan. Ultimately, the Second United Front did not last long after the conclusion of World War II, as peace with Japan left the Kuomintang and Chinese Communist Party still needing to settle the score with each other.

The Kuomintang was ultimately defeated in the Chinese Civil War and driven into retreat to Taiwan in 1949, but in a pivotal move before the retreat, a new Republic of China constitution was enacted in 1947 along with crucial provisions in 1948. Adopted by the National Assembly on December 25, 1946, and put into effect exactly one year later, the Constitution of the Republic of China reaffirmed that the ROC was “founded on the Three Principles of the People” and guaranteed the rights and liberties first promoted by Sun Yat-sen decades prior.\textsuperscript{37} Regardless of all the war and political intrigue, the Kuomintang was still presenting itself as the heir to Sun Yat-sen’s political philosophy. The constitution also codified the Kuomintang’s claim to the mainland, as the constitution stipulated that territory of the ROC could “not be altered except by a resolution of the National Assembly.”\textsuperscript{38} Regardless of rhetoric, the threat of the Chinese Communist Party was becoming increasingly relevant as time passed, so the following year, in 1948, the National Assembly ratified the so-called “Temporary Provisions Effective during the Period of Communist Rebellion.” As the name implied, the provisions were meant to serve the government until the end of the so-called rebellion, a point

\textsuperscript{c} International opinion saw China as the domain of the Kuomintang and its leader, Chiang Kai-shek.
in time whose interpretation was at the discretion of the President.\(^3\) Under said provisions, the constitutional limit of two terms for the ROC President and Vice President was void.\(^4\) Seeing as how Chiang Kai-shek was such a staunch supporter of a single united China, it should come as no surprise that these provisions were never terminated after he retreated to Taiwan in 1949.

**Chiang Kai-shek In Brief**

Chiang Kai-shek would not have gotten far in life if it not for Sun Yat-sen. While it is true that Sun gained much from Chiang’s military prowess, Chiang gained much more from the philosophy and persona of Sun. As will be seen in the next chapter about the Mao Zedong and the Chinese Communist Party, Sun was as much an almost mythical symbol for united China as he was a flesh and blood political theorist. Chiang, on the other hand, was known for a “‘bad temper [that was] always the cause of trouble,’” in the words of his Xi’an kidnapper Zhang Xueliang.\(^5\) Hence, when Chiang’s greatest skill, his military mind, failed him, and he lost the civil war, all he could justifiably turn to was the unifying figure of Sun Yat-sen.

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5. Pichon P.Y. Loh, 16.
10 Quoted in Pichon P.Y. Loh, 20.
11 Jay Taylor, 20.
12 Pichon P.Y. Loh, 34.
13 Jay Taylor, 29.
14 Ibid.
15 Ibid., 30.
17 Jay Taylor, 55.
18 Ibid., 66.
20 Jay Taylor, 72.
21 Ibid., 24.
22 Peter Zarrow, 242.
23 Ibid.
24 Jay Taylor, 78.
26 Peter Zarrow, 248.
27 Lloyd E. Eastman, 14.
28 Jay Taylor, 249-250.
29 “The General Principles Governing the Period of Political Tutelage, Promulgated by the Central Executive Committee of the Kuomintang (October 3, 1928),” in Shieh, 71.
30 Peter Zarrow, 249.
31 Ibid., 246.
32 Lloyd E. Eastman, 107.
33 Peter Zarrow, 213.
34 Quoted in Peter Zarrow, 267.
35 Jay Taylor, 125.
36 Ibid., 128.
38 Ibid., Chapter I, Article 4.
39 Temporary Provisions Effective during the Period of Communist Rebellion, Article 10.
40 Ibid., Article 3.
41 Quoted in Jay Taylor, 127.
CHAPTER FOUR: THE ALTERNATIVE OF MAO ZEDONG

In any case, people with a conscience will never forsake the new Three People’s Principles until the task of opposing imperialism and feudalism is basically accomplished...We Communists will always persevere in long-term cooperation with all the true followers of the Three People’s Principles and, while rejecting the traitors and the sworn enemies of communism, will never forsake any of our friends.

—Mao Zedong (“On New Democracy,” January 15, 1940)

Few men in history can claim a cult of personality on the scale of that of Mao Zedong. A successful general, talented poet, influential political theorist, and staunch revolutionary, Mao commanded—and still commands to this day—an incredible degree of respect and loyalty from his supporters. A cruel, uncompromising leader of questionable morals and intentions, Mao was—and is—the subject of much scorn by dissidents. Regardless of history’s assessment of Mao Zedong, his impact on China cannot be denied. His ultimately successful campaign against Chiang Kai-shek and the Kuomintang during the Chinese Civil War resulted in the establishment of the People’s Republic of China, the world’s largest experiment in communism. Despite the fact that Mao waged a long, costly war against the Kuomintang, the creation of Dr. Sun Yat-sen, he did use the personage of Sun as a source of credibility for his own political ideology. While that ideology was not as strongly tied to Sun’s as was that of Chiang Kai-shek, Mao would eventually begin to make careful mention of Sun, the figurehead of modern China. While Chiang Kai-shek and the Kuomintang claimed Sun Yat-sen as their own, Mao Zedong and the Chinese Communist Party also derived a sense of legitimacy from Dr. Sun Yat-sen.

Much like the structure of the previous chapter, here we will focus on the early life of Mao Zedong before moving on to several episodes between the end of the First United Front and the end of the Chinese Civil War. In the aftermath of the Shanghai Massacre, the Chinese Communist Party was forced to regroup and reassess their strategy. Any gains during the
following period were overturned by KMT raids resulting in the Long March. It was during this grueling retreat that Mao Zedong solidified his command over the party. Securing a base in Shaanxi province, the Communists were able to grow by reaching out to underrepresented segments of society while waging war with the Nationalists and the Japanese. All the while, Mao Zedong crafted his ideology by borrowing from other theorists. He and his followers would eventually prevail and establish a new China.

**The Early Life of Mao**

Mao Zedong came from humble origins for which he attempted to compensate with education. Born six years after Chiang Kai-shek, in late 1893, Mao Zedong came from the small village of Shaoshan in Hunan province. His father’s oldest son, Mao spent his early childhood working in the fields while attending primary school. In school, young Mao became acquainted with the Confucian classics, which he saw as “‘dry and boring,’” from a teacher he similarly remembered as “‘harsh and severe.’”1,2 Regardless, Mao believed that his education would be “useful” to him in the future, and this compelled him to study diligently.3 He obsessed over classic novels of intrigue and romance.4 His love of books extended beyond his completion of primary school, and after taking his leave, Mao became an avid reader of revolutionary political articles. When he was sixteen, in 1909, Mao Zedong began to attend a “new-style school” in Xiangtan, twenty-five miles away from home.5 There he studied anti-dynastic theory and Western science until he decided to move to the Hunan capital of Changsha in 1911. Following the Wuhan Uprising on October 10, 1911, Mao joined a local revolutionary army but saw no action.6 After the abdication of the Qing Emperor Puyi in February 1912, Mao returned to continue his education.
Following his brief interlude in the army, Mao Zedong continued to pursue his quest for knowledge. Over a six month period in 1912, Mao read *The Wealth of Nations* and *The Origin of Species*, as well as the works of Mill, Rousseau, and Montesquieu. These proved of interest, but like his obsession with classic Chinese novels, Mao was more intrigued by the lives of men such as Napoleon and Peter the Great. The following year, in 1913, Mao enrolled in the Fourth Provincial Normal School, which then merged with and took the name of the First Provincial Normal School. At First Normal, Mao was further exposed to China’s weakness in the world and led an organization known as the New People’s Study Society, many of whose members would later become members of the Chinese Communist Party. Having no experience with Marxism at the time, Mao was still an idealist liberal who believed self-cultivation was the key to reforming society, rather than any radical societal overhaul. While studying at First Normal, Mao developed a relationship with a Western-educated teacher named Yang Changji. In 1918, Yang took a professorship at Peking University in Beijing and invited Mao to come along with him. Despite the fact that he had yet to leave Hunan province in his life, Mao enthusiastically agreed. The move to Beijing would be difficult at times for Mao, but his time there would greatly contribute to his political beliefs later on in life.

Perhaps seeing himself as a prime example, Mao Zedong would later describe Beijing as a city “in which one cannot but be transformed.” When Mao arrived in late 1918, he knew no one other than Professor Yang, who secured a job for him as an assistant in the library of Peking University under Li Dazhao, the head librarian. Unfortunately, Mao’s crude country manners alienated him from many at the university, but he was able to make friends with a select few, including faculty member Chen Duxiu. Prior to taking his position at the university, in 1915,
Chen founded *New Youth* (新青年), a highly influential revolutionary magazine. It was the pages of *New Youth* that first introduced Mao to anarchism, Marxism, and Bolshevism while he worked in the library. Such readings helped foster a desire in Mao to help bring change to China. Mao’s first trip to Beijing was cut short when his mother fell ill, forcing him to return home to attend to her. Meanwhile, outrage at the world’s great powers would prompt much political drama in China.

Though he was back in Hunan, political intrigue coming out of the May Fourth Movement in Beijing gave Mao a specific ideology to serve his passion for reforming China. Resentment over the lack of mention of territory China had lost to Japan in the Treaty of Versailles led to an outpouring of Chinese nationalism, as well as an increased push for modernization, known as the May Fourth Movement. Two major figures of the movement, Hu Shih and Chen Duxiu, split opinion over how to best accomplish such goals: Hu favored the adoption of Western-style democracy, whereas Chen pushed for a more radical Leninist approach. Prior to this period, Mao had been more dedicated to the cause of revolution than any specific ideology, but he trusted Chen Duxiu. By mid-1920, Mao accepted Marxism and “declared his support” for Bolshevist Communism. Meanwhile, Vladimir Lenin’s Comintern had gained word of the communist sympathies in China, and Comintern agents were sent to investigate the possibility of a communist party in China. In June 1921, with the Comintern’s help, Chen Duxiu and Li Dazhao, Mao’s friends and mentors from Peking University, founded the Chinese Communist Party in Shanghai. Mao was in attendance as a representative from

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*a* The name of the movement comes from the date of student protests regarding the treaty (May 4, 1919).

*b* Not unlike Dr. Sun Yat-sen during the Xinhai Revolution, neither Chen nor Li were actually present at the CCP’s first meeting in Shanghai.
Hunan. Following that first meeting, Mao returned to Hunan charged with the duty of recruiting new members into the CCP. In this minor role, Mao began to develop his ideology.

While busy seeking out new members for the Chinese Communist Party, Mao Zedong was able to develop a solution to an inherent flaw in Chinese communism. While Comintern agents were present at the Chinese Communist Party’s founding and helped forge it in line with Marxism-Leninism, there was a major difficulty in that agrarian China lacked any significant proletariat base. As Mao searched the largely-rural Hunan province, Mao came face-to-face with the difficulties inherent to such a contradiction. For Mao, the solution was to focus on China’s many peasants, who faced a plight not unlike that of the world’s proletariat. When Comintern agents came to reorganize the Kuomintang, the Leninist concept of the vanguard party was given much support, and the KMT quickly took up such a role. Similarly, in his February 1927 essay “Report on the Peasant Movement in Hunan,” Mao referred to China’s peasantry as the “backbone” of the “vanguard in overthrowing the feudal forces” of China. Mao believed the mission of the CCP should be to support these revolutionaries. This would be done by organizing the peasantry into associations, helping those organizations overthrow old institutions of oppression (including landlords and corrupt magistrates), and providing for improved living conditions with land projects and modern schools. This was well-received by the peasantry, whose support proved an asset to the KMT-CCP alliance, under the First United Front, as it sought to drive out China’s warlords. Unfortunately for the CCP, Chiang Kai-shek’s suspicions of communism brought on the Shanghai Massacre and the First United Front’s end. During the crackdown, Li Dazhao was executed by KMT soldiers, Chen Duxiu was blamed and ousted from the party, and the entire Chinese Communist Party was driven into disarray. Mao
Zedong, along with other remaining CCP members, was driven underground and then to Jinggangshan (井岡山). There, Mao would solidify his political ideology.

**Testing Theory and Garnering Reputation**

Hiding out in the mountains between Jiangxi and Hunan province, Mao Zedong and his supporters would craft a view of communism unique to China’s situation. With the communists driven to the mountains out of necessity rather than any concerted effort, Jinggangshan was “at best an accidental site” to conduct the ideological framing that would happen there. Regardless of the circumstances leading Mao to the area, the time he spent there would prove a crucial period for his theory of communism. The arrival of other CCP leaders would also prove of major benefit to Mao’s capabilities. Overall, the encampment at Jinggangshan was critical to the development of the Chinese Communist Party.

The ideological persuasion of those at Jinggangshan shifted away from the Comintern’s communism to that of Mao Zedong. While CCP members were driven into the mountains by “the imperatives of survival,” they also found a genuine chance to bring “fundamental change” to the party. The remote mountain base afforded Mao the opportunity to test out reforms he had called for in his 1927 report on the Hunan peasantry, and definite successes were to be found. Land redistribution was carried out; basic literacy was promoted; and a system of non-hierarchal relationships developed. These accomplishments did not go unnoticed by the underground communists, and steadily more of them made their way to Mao’s hideout. Notable newcomers included military expert Zhu De and diplomatic master Zhou Enlai. Mao quickly put Zhu De’s military prowess to work, and the forces defending the Jinggangshan base became popularly known as the Zhu-Mao Army. The face of the CCP reforms carried out in
Jinggangshan, as well as one of the key faces of the CCP army, Mao Zedong became a local hero whose name was increasingly well-known name among China’s communists. Mao’s growing reputation helped upset the Stalin-influenced Comintern’s control over the CCP. While this would benefit Mao in the long-term, it would not prevent the KMT from continuously raiding the mountain base, and Mao’s supporters went into retreat in early 1929.

Though driven into retreat from Jinggangshan in 1929, the Zhu-Mao Army continued to improve its reputation. Early on, Mao and Zhu developed a strict code of ethics which ordered soldiers to be respectful and courteous to those they encountered. Perhaps drawing on the support this good behavior garnered, the Zhu-Mao Army was able to settle in Jiangxi and Fujian province in late 1931 to establish the Jiangxi Soviet, the largest territory within the Chinese Soviet Republic. In reaction to the Japanese invasion of Manchuria, the Chinese Soviet Republic issued a declaration of war against Japan in April 1932. Mao Zedong was among the signatories. Considering that Chiang Kai-shek refused to fight the Japanese until defeating the CCP first, this move was another boon to CCP support by Chinese seeking retribution against Japan. Regardless of reputation, the CCP suffered greatly from Chiang Kai-shek’s nearly-constant raids and was driven into retreat yet again beginning in late 1934. By the end of this epic retreat known as the Long March, Mao Zedong would lead the entire CCP.

Mao’s Eventual Victory

With Chiang Kai-shek working furiously to eliminate what he perceived to be the communist threat, Mao and many of the others in the Jiangxi Soviet were forced to abandon the

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*The Chinese Soviet Republic (中華蘇維埃和國) was a short-lived coalition of communist states within China that lasted from around 1931 to 1937; it went unrecognized by the international community.*
outpost. In October 1934, about 86,000 troops left the Jiangxi Soviet without any sense of where they were going.\(^{27}\) Even with the arrival of various bands of peasants and soldiers that had become impassioned to join the CCP’s retreat, it was still an incredibly difficult time for everyone involved. By the time the retreat was finally over, it was October 1935. The CCP was now based in Shaanxi province, and only 7,000 had survived.\(^{28}\) The next fourteen years would ultimately see Mao Zedong claim victory over the Chinese Communist Party, as well as the Chinese Communist Party over the Chinese mainland.

The renewed alliance with the Kuomintang under the Second United Front saw Mao Zedong begin to use Sun Yat-sen as a source of legitimacy. As discussed in the previous chapter, in the end of 1936, the Xi’an Incident forced Chiang Kai-shek to ally with the CCP and focus on fighting the Japanese. War between the KMT and the CCP was put on hold until the Japanese invaders were expelled. With a greater sense of security, Mao was able to promote the alliance in “On New Democracy,” an essay dated January 15, 1940, for giving the feeling that there was “a way out of the impasse” that had long plagued China.\(^{29}\) Speaking on the behalf of his fellow communists, Mao recognized “the Three People’s Principles as the political basis for the Anti-Japanese United Front.”\(^{30}\) Mao praised the revised Three Principles of the People delivered by Dr. Sun near the end of his life, which conveyed more Soviet sympathies. Mao further claimed that he and the Chinese Communist Party were the true supporters of Sun’s “genuine” political philosophy, whereas Chiang and the Kuomintang had “butchered” it.\(^{31,32}\) Hence, Mao Zedong believed the Chinese Communist Party was the true successor to Dr. Sun Yat-sen and ultimately deserved power over China.
A few years later, in 1942, Mao Zedong would begin to assert his final claim over the Chinese Communist Party, as well as its ideology, through the Yan’an Rectification Movement. Named for the seat of CCP power in Shaanxi following the Long March, the rectification campaigns were intended to both curtail criticism of Mao’s non-Marxist ideas and assert “Mao Thought” as the driving ideology of the Chinese Communist Party. Prior to the campaign, Mao was “vulnerable to charges of being an effective tactician but a poor Marxist” due to his unorthodox promotion of the rural peasant over the urban worker.33 “‘If you want the masses to understand you,’” as Mao would describe the approximately 700,000 members of the CCP to a conference in May 1942, “‘you must make up your mind to undergo a long and even painful process of tempering.’”34 “Tempering” entailed ordering party members to fully indoctrinate themselves in the writings of Mao Zedong and to stage self-criticism. A common practice in the early People’s Republic of China, self-criticism forced people to atone for misunderstanding Maoist belief by publicly confessing such crimes against the party. Meanwhile, dissidents were rooted out, often by force, and many were killed. Just as Chiang Kai-shek had made it painfully clear how he would take to dissenting opinions within the Kuomintang, Mao Zedong forcefully projected his power over the whole of the Chinese Communist Party. By the end of the campaign in 1944, negative talk of Mao was violently silenced, and the cult of Mao had begun.

Following the end of World War II in 1945, Mao and his forces known as the People’s Liberation Army began their struggle with Chiang Kai-shek and his Revolutionary Army anew. Despite having suffered heavy losses throughout the Chinese Civil War, Mao and the CCP were ultimately victorious on the mainland. On October 1, 1949, addressing a crowd from the Forbidden City in Beijing, Mao Zedong declared the founding of the People’s Republic of China.
It would mark the beginning of the Chinese Communist Party’s experiment with nation building based on the ideology of Mao Zedong thought and the so-called “genuine” Three Principles of the People.

A Few Words on Mao Zedong

The revolutionary fervor and political ideology of Mao Zedong was much less based on the life and works of Dr. Sun Yat-sen that those of Chiang Kai-shek. Whereas Chiang utilized the symbol of Sun to bolster his reputation within the Kuomintang, Mao used Sun to bolster the reputation of the entire Chinese Communist Party. Compared to Chiang in the KMT, Mao Zedong had a relatively easy time ensuring that his was the central voice of the CCP. It was much more difficult for the CCP, though, to assert its claim as the legitimate power in China. The Chinese Communist Party was forced to project itself as the true inheritor to Sun’s ideology. Hence, in the 1940s, Mao began to claim much of his philosophy was based on what he called Sun’s “genuine” Three Principles of the People. The adoption of Sun Yat-sen’s image was a pragmatic move for Mao Zedong and the Chinese Communist Party, but Mao’s image still reigned supreme.

3 Philip Short, 26.
4 Rebecca E. Karl, 6.
5 Ibid., 7.
6 Ibid., 9.
8 Ibid.
9 Rebecca E. Karl, 12.
10 Ibid.
11 Ibid., 12-13.
12 Quoted in Philip Short, 82.
13 Rebecca E. Karl, 12.
14 Philip Short, 83.
15 Rebecca E. Karl, 14.
16 Stuart R. Schram, 15.
17 Rebecca E. Karl, 18.
18 Timothy Creek, ed. *Mao Zedong and China’s Revolutions: A Brief History with Documents* (Boston: Bedford/St. Martin’s, 2002), 10.
20 Ibid., 54-75.
21 Rebecca E. Karl, 36.
22 Philip Short, 265.
23 Rebecca E. Karl, 36.
24 Ibid.
25 Ibid.
26 Stuart. R. Schram, 37.
27 Peter Zarrow, 299.
28 Philip Short, 341.
30 Ibid., 94.
31 Ibid., 100.
32 Ibid., 108.
33 Peter Zarrow, 330.
34 Quoted in Peter Zarrow, 329.
Section III: The Question of Democracy in Greater China

In light of the previous section, it appears that Chiang Kai-shek and Mao Zedong both adapted the ideology and persona of Sun Yat-sen and, in the process, established themselves as the central figure of a single-party authoritarian system. Regardless of this similarity, the political situations in the Republic of China and the People’s Republic of China are currently very different. In this section, we will discuss the unique circumstances of Taiwan that lead to such a political transformation, as well as the potential for application to mainland China.
CHAPTER FIVE: THE WAVERING BOND BETWEEN TAIWAN AND CHINA

Thus the [Qing] had decided to keep Taiwan largely to keep it out of the hands of trouble-making foreigners and dissident Chinese. But they saw from the beginning that it would be a headache...This attitude toward Taiwan was a sharp contrast to that of the last two regimes, the Dutch and the [Zheng], for whom Taiwan had been an essential base at a time when they were not welcome on the mainland.

—John E. Wills, Jr.

The fact that the Republic of China on Taiwan is now a developing democracy owes a considerable debt to the unique experiences of Taiwan and its people. While Kuomintang ideology called for democracy, this was never realized on the Chinese mainland as it was intended. It only came to pass on a nearby island that was not even part of Chinese territory for over fifty years between 1895 and 1945. Little did the Kuomintang know when Taiwan was recovered after World War II that it would soon become the center of their power. Upon their arrival, the Kuomintang was forced to reconcile with the troubled relationship that had long existed between Taiwan and the mainland. This neglect had had a major impact on the development of Taiwan and a not insignificant impact on the Chinese mainland, as well. Before discussing the Kuomintang’s time in Taiwan, it is helpful to know a bit of the history, as well as Taiwan’s place in the international system and its various rulers. The legacy left behind by periods of occupation and colonization would present the Kuomintang with unique challenges that would ultimately lead to democratization. Thus, a basic knowledge of Taiwanese history prior to 1945 is necessary before discussing the political transformations that came to pass during the latter half of the twentieth century.

The Island of Taiwan

Before beginning to discuss political connections, it is beneficial, for the sake of introduction, to say a few words about Taiwan’s geography. The island of Taiwan, also known
as Formosa,\textsuperscript{a} lies approximately 100 miles across the Taiwan Strait from the Asian continent\textsuperscript{b} (Figure 1). It is nearly 250 miles in length running from the northeast to the southwest and about 100 miles across from the northwest to the southeast.\textsuperscript{1}

Figure 5.7 – Map of Taiwan

It was originally settled by various Austronesian peoples who explored all around that region. The descendants of these peoples came to be known as the aboriginal peoples who still make up a small percentage of the island’s population. The island is quite mountainous, especially in the east, and a majority of the arable land is located along the western coast. While typhoons and rough currents often make the waters surrounding the island treacherous, Taiwan’s location has made it of great strategic value at several points in history to the Chinese, Japanese, and some Europeans. Regardless, the Chinese were quite slow to realize the potential value of Taiwan.

\textbf{Taiwan Prior to the European Arrival}

Said plainly, the relationship between Taiwan and mainland China has been marked by neglect, foreign interest, and dissent. Through much of history, Taiwan was simply of little to

\textsuperscript{a} The name Formosa is taken from the Portuguese \textit{Ilha Formosa}, meaning “Beautiful Island.”

\textsuperscript{b} More specifically, Taiwan lies to the southeast of the Chinese province of Fujian.
no interest to the Chinese government. This only started to change when foreign powers came into the region with designs for monetary gain. All the while, Taiwan served as both a hideout and a redoubt for pirates and political dissidents. While terms between the two have been less than amicable, Taiwan and mainland China have also played major roles in each other’s history.

Following China’s first encounter with Taiwan, over a millennium passed with little interest sparked in the island. The first contact between mainland China and Taiwan appears to have come in the year A.D. 239, when the Wu court\(^c\) sent a 10,000-man expeditionary force to explore the island. Following that initial encounter, there was some small-scale migration from the mainland to Taiwan. Most moving across the Taiwan Strait to Taiwan and the nearby Penghu Islands\(^d\) came from coastal parts of China, especially Fujian and Guangdong. Many such migrants were driven by economic problems caused by excess population on the mainland.\(^2\) It was not until the fourteenth century that China made some sort of claim to the region, when the Yuan dynasty rulers installed a circuit intendant in Penghu. This marked the first time China laid any sort of claim upon the Taiwan region.\(^3\)

Following the Ming overthrow of the Yuan dynasty in 1368, Chinese immigration to Taiwan remained small in scale but was developing. The first Ming emperor, Hong Wu (洪武), wrote he believed land “far away in a corner” beyond the Chinese mainland was not worth his attention, and he refused to allow Chinese to sail abroad except on official business.\(^4\) Anyone who set sail for other reasons would become outlaws. A law was passed forbidding people

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\(^c\) Following the demise of the Han dynasty around A.D. 220, China became divided between three competing kingdoms (hence the name of the Three Kingdoms period). The Wu kingdom (lasting from approximately 229 to 280) laid claim to an area that extended south from the Yangzi River into territory including the modern Fujian province previously mentioned.

\(^d\) The Penghu Islands can be found on the above map labeled as Pescadores, a common name for the islands from the Portuguese for “fishermen.”
from leaving the Chinese mainland. Despite the ban, increasing numbers of people—including Zheng Zhilong, who became increasingly noteworthy in time—bribed officials into allowing them to sail for Taiwan and the Penghu Islands. They would not be alone for long.

**Imperialist Europe’s Onset**

By the sixteenth century, Europeans were making their presence felt around China and Southeast Asia. In 1499, Vasco da Gama returned to Portugal after having completed the first all-water voyage from Europe to India. From there, the Portuguese continued to explore the region and, in time, established a base in China at Macau in 1557. Meanwhile, Spanish explorers carried out similar journeys and occupied Manila in 1571. Wanting in on the lucrative spice trade, the English and Dutch followed. As Asian waters became increasingly filled with European ships, it was only a matter of time until Europeans encountered Taiwan for the first time. This came in 1622, when Dutch sailors explored the southwestern coast of Taiwan.

Wasting little time, the Dutch attempted to establish a base on the Penghu Islands the same year of 1622. This was met with opposition by the governor of Fujian province, but the Dutch decision to relocate to Taiwan in 1624 was met little opposition from the Ming court. Thus marked the beginning of nearly forty years of Dutch colonization began on the island of Taiwan. Taiwan would serve the Dutch both as a starting point “from which to seek to trade with China and Japan” and as a base “to wage war.” The Dutch presence soon angered Taiwan’s Han population which, despite lacking a sense of a unified group, was quick to recognize the Dutch as outsiders. Meanwhile, the fall of the Ming dynasty in 1644 spurred the

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* Located near Hong Kong, Macau (澳門) is a Chinese port city which remained until Portuguese control until it was returned to China in 1999, the first established and last returned European colony in China.
beginning of substantial Chinese migration to Taiwan. By 1650, Taiwan was home to about 25,000 Chinese migrants, and by 1664, this number had doubled.⁹ These two realities came to a head in 1661, when a force led by Zheng Cheng-gong, son of Zheng Zhilong, sought refuge from the incoming Qing dynasty on the mainland by seizing Dutch fortifications on Taiwan and driving out the former occupiers. Thus, spurred by a potentially costly war, Dutch colonizers abandoned Taiwan in 1661.

**The Return of Chinese Rule**

Following the period of Dutch rule, Taiwan became host to a short-lived dynasty founded by Zheng Cheng-gong. While the Manchus were able to quickly topple the Ming dynasty and establish Qing dynasty in northern China, southern China would not be acquired so easily. Resistance came, in part, from the aforementioned Zheng Zhilong, who the Ming government hired in 1628 to help defend their dynasty.¹⁰ Zheng Zhilong fell in battle with the Manchus in 1661, but his son, Zheng Cheng-gong, took up his father’s mission and launched an attack on the Dutch in Taiwan in order to withdraw to the island. There Zheng attempted to establish a dynasty, but it was not to last. Qing attacks were frequent and drove Zheng out in 1683. Taiwan, now of value due to both foreign interest and the many conflicts it had inspired, was finally incorporated into a Chinese empire. In April 1684, Qing rulers incorporated Taiwan and Penghu together as a prefecture of Fujian province.

For much of the Qing period in Taiwan, the belief remained that Taiwan was inferior to the mainland. Even after fighting to suppress opposition, and in turn acquire Taiwan, the rulers

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¹ Zheng Cheng-gong (1624-1662) was an anti-imperialist and Ming loyalist, more commonly known as Koxinga—from the Chinese 國姓爺(Guo Xing Ye), meaning “Lord with the Imperial Surname.”
of the Qing dynasty still put little value in Taiwan. This sentiment persisted for another hundred years, until European imperialists returned. During the Opium Wars (1839–1842 and 1856–1860) between China and Great Britain, the British led several attacks on Taiwan in an attempt to seize the island. The French similarly sent in a fleet to bombard the island during the Sino-French War (1884-1885). Realizing the perceived value of the island, Qing officials finally upgraded Taiwan’s status to its own province in 1885. Though suffering heavy losses through several wars, China managed to hold onto Taiwan. Unfortunately, the same could not be said about Japanese imperialists and the Sino-Japanese War (1894-1895).

Japanese Occupation (1895-1945)

Simply put, the First Sino-Japanese War was “disastrous” for Qing China, which had little recourse but to meet the demands of the Japanese during the peace talks. Among other terms, the resulting Treaty of Shimonoseki (signed on April 17, 1895) granted ownership of Taiwan and the Penghu Islands to Japan. While the transfer of power in Taiwan did not proceed smoothly, Japan was soon able to assert control over the island. Once Taiwan was fully under Japanese control, the new rulers set about bringing law and order to the island, often by force. Though the Japanese occupation of Taiwan was not without violence or oppression, the effects that it had were of great significance to its role in post-war China.

Japan’s acquisition of Taiwan came at a time of incredible rise in Japanese power, from which Taiwan benefitted substantially. During the latter half of the 1800s, Japan’s Meiji rulers oversaw an incredible modernization campaign. As part of this campaign, Japan also became

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8 Military resistance was led on two fronts: first by Tang Jingsong, the deposed Qing governor of Taiwan, and second by Liu Yongfu, a Qing military commander. Japan’s military might far exceeded both and put down opposition within a few years.
imperialistic, and newly-acquired Taiwan presented a potential “base for Japan’s expansion southward.” In order to make Taiwan a suitable base, though, Japan needed to “[take] special care to develop the island” and bring it up to Japanese standards. To accomplish this, Japan’s governing body in Taiwan initiated a series of political, infrastructural, and social reforms.

Recognizing the great distance between Taiwan and the home islands, Japan gave a degree of autonomy to its regime there and limited authority to the Taiwanese people. Soon after seizing control, the Japanese government passed a law authorizing its appointed governor-general in Taiwan to independently decide on issues, so long as he held “consistent with general policy guidelines made in Tokyo.” Prior to Japanese colonization, Taiwan operated under the so-called baojia (保甲) system, whereby 100 households (hu—户) were linked together as one jia (甲), ten of which were united as one bao (保). Each level of the structure appointed leaders responsible for protecting the interests of his constituents. The governor-general cooperated with the baojia system for much of the occupation period and appointed Japanese to serve in many positions of power. In an effort to inspire loyalty, the governor-general also collaborated with Taiwan’s local elite by exchanging “a degree of political power” for loyalty to Japanese rule. Seeing the need to better address the “key regions of cultural and economic coherence on the island,” the governor-general reformed the Taiwanese government in the 1920s. Taiwan was organized into five provinces—based in the major cities of Keelung, Taipei, Taichung, Tainan, and Kaohsiung—and two sub-provinces in the less-developed east. The system extended deep into the populace and brought local Taiwanese “into the fold of the Japanese administration.” In this way, Japanese occupation provided the Taiwanese people with both an effective government structure and a taste of political authority.
Aiming to improve Taiwan’s agricultural capabilities, the Japanese built a modern infrastructure that would, in time, prove crucial to Taiwan’s development. Realizing Taiwanese soil hid no economically viable mineral or gem deposits, the Japanese regime quickly turned to agriculture. Impressed by the small-rent farmers’ knowledge of and connections to local affairs, the Japanese organized a large-scale campaign of land redistribution.18 Having redistributed the land among the masses, the Japanese began to push Taiwanese farmers to produce rice and sugar, both of which would sell well back in Japan.19 Production of these crops markedly increased as a result. Still, an agrarian society is utterly dependent upon getting water to the fields, and the Japanese construction of a modern irrigation system in Taiwan was, by some calculations, the Japanese regime’s “most important achievement.”20 In addition, factories were needed to refine agricultural products, and ways to bring these products to market were also necessary. To this effect, the Japanese built factories, power plants, railroads, highways, telegraph and telephone lines. For an area whose rural population did not have access to basic amenities such as running water or electricity, these construction project presented marked improvements.21 Because the Japanese owned the factories, their forced withdrawal in 1945 after World War II meant that Taiwan received the benefits of industrialization without the complexities of rich capitalists. Thus, Taiwanese industrialization did not come at the cost of great economic disparity, a great benefit to later development according to Sun Yat-sen’s theory.

Initially provided for by the Japanese, the beginnings of universal education in Taiwan led to both increased literacy and early feelings of Taiwanese pride. In 1904, only 3.8 percent of Taiwanese children attended school, and this education was primarily offered only in Japanese and “delivered heavy doses of Japanese culture and history.”22 While this percentage had
grown to 25.1 percent in 1920, the government still tried to accelerate the expansion of education. To this end, in 1922, schools started encouraging practical education in the fields of medicine and engineering. This came alongside increasing numbers of Taiwanese enrolling in Japanese universities. Overall, education in Taiwan became more and more common under Japanese rule. By 1943, 71.3 percent of Taiwanese children were in school, and by 1945, thirty thousand Taiwanese worked and studied in “cosmopolitan” Tokyo. While in Tokyo, increasing numbers of Taiwanese encountered “modern ideas and trends,” including notably Sun Yat-sen’s theories as well as other views of democracy and self-determination. These ideas struck a chord with some students, who began to call for change in Taiwan. In response, the Japanese government began a crackdown on dissidents, who returned to Taiwan with these new ideas. Thus, propagation of education in Taiwan, by extension, brought ideas of democracy and autonomy and to the island.

When Japan surrendered on September 2, 1945, bringing an end to World War II, the Japanese occupation of Taiwan was also brought to an end. Fifty years under Japanese rule had had a profound impact on Taiwan’s future development and democratization. Due to Japan’s incorporating of Taiwan’s local elite into the government, a small group of Taiwanese got to take part in a centralized system. Additionally, land redistribution, factory construction, and infrastructural buildup all greatly improved Taiwan’s chances of success in the modern world dynamic. In the context of future democratization, Japan’s greatest contribution was the education programs that exposed Taiwanese students to the concepts of self-determination and democracy before pushing them back to Taiwan. Tokyo’s goals may have been to silence their
dissent and discontent toward the system of Japanese occupation, but they effectively presented Taiwan with modern Western, democratic ideas that would develop in the coming decades.

The Status of Taiwan in the Post-War World

Upon the conclusion of World War II, Taiwan and the Penghu Islands were returned to the government of the Republic of China, which was controlled by Chiang Kai-shek and the Kuomintang. Of course, the Chinese Civil War quickly swept through China again and by 1949, the Kuomintang retreated from the mainland to safety on Taiwan. Whether or not a smooth transition was expected is unknown, but it is obvious that the unique characteristics of Taiwan, greatly influenced by its unique history, presented a challenge to Chiang Kai-shek and the KMT.

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2 Ibid., 4.
3 Ibid., 3.
5 Gary Marvin Davison, 4.
6 Ibid., 5.
9 Murray A. Rubinstein, 10.
10 Gary Marvin Davison, 4.
13 Jaushieh Joseph Wu, 23.
14 Gary Marvin Davison, 54.
15 Jaushieh Joseph Wu, 23.
16 Gary Marvin Davison, 56.
17 Ibid.
18 Ibid., 57.
19 Ibid.
20 Jaushieh Joseph Wu, 23.
21 Gary Marvin Davison, 63.
22 Ibid., 64.
24 Ibid.
CHAPTER SIX: THE POLITICAL TRANSFORMATION ON TAIWAN

Internally, we must realize that this war is not simply a war between Taiwan and the Chinese mainland; it is a war against aggression, against totalitarianism and against enslavement. It is not a “civil war”; it is a war for democracy, peace, and justice.

—Manifesto of the Seventh National Congress of the Kuomintang (October 20, 1952)

Few would debate the assessment that the quarter-century following the death of Dr. Sun Yat-sen in 1925 was a rough period for the Kuomintang and the Republic of China. For almost the entire period, the Chinese mainland was torn apart by war, against foes both foreign and domestic. Domestically, political sovereignty and allegiances were tested by in-fighting amongst powerful warlords, as well as hostilities with the Chinese Communist Party that gave rise to civil war. On the international front, the imperialist tendencies of nearby Japan led to costly wars and massive territorial losses. Despite many obstacles, by the end of the Second World War in 1945, the Republic of China was able to preserve international recognition and recover the island of Taiwan from Japan. Little did Generalissimo Chiang Kai-shek and the KMT know at the time, Taiwan would present the Kuomintang, and the political philosophy of Sun Yat-sen, with new challenges and opportunities, as well as the potential for democratization.

This is not to say that the arrival of democracy, that would eventually occur in the Republic of China on Taiwan, was inevitable. In fact, such an assessment would be far from the truth. The Kuomintang ruled the island via a strong-fisted dictatorship that lasted much of their time in power there. The people of Taiwan suffered greatly for much of this period of single-party authoritarian rule, which featured the longest period of continuous martial law in modern history—lasting approximately forty years from 1947 until 1987. Hence, it is the aim of this chapter to serve as both a chilling account of despotic rule and a celebration of the
remarkable turnaround and democratization that took place on Taiwan during the latter half of
the twentieth century.

A Rough Beginning

Having been defeated by the Allied Powers—which included the Republic of China—in
the Second World War, Imperial Japan was forced to relinquish its hold on territory seized from
China during its time of weakness. As with seemingly every power transition on the island, the
transfer of power in Taiwan from the Imperial Diet to the Kuomintang government did not
proceed smoothly. In fact, opposition to KMT-rule was strong enough to lead to a violent
crackdown and the imposition of martial law. Such a reality on Taiwan would have a major
impact on the administration of the island at a crucial point in its history.

The end of World War II, unquestionably a major event for the entire world, precipitated
no small change, as well, for the people and governance of Taiwan. On August 15, 1945, the
Japanese Emperor Hirohito formally declared his nation’s acceptance of the Potsdam
Declaration made by President Harry S Truman, Prime Minister Winston Churchill, and
Generalissimo Chiang Kai-shek one month prior. The message from Potsdam had, in turn,
reaffirmed the Cairo Declaration—made in December 1943 by the same three leaders—which
called for the return of “all the territories Japan had stolen from the Chinese, such as Manchuria,
Formosa, and the Pescadores…to the Republic of China.”¹ In anticipation of Japan’s defeat even
prior to the address of Emperor Hirohito, the Kuomintang commissioned general and former
Fujian governor Chen Yi to lead a committee in researching how to best bring Taiwan back into
the Chinese sphere after fifty years of separation. On August 14, 1945, one day before Japan’s
preliminary surrender, the Kuomintang central government declared Chen Yi would serve as
the Kuomintang’s governor-general in Taiwan upon its return to the Republic of China. His brief but chaotic term would ultimately be rocked by violence.

The scene in Taiwan following World War II was less than conducive to the implementation of efficient government. Years of distant authority—a result of both Qing neglect and Japanese hands-off rule—fostered a belief in Taiwan that government was something far away, not something that would necessarily be felt directly much less heeded. The prospect of a government orchestrated by the Kuomintang, which possessed a belief in the need for a strong central government, was met with many different reactions by the people on the island. As researcher Gary Marvin Davison described:

[Some] moved to Japan while others scrambled to reorient their loyalties in deference to the reality of [Kuomintang] authority. Many a collaborator suddenly turned enthusiastic Chinese patriot. Some laid low. But there were also those of Han Chinese ethnicity on Taiwan who had yearned for the exit of the Japanese and the institution of a government headed by people closer to their provenance. Overall the Taiwanese masses [were] war-weary, eager for normality of peacetime, and hoping for better economic conditions.²

Despite the Imperial Diet’s relative neglect, Taiwan was part of Japan’s empire throughout World War II and, as such, was not exempt from the trials of war. American bombings ravaged the infrastructure, resulting in a depressed economy, inflation, job scarcities, and rampant disease. When he arrived in Taipei on October 24, 1945, Chen Yi and his fellow officials set up in some of the city’s “few buildings still standing.”³ Upon arriving, Chen Yi declared his goal was “to build a new Taiwan” with the cooperation of his “Taiwan brethren.”⁴ Despite Chen Yi’s lofty rhetoric, Taiwan would be bogged down by flawed government.

While many in Taiwan had been opposed Imperial Japanese control during the fifty-year occupation, the many faults of the Chen Yi administration incited a frenzy of opposition.
The people of Taiwan quickly came to see their new leaders as “particularly dishonest, incompetent, unpredictable, and inefficient.” This view was largely influenced by the corruption seen in both the civil authorities and the military, both under Chen Yi’s control. A consular official from the United States commented that “corruption was rife at all levels in the organization” of the Taipei city police. The people also noted the lack of discipline and equipment displayed by Nationalist soldiers. Having grown used to the “strict, yet predictable, police state of the Japanese,” the Taiwanese were disconcerted by such dishonesty. The pervasive practice of bribery under the Kuomintang regime only further troubled people. Such failings resulted in a sour image of the Kuomintang. This was made only worse by Chen Yi’s decision on January 10, 1947, to prevent the Kuomintang’s recently ratified constitution from taking effect in Taiwan because the people were “too retarded politically to enjoy its full benefits.” Such political failings, as well as the economic woes caused by war and the transition to peace, tarnished the Kuomintang’s credibility in Taiwan, leading to direct conflict in February 1947.

The 228 Incident, named in reference to the first day of conflict (February 28, 1947), marked arguably the darkest hour in the Kuomintang’s rule of Taiwan, as well as the beginning of a grossly extended period of martial law. By the beginning of 1947, the Taiwanese people’s resentment of the Kuomintang had reached a fever pitch. On February 27, 1947, Lin Jiang-mai, a forty year-old widow, was detained for selling reportedly contraband cigarettes. Lin resisted and was killed by the officers who held her. This was the last straw for angry Taiwanese, who quickly took to the streets. The next day, a few thousand Taiwanese marched on the headquarters of the Monopoly Bureau that had arrested the woman. Nationalist forces turned
their guns on the protestors, and the island was soon consumed by chaos. Martial law was declared on the night of February 28, and the upheaval was violently suppressed over the coming weeks. The total dead remains unknown to this day, but estimates are around seven or eight thousand.\textsuperscript{12} Chen Yi later expressed “sorrow” for the events that occurred but still “considered himself blameless.”\textsuperscript{13} Regardless, Nationalist control over Taiwan and its people had been bloodily reaffirmed.

Not much was done to ameliorate the situation in Taiwan following the 228 Incident while Chen Yi remained in power. Martial law remained in place. No timetable was set for its repeal, nor for the adoption of the Nationalist constitution. This was to be the state of things when Chiang Kai-shek and the remaining Nationalists retreated from the mainland in 1949.

**The Remaining Years under Chiang Kai-shek**

The arrival of centralized KMT rule in Taiwan in 1949 resulted in a series of unpopular maneuvers that further damaged the Nationalists’ credibility. Despite continually purporting to be the ideological successors of Dr. Sun Yat-sen, the Kuomintang simply did not make the implementation of his ideas a top priority following such a costly and shameful retreat. After the retreat, Chiang Kai-shek and his son Chiang Ching-kuo discussed their three priorities for the Republic of China in Taiwan: first, “[consolidating] the government’s hold on Taiwan...[by] eradicating...Communist agents and Taiwanese dissidents”; second, “intensive preparations to resist the inevitable Communist assault”; and third, “currency stability.”\textsuperscript{14} By and large, the plan moving forward was to continue the struggle with the Chinese Communist Party in hopes of retaking the mainland, rather than accept defeat and begin anew. In effect, Chiang Kai-shek put aside the principles of Sun Yat-sen for the remainder of his rule until his death in 1975.
In light of the different realities endemic to Taiwan, the decision to view the island as merely a stopping ground for the Kuomintang proved to be a poor one. While the popularity of the Kuomintang on the mainland wavered with time, international recognition and a solid core of domestic support, both of which owed at least some debt to Sun Yat-sen, were constant assets. When the Nationalists retreated to Taiwan at the end of the Chinese Civil War, though, they lost any pretense of representing the majority of those under their control. In the early 1950s, the mainlander population on Taiwan amounted to only 25 percent of Taiwan’s total population of approximately 8 million. A “we and ‘they’ dichotomy” soon developed between Taiwanese and Mainlanders. Much to the ire of many Taiwanese, many new residents readily espoused their intentions and desire “to return home to the mainland.” Such mainlander longings were coupled with similar official policies.

Still believing he was at war with the Chinese Communist Party, Chiang Kai-shek felt he needed to keep the war effort alive and suppress any sort of dissent on Taiwan. In light of this, Chiang Kai-shek upheld the constitutional provisions that granted him the right to disregard any term limits. In much the same way, other KMT officials remained in office according to the results of the last elections held on the mainland before the retreat. Both the Taiwanese and Japanese languages were banned from schools and, later, from the entire public sphere. With martial law still in effect, the KMT ruled Taiwan via a one-party authoritarian regime that suppressed dissidents and prevented the people from voicing their grievances. Having grown accustomed to at least some degree of autonomy under the Japanese, many Taiwanese opposed

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*a The so-called mainlander population represents those who fled the mainland to Taiwan over the course of the Chinese Civil War. Fleeing from the Chinese Communist Party would seem to imply at least some support on their part of the Kuomintang.*
such practices. It would only be a matter of time before they would disregard what had happened during the 228 Incident and make their voices heard.

Believing they would return to mainland China in due time, Chiang Kai-shek and the KMT government never bothered to adapt to their new surroundings in Taiwan. Rather, the paranoid and corrupt regime simply through its weight around. Having grown used to the relatively honest and efficient Japanese rule, the people of Taiwan did not easily accept this new style of governance. In effect, the Kuomintang represented a group of people totaling only a quarter of the population on Taiwan that used both military might and political suppression to quiet discontent, and then set about figuring out a way to leave as soon as possible. It’s no wonder that the people were less than impressed by the KMT. When Chiang Kai-shek, the face of the almost-foreign government from the mainland, died in 1975, the resulting power transition presented a possibility for change that provoked many to make their voices heard.

A New Beginning

For democracy to truly take root in a region, a healthy multi-party system must develop in order to give the people a true choice between candidates. In the case of a single-party state like Taiwan under KMT martial law, a legitimate second party must develop either from a split within the dominant party or the formation of an opposition party. Both of these came to pass in Taiwan during the 1980s and ‘90s. The resulting multi-party dynamics greatly contributed to the arrival of democracy as seen in the first popular presidential elections in 1996 and 2000. A consequence of legitimately different points of view within Taiwanese polity, the developing
multi-party system in Taiwan proved essential to the democratic experiment that began in 1996, solidified in 2000, and continues to evolve to this day.

The proactive and reactive reform measures spearheaded by Chiang Ching-kuo during the 1970s and ‘80s both legitimized and provoked divisions within Taiwan’s political system. The son of Chiang Kai-shek, Chiang Ching-kuo became premier of the Republic of China in 1972 and assumed the presidency in 1978. While expected continue his father’s policies after his death, Ching-kuo had his own agenda. While still a “strongman” like his father, Chiang “was willing to gradually liberalize the system.” In 1972, the same year Chiang became premier, the Nationalist government implemented limited elections to bring new people into the Legislative Yuan and National Assembly. The deaths of some of the representatives elected before the KMT retreat in 1949 had produced a need to incorporate new members into the government. Gradually, a “loose anti-KMT coalition of independent candidates” entered Taiwan’s political scene. By 1979, these politicians and their supporters organized around a publication known as Formosa (Mei Li Dao—美麗島). Soon, support of Formosa became part of a movement known as “outside the party” (Dang Wai—黨外). While it did not develop without resistance, this “rapidly growing opposition” was allowed to exist by Chiang Ching-kuo so long as it stayed out of politics. Not yet satisfied, Dang Wai leaders in the government opted to test the KMT and push “the limit of its tolerance.” Marrying the obvious push for liberalization with his own intentions, in March 1986, Chiang presented “his intention to open up the system” to a meeting of the Kuomintang Central Committee. Later, on October 7, 1986,

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b A government crackdown on a Dang Wai protest in Kaohsiung on December 10, 1979, resulted in the jailing of forty-seven opposition leaders and the shutting down of Formosa.
he made public his intent to lift martial law and allow for a multi-party system. Seeing as how those in power tend to try to remain in power, this idea was obviously not favored by all within the KMT. Ultimately, martial law came to an end in Taiwan on July 3, 1987, after forty years and several generations of leadership. By the time Chiang Ching-kuo died in 1988, the development of opposition parties in Taiwan was a very real possibility.

The formation of the Democratic Progressive Party (DPP), Taiwan’s main opposition party, fed off the sentiment of the Dang Wai movement that arose during Chiang Ching-kuo’s term. Blatantly defying the ban on opposition parties, a group of Dang Wai leaders founded the Democratic Progressive Party in December 1986. Chiang Ching-kuo had already made his intention to allow for multiple political parties public, so Dang Wai leaders felt it an appropriate time to make a bold move. Whereas the KMT claimed legitimacy from both the legacy of Sun Yat-sen and the reality of being the only party in power in Taiwan since 1945, the DPP drew credibility from the “sacrifices [its members had] made during the struggle for democracy.” Overall, the DPP became largely populated by ethnic Taiwanese, but the party still worked hard to present an image of representing everyone, both Taiwanese and non-Taiwanese. In the long run, Chiang Ching-kuo’s decision to tolerate the DPP’s existence marked a definite turning point in KMT rule. It essentially had the effect of pushing “the process of authoritarian breakdown past the point of no return.” Preserving single-party rule in Taiwan would no longer be feasible with a legitimate second party. Born out of opposition to continued KMT domination and martial law, the founding of the Democratic Progressive Party marked the beginning of a true multi-party system in Taiwan.
As much as the actions of Chiang Ching-kuo precipitated the rise of the DPP, the presidency of Lee Teng-hui brought about the so-called New Party (Xin Dang—新黨). On January 13, 1988 Chiang Ching-kuo died, and Vice President Lee Teng-hui moved into the presidency. Lee, unlike his predecessors and much of the KMT party around him, was ethnically Taiwanese. In fact, Lee Teng-hui was the first Taiwanese president of Taiwan. The rise of the DPP, and its largely Taiwanese membership, had planted the image of ethnic Taiwanese in the minds of KMT “party hardliners” as being in opposition to the Kuomintang. Thus, many within the KMT were opposed to Lee Teng-hui’s rise to power. Contentions over Lee Teng-hui’s position led to a split in the KMT positioning Lee, his allies, and “the Mainstream Faction” (MF) against the “entrenched old-timers” and “the Non-Mainstream Faction” (NMF). Ultimately, this split was so contentious that some NMF leaders broke off from the KMT and formed the New Party (NP) in August 1993. Thus, the once single-party system that ruled Taiwan for over forty years quickly became quite complicated.

The election of Chen Shui-bian in the 2000 presidential election solidified the existence of a viable multi-party democratic system in Taiwan. Despite the formation of several opposition parties, the KMT continued to hold control of Taiwan. The first direct presidential election occurred in 1996, and KMT candidate Lee Teng-hui proved victorious. In the election, Lee won with 54 percent of the popular vote, with the remaining vote split between candidates from the DPP, NP, and other minor parties—the DPP won the most out of the three with about 21 percent. This victory for the KMT was largely due to Lee Teng-hui’s own personal popularity amongst the people. In preparation for the 2000 election, the KMT chose Lee’s vice president, Lien Chen, to be their candidate. Outraged by this was the immensely popular KMT
politician James Soong. Many within the KMT called for a “dream ticket,” with Chen and Soong running together. Unfortunately for them, Soong had greater ambitions. He started his own party, the People’s First Party, and ran for president as an independent. This effectively split the voters, and DPP candidate Chen Shui-bian (a leading figure in the earlier Dang Wai movement) emerged victorious, despite garnering just less than 40 percent of the vote (compared to 37 percent for Soong and 23 percent for Chen). The unthinkable had happened; Taiwan was now under the control of a non-Han (Chen, like Lee Teng-hui, is ethnically Taiwanese), non-KMT leader. Democracy, the rule according to the will of the people, was in place in Taiwan.

The Victory of Democracy


Elected by a narrow margin two months before, former mayor of Taipei, Chen Shui-bian stood to take the oath of office and deliver his inaugural address. While obviously personally excited about his election, Chen made considerable mention of the great historical implications of his victory. A member of the Democratic Progressive Party, one of the foremost parties in opposition to Kuomintang party rule, Chen Shui-bian became the first non-KMT member to preside over Taiwan in over fifty years. His victory, and the peaceful transition of power that followed, bore obvious similarities to the United States Presidential election of 1800. Much like that event has been hailed as a victory for American democracy, the Taiwanese Presidential election of 2000 marks a milestone in the democratization of the Republic of China on Taiwan.

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(ROC). This point was not lost on Chen, who called his election “not only the first of its kind in the history of the Republic of China, but also an epochal landmark for Chinese communities around the world.” To fully understand the gravity of Chen’s election, one must view it in historical context. As Chen described this history:

Over the past one hundred plus years, China has suffered imperialist aggression, which left indelible wounds in her history. Taiwan’s destiny has been even more arduous, tormented by brute force and the rule of colonialist regimes. These similar historical experiences should bring mutual understanding between the people on both sides of the Taiwan Strait, setting a solid foundation for pursuing freedom, democracy, and human rights together. However, due to long period of separation, the two sides have developed vastly different political systems and lifestyles, obstructing empathy and friendship between the people on the two sides and even creating a wall of divisiveness and confrontation.

For Chen, his victory in the 2000 election had obvious implications for his neighbor across the Taiwan Strait, the People’s Republic of China. He was quick to remember the “ancestral, cultural, and historical background” common to the two. In light of these, Chen believed it was fully possible for the People’s Republic of China to embrace “the principles of democracy and parity.” The fact that the Republic of China had established a viable democracy, despite its history of authoritarianism, was proof enough that the People’s Republic of China could democratize, as well.

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2 Gary Marvin Davison, 76.
3 Tse-Han Lai, Ramon H. Myers, and Wei Hou, 62.
4 Quoted in Tse-Han Lai, Ramon H. Myers, and Wei Hou, 63.
6 Quoted in Tse-Han Lai, Ramon H. Myers, and Wei Hou, 73.
7 Tse-Han Lai, Ramon H. Myers, and Wei Hou, 75.
8 Steven E. Phillips, 67.
10 Tse-Han Lai, Ramon H. Myers, and Wei Hou, 103.
11 Steven E. Phillips, 75.
12 Tse-Han Lai, Ramon H. Myers, and Wei Hou, 160.
13 Ibid., 161.
14 Jay Taylor, 411-412.
15 Gary Marvin Davison, 82.
17 Ibid., 110.
18 Ibid., 108.
19 Jaushieh Joseph Wu, 34-35.
21 Ibid., 35.
22 Ibid., 36.
23 Ibid., 37.
24 Ibid.
26 Jaushieh Joseph Wu, 106.
28 Steven J. Hood, The Kuomintang and the Democratization of Taiwan (Boulder: Westview Press, 1997), 93.
30 Ibid., 275.
31 Ibid.
32 Ibid., 276.
34 Ibid.
35 Ibid.
36 Ibid.
CONCLUSION

In order to conclude this thesis, I have decided to provide responses to a few questions I believe pertinent to the subject matter that has been discussed. These shorter writings are based on my own opinion, as well as the knowledge I have gained through this research. I make no claims to being an expert, but here I present my thoughts.

What has been the status of democracy in the People's Republic of China since the end of the Chinese Civil War and the establishment of the PRC on October 1, 1949?

Democracy has not stood much of a chance in the People’s Republic of China. The campaigns spearheaded by Mao Zedong, including the Great Leap Forward (1958-1961) and the Cultural Revolution (1966-1976), have been well documented. Overall, the People’s Republic of China under Mao’s control was too rigidly controlled and ideologically impassioned for any sort of democracy movement to take hold. When Mao died in 1976, the possibility of democracy gained some glimmer of hope. As a result, calls for democracy—such as the Democracy Wall movement of 1978-1979 and the Tiananmen Square protests of 1989—have sprung up, but they have all ultimately been struck down. With or without Mao, the Chinese Communist Party has made it abundantly clear that it has no intentions of caving to such popular demands.

What impact did the death of Mao Zedong in 1976 have on the potential for democratization in the PRC after 1976?

As previously noted, Mao Zedong went to great lengths to ensure his ideology was the central ideology of the Chinese Communist Party. With his death, the CCP was left without its figurehead. After a rocky transition period, Deng Xiaoping asserted himself as the new leader. Deng was known for his pragmatism, as seen in his famous 1961 declaration, “No matter if it is
a black cat or white cat, so long as it catches mice, it is a good cat” (不管黑猫白猫，能捉著老鼠就是好猫). The party adopted pragmatism as its main policy and “seeking truth from facts” (实事求是) as its motto. Ideology was of little concern, as the party’s survival was its ultimate end. This was to be ensured by pacifying the people with a robust economy, and few would question the party’s successes in this regard. Issues such as human rights have been of little interest, as they do not contribute to the party’s continued existence. Overall, ideology in mainland China died when Mao did, and this has led to a society meant to simply keep the leadership in power by any means.

*Does democracy come from the top of society or the bottom of society?*

It is my general belief that democratization can follow two distinct paths which imply two different answers to this question. If democracy is to come peacefully, that is, with minimal violence and without a complete collapse of the government, it must come from the top. Peaceful democratization requires that the government in power agrees to the reforms being carried out. In light of observations made earlier, Taiwan is a good example of this top-down democratization. If, on the other hand, democracy is not supported by the top but by the bottom, the system in place will need to be removed before it can be replaced with democracy. The uprooting of a government is a violent act that, more often than not, requires a revolution, rather than just a period of reform. An example of this would be France during the French Revolution. Hence, to admittedly oversimplify things, if a non-democratic government is unwilling, for any number of reasons, to reform and democratize, it is up to the people under that government’s control to topple the regime and establish democracy in its stead.
How likely is it that the People’s Republic of China will democratize in the foreseeable future?

In light of the above observations, I believe it is highly unlikely that the People’s Republic of China will democratize in the foreseeable future. Considering the Chinese Communist Party ultimately only takes on initiatives that help sustain its power, I cannot see the party loosening control so much that a democracy could exist; such a move would pose too great a threat to its power. The party has made it abundantly clear—see the crackdown on the Tiananmen Square protests—that such threats will not be taken lightly. Hence, democratization will not conceivably come from the top of society. Democratization that does not come from the top must come from the bottom, and as just discussed, bottom-up democratization entails violence and often revolution. If that is to occur, it is possible that democratization could come to mainland China, but not under the control of the People’s Republic of China.

What is Dr. Sun Yat-sen’s legacy? Is he still relevant to the modern Chinese world?

Dr. Sun Yat-sen is a man of many legacies. For the Kuomintang, Sun was the founder and central ideological figure whose idealistic hope for democracy in China ultimately came true on Taiwan. For the Chinese Communist Party, Sun was a practical source of legitimacy whose call for a mighty vanguard party focused around a central figure came to pass on the mainland. Overall, Dr. Sun Yat-sen is to greater China what George Washington is to the United States. In this sense, it should come as no surprise that Sun is similarly referred to as Guo Fu, “father of the country.” Just as George Washington is remembered for his tireless dedication to the idea of a free and independent United States of America, Dr. Sun Yat-sen should be remembered for his commitment to a strong, modern China. It cannot be said that Sun never changed his mind,
and while this led to the many interpretations of his life and work, it should not be seen as a failing on his part. Rather, it is proof that Sun was human, full of errors and contradiction, but dedicated to an ultimate purpose. The Qing dynasty would have fallen eventually with or without Sun, but there are simply too many variables to predict what the outcome would have been without him. Hence, as a symbol of indefatigable dedication to China and proof that this world’s great men are still men of this world, Dr. Sun Yat-sen is still relevant to the modern Chinese world and beyond.

With a better understanding of Dr. Sun Yat-sen’s influence on the development of modern China, it appears more reasonable that both the Republic of China and the People’s Republic of China would ascribe importance to his name, image, and ideas. The many interpretations of his work lent credence to entirely different realities. Chiang Kai-shek used the anti-communist, idealistic Sun to justify his never-ending crusade against the Chinese Communist Party, even when it forced the Kuomintang onto Taiwan. Mao Zedong, meanwhile, used the modern, liberal Sun to justify the Chinese Communist Party as rightful heir to Chinese authority. Regardless of any inconsistencies in his philosophy, Dr. Sun is the starting point of any history of modern China, a history to which both the Republic of China and the People’s Republic of China lay claim.
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