CHINA

A NEW HISTORY

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12

The Republican Revolution
1901–1916

A New Domestic Balance of Power

After its defeat by expeditionary forces of all the major powers in 1900, the Qing dynasty survived until 1912 only because there was no regime in sight to replace it—and because both Chinese and foreigners in China preferred order to disruption. During the decade from 1901 to 1911 the pace of change in the treaty ports on China's coastal and riverine littoral steadily widened the gap between modern-urban China and the countless villages of the interior. This widening gap had begun with the treaty system, which gave reform-minded Chinese their chance to organize and publicize political opinions—something that the Qing regime did not permit. Even so, the early protagonist of rebellion, Sun Yatsen, in 1905 became head of the Revolutionary League at a meeting of Chinese students in Tokyo only with the help of Japanese expansionists. Chinese nationalism was growing but still dormant.

In this buildup of social forces that would emerge in 1911, the key relationship was that between the imperial government and the gentry-elite. In the era from 1850 to 1911 three stages are broadly visible. The first was the success of the gentry-elite in supporting the dynasty against the Taiping and other mid-century rebels. This was done by setting up militia bureaus throughout the countryside, selecting soldiers on the basis of personal loyalty, and financing it all with gentry contributions and the new *likin* tax on trade.

A second stage came in the post-Taiping era of reconstruction, when gentry-elite became active in a revival and growth of Confucian education in academies and became gentry managers of a wide range of urban welfare and other community works. The gentry class changed its com-

position as landlords moved into cities and merchants were received into gentry status by purchase of degrees and by joining in officially sponsored commercial and industrial projects. Big families had the funds and accounting procedures to join in economic development. Meanwhile, urbanization allowed a large injection of foreign examples, ideas, and connections.

In a third stage beginning in the late 1890s, along with the rise of nationalism came a reformist urban elite, who enlisted under the banner of provincial development, local self-government, and constitutionalism. They started along many lines of modernization, but they found the Manchus too slow, obstructive, and incapable of leading a Chinese nation.

We turn first to the gentry's role in suppressing rural rebellion.

Suppressing Rebellion by Militarization

One consequence of the great Taiping rebellion after 1850 was the militarization of the countryside to maintain order over a swelling and restive rural populace. This raised an institutional problem—how to maintain the dynasty's central control over the military, the *wu*-element in imperial rule. Dynasties had avoided mass conscription of troops ever since the Qin. The Han and later regimes had used prisoners, paupers, mercenaries, or professional, often hereditary, fighting men. Under the Qing, strategic garrisons of bannermen had been supplemented by a dispersed Chinese constabulary, but both had proved inadequate to quell the White Lotus rising. During the early nineteenth century the increase of local disorder led to a proliferation of local militia forces.

Militia were locally supported part-time soldiers, as Philip Kuhn (1970) remarks, "neither purely military nor purely civil" but a bit of both. Their chief feature in late Qing was their management by local gentry. For example, Frederic Wakeman, Jr. (1966), has described how the Guangzhou gentry organized villagers to oppose the British in the 1840s and 50s. Qing officials there were caught in a dilemma: to oppose the popular xenophobia might turn it against the dynasty; to go along with it might provoke British retaliation. Militia as a form of military power in the hands of the people or at least of the local gentry was a two-edged sword. Beijing had backed away from setting up militia *(tuanlian)* under gentry leadership and financing unless they were strictly controlled by the local magistrates in a system of "official supervision and gentry management" *(guandu shenban)*. On this basis hundreds of

villages with thousands of militia could be organized over wide areas to respond to official orders transmitted through widespread gentry associations.

Such a mobilization might be assisted by several networks already in place. One was the *baojia* registration of all households with their able-bodied manpower. Another was the strength of lineage networks that connected people through kinship, common property, and ancestor reverence at ancestral halls. Still another was the market community of the villages of a market area. Intermeshed with all these networks—administrative, social, and economic—a militia system had the potential not only to control rural areas but to supplant the government's control over them. Consequently, in the 1850s Beijing had commissioned trusted officials like Zeng Guofan to organize militia in their native areas only as a last recourse in desperate circumstances.

The reliability of a militia network depended upon all its fighting men being locally connected and identified. Secret societies like the Triads, who operated among smugglers along transport routes, and vagrant refugees, who might flood the roads in time of famine, flood, invasion, or other disasters, were incongruous elements that were hard to control. Most dangerous of all were sectarian rebels like the Taipings, who were animated by a specific faith that held them together.

Two things were therefore necessary to check the Taiping rebels' fanaticism. One was a revival of the Confucian ideology of social order expressed in personal relations between commanders and officers and between officers and men. In short, command, to be effective, had to be personal, based on the interpersonal motives of loyalty, respect for authority, and exemplary leadership. Case studies especially from Hunan show how scholar-commanders of the type of Zeng Guofan developed by trial and error the ideas and practices that eventually created the Hunan Army and similar regional forces that defeated the rebellion. From locally based militia, these troops had advanced to the status of full-time warriors (*yong,* "braves").

The other requirement for success was the levy of taxes to finance the war effort. Contributions secured from well-to-do gentry were a primary source once the ideological struggle had been consciously joined. Sale of degree status and even of official posts were other devices of a dynasty *in extremis*. But the main recourse after 1853 was a new tax on trade, collected on goods in transit or in stock, at a very low rate and hence called *likin* (*lijin,* "a tax of one thousandth"). This new tax battened on the recent growth of domestic trade. (Foreign-owned trade

goods moved through the interior, subject to a comparable levy of "transit duties" prescribed by treaty.)

The point about *likin* was that it began under local and provincial, not central, control. Susan Mann (1987) has traced how *likin* spread into every province, where elaborate networks of taxing stations were set up on major routes and in cities, all beyond the immediate purview of Beijing. Gradually the central authorities would get a nominal reporting of *likin* receipts and expenditures. By the end of the century *likin* collections would equal the salt taxes in central government revenue accounts. In short, *likin* taxes, like the militia *(tuanlian)* system and the regional armies they supported, were all made agencies of the state in nominal terms, even though they created a new balance between the central and provincial governments that was to shift steadily in favor of the latter.

Thus led and paid for, the regional armies that wiped out the Taipings had been organized by men who not only shared a general outlook and ideology but were also personally related by the bonds that integrated China's ruling class—kinship including marriage, teacher-student relations, same year graduation, and similar relationships. As Kuhn puts it, "the close integration of the Hunan elite" was due to both "the Qing academic system and the network of patronage and loyalty that ran through the bureaucracy." Under the threat of heterodoxy as well as foreign invasion, they had survived as a ruling class loyal to the Confucian order. After the 1860s their unity of thought and action gradually dissipated.

Meanwhile, the regional armies became regular provincial forces, and new naval and military academies began to train officers who had the new prestige of being scholar-soldiers. They became professional officers in the specialties of modern militarism. Their best graduates would lead the warlord generation of 1916–1927 under the Republic.

Elite Activism in the Public Sphere

During the post-rebellion reconstruction of the late Qing decades, the gentry managers who had militarized the countryside had their successors in an urban gentry class who handled activities of value to the community. Many of these matters had been associated with the local elite ever since the Song, but in the rapid rise of cities in the late nineteenth century new responsibilities were taken on. They provided an outlet for the energy of an elite that could not be wholly employed in the bureau-

cracy. The Qing examinations continued to produce far more degree-holders than the government could absorb into official posts. The Ming–Qing "minimalist form of government," as Mary Rankin (1986) terms it, continued to rely on the gentry to deal with public matters that lay in between the official and the private levels.

In this public *(gong)* sphere, gentry had first of all taken on the management (with official sanction) of irrigation water, including dams and dikes. The old reasoning of K. A. Wittfogel (1957) and others that the need for central control of water resources was responsible for the inevitable rise of an all-powerful Chinese state can now be turned on its head and applied to the rise of power among the local gentry. This critical community resource had to be managed in each case according to local circumstances and could not be imposed from a distance. Along with management responsibilities came a degree of autonomy and power. So quickly are simplistic theories undone!

The urban gentry also made their influence felt in the sphere of education through an increase of academies. Ideally an academy might shelter and sustain a few dozen scholars in a secluded rural spot, where simple living and high thinking might be pursued close to nature. In practice, however, most academies became preparatory schools for examination candidates and were situated in cities. From Song times onward their number steadily accumulated until there were many thousands in the empire—for example, 565 academies had been established between 1506 and 1905 in Guangdong province; almost 500 had been set up between 960 and 1905 in Jiangxi; and Zhejiang had 289 academies during the nineteenth century. Though some were privately founded, most were set up under official sponsorship and continued superintendence. In either case, the land endowment, trust funds, rents, and contributions or subsidies came from officials personally, from gentry and merchants. A spate of academy foundings followed the suppression of the Taipings. Though not funded by the government, they were semiofficial institutions.

Welfare activities traditionally in gentry hands also took on a new urgency. Caring for the ill and for widows and foundlings, maintaining temples, bridges, and ferries, fighting fires, and burying the dead were all customary gentry-aided services. They were now coordinated in many localities under omnicompetent welfare agencies headed by prominent local figures and often backed by native-place guilds. These leaders of the local elite were obeying Confucian moral injunctions and at the same time trying to ensure social stability and community cohesion.

Their motivation harked back to the "feudal" *(fengjian)* ideal of Confucian reformers, who wanted local leaders to bear greater responsibility for local government.

All this elite activism was extra-bureaucratic. In 1878 a famine in North China inspired a mobilization of prominent managers at different urban levels and across provincial boundaries. The managerial elite's capacity to deal with social problems was outpacing that of the Qing bureaucracy. In a variety of forms the gentry had expanded their public functions to meet local community needs, while the Qing bureaucracy grew only informally, by adding on more advisers and deputies. Gentry managers were preferable to the uneducated and corrupt yamen clerks and runners. The bureaucracy's sanction for elite activism, though still nominally required, was becoming less necessary. The public sphere was growing faster than the governmental.

The land-holding gentry who managed the rural militarization that defeated the Taipings and the urban gentry-merchant activists who managed elite education and social welfare in later decades shared certain features. Both remained upper-class, eager to use devices of statecraft to preserve social stability, not by any means ready to lead peasant rebellion to change China's two-level social structure. From the perspective of modern times they were conservatives. Their eventual alienation from the effete Manchu ruling house would be based on the cultural nationalism of Chinese patriots determined to preserve not only their country but also their own social leadership and domination.

The Japanese Influence

Both the late Qing reforms after 1901 and the Revolution of 1911 were nurtured in Japan. In 1890 the poet-diplomat Huang Zunxian published his *Treatise on Japan,* describing to his countrymen the modernization of a country considered by China's elite to be a cultural offshoot of China, where, for example, the philosophy of Wang Yangming (Ō Yōmei) had a wide appeal, especially among the samurai. Japan's unexpected and crushing defeat of China in 1895 made her the country to emulate. Japan's benevolent though arrogant concern for China was expressed in the doctrine that Japan's successful modernization gave her the duty of helping the backward Chinese along the same path. Expansionist secret societies and the Japanese military became thorough investigators of Chinese life and conditions, while scholars studied the common culture *(tongwen, dōbun)* of the two countries. After 1900 Chinese

students crowded into Tokyo, about half of them sent by provincial modernizers like Zhang Zhidong.

The Qing reform program of New Policies that he proposed in 1901 followed the Japanese example in many respects: for instance, in the public school system, in the administrative reform of central government, in the promise (made only in 1908) of a constitution and parliament after nine years, and in the emperor's grant to the people of constitutional rights that the emperor could thereafter rescind at will. Both self-government to mobilize the people and police systems to control them were part of the Qing borrowing from Japan. The Qing reforms were in fact aided by Japanese advisers and a generation of Chinese trained in Japan.

Japan's influence on China by example was supplemented after 1905 by Japan's inheritance from the defeated Russians of their leasehold of the Liaodong peninsula in southern Manchuria, together with the South Manchurian Railway. This lodgement of Japanese forces on what was still Qing territory went along with the rapid growth of Japan's "informal empire" in China. Using their privileges under the British-invented unequal treaty system, the Japanese penetrated China's terrain and economy farther than all the Westerners put together. By 1914 Japan was ahead of Britain in direct trade, trading firms, and resident population. By 1930 Japan would have displaced Great Britain as the paramount foreign economic power in China.

Unfortunately, these achievements were cast under a cloud first by Japan's attempt to get ahead of the other imperialists in her 21 Demands of 1915 and finally by her seizure of Manchuria in 1931.

The Qing Reform Effort

With the onset of the twentieth century, the welter of events in China and the wide spectrum of interest groups and actors all take on a modern complexity. This puts a great premium on sorting out the major movements and forces at work. We are dealing here with a decade of reform from 1901 that precipitated the revolution of 1911 and was followed by the setting up of the Chinese Republic and the attempt of the first president, Yuan Shikai, to rule as a new emperor (see Table 5). This sequence of three phases—reforms that stirred things up, a rebellion that led to political confusion, and an effort to reassert central control by dictatorship—seems reminiscent of other great revolutions that led to the rise of a Cromwell, a Bonaparte, or a Stalin.

Table 5. Major turning points, 1901–1916

1901	Proposal of *New Policies* by Zhang Zhidong et al.
1904	New school system decreed
1904–5	Japan's defeat of Russia in Manchuria
1905	Abolition of old examination system
1906	Ancient Six Ministries supplanted by a dozen modern departments of government at Beijing
1908	Constitutional government projected
	October 14 and 15: Death of Emperor Guangxu and Empress Dowager Cixi
1909	Provincial assemblies meet
1910	National Assembly meets
1911	October 10 rebellion at Wuhan cities
1911	January 1: Sun Yatsen provisional president of Chinese Republic at Nanjing
	February: Qing emperor abdicates, Sun resigns, Yuan Shikai provisional president of Chinese Republic at Beijing
1911–13	Struggle between parliament and president
	March: Yuan has Song Jiaoren, parliamentary leader of the new Nationalist Party, assassinated
1913	Yuan dissolves parliament and takes dictatorial powers
1916	Death of Yuan; warlordism ensues

By 1901 the Qing court had got the message that it could become modern only by centralizing power at Beijing. But it was too late to do this. Major governors (including governors-general) had set up bureaus *(ju)* to handle their provinces' foreign relations on such matters as trade, loans, and investments, as well as provincial industry and railways. So many other new developments had outdated the old imperial system that its revival by metamorphosis was a forlorn hope. Nevertheless, the effort was made. The Empress Dowager and her stand-pat Manchu supporters, who had rejected the sweeping blueprints of Guangxu's "Hundred Days of Reform" edicts in 1898, felt obliged by 1901 to embrace reform as unavoidable. But their aim of using it to strengthen the Qing position tarnished the enterprise from the start. Formally the lead was taken by the impeccable loyalist Zhang Zhidong and the remaining member of the Chinese victors over the Taipings, Liu Kunyi. When they

put forward in 1901 their New Policies, the most portentous was educational reform.

A hierarchy of modern schools was to be set up in counties, prefectures, and provinces, with a Japanese-style curriculum of old and new subjects. China's many academies would be converted to this use. New school graduates would enter the classical examination system, which would be a bit modernized to accommodate them.

Alas, it was soon found that students would continue to aim mainly at the old examinations as a more prestigious and much cheaper route of advancement, bypassing the difficult modern curriculum and greater cost of the modern schools. There was nothing for it but to abolish the classical examinations entirely in 1905. This great turning point stopped production of the degree-holding elite, the gentry class. The old order was losing its intellectual foundation and therefore its philosophical cohesion, while the student class that replaced it would be buffeted by discordant fragments of Chinese and Western thought. Education began to be the grab-bag that it has since remained, pulling students into technical specialities that in themselves did not constitute a moral order. The Neo-Confucian synthesis was no longer valid, yet nothing to replace it was as yet in sight.

The speed of change now became very unsettling, beginning with the way things looked. Military officers put on Western-style uniforms (and decorations!); high-level ministers and merchants began to wear business suits; radical students began to cut off their queues in defiance of the Manchus. Protestant missionaries assisted in crusades against foot-binding and opium smoking. The training of new armies went on apace on lines already established, and the new press and publications offered broader views of the world as well as of events in China. The spread of literacy and of news helped the emergence of public opinion, more broad and significant than the literati opinion *(qingyi)* of the past. Mass nationalism among the urban population had been aroused as early as the 1880s by the undeclared warfare with France. In the foreign-tinged treaty ports new professions began to be followed—not only those of industrialist, teacher, journalist, engineer, medical doctor, and other scientists but also those of independent writer, artist, and even revolutionary agitator, like Sun Yatsen.

Facing this vortex of change, Beijing pursued systematic policies inspired partly by foreign examples. The aim was to bring the professional activities of the new elite in business, banking, law, education, and agriculture under state regulation and control. This was to be done by set-

ting up professional associations (*fatuan,* "bodies established by law") to form new elite institutions with quasi-administrative functions. The first were chambers of commerce in 1904, which were expected to be four fifths drawn from guilds. They were followed by educational associations (1906), agricultural societies (1907), lawyers' associations (1912), and bankers' associations (1915). In each case the *fatuan* were intended to be subordinate to government and were to be used as mechanisms to control local elites. The most wide-ranging was the program for local self-government, which opened information offices after 1907. The slogans of the day at Beijing focused on rights recovery, constitutionalism, and self-government.

Constitutionalism and Self-Government

Meanwhile, in the dynamic urban environment of the treaty ports, provincial reformers had found many opportunities. This third generation of the late Qing elite were no longer based in the countryside. Landlord bursaries typically collected their rents, dissolving the erstwhile personal bonds between landlord-patron and tenant. Joseph Esherick (1976) sees this generation as neither still a gentry class nor as yet a bourgeoisie. He therefore calls them an "urban reformist elite." They reacted to foreign imperialism by joining in the Rights Recovery movement to combat foreign control of China's industries, especially mines and railways. During the decade from 1901 to 1911 they invested in industrial enterprises with the customary assistance of official connections, monopoly rights, government loans, and tax advantages, all reminiscent of the bureaucratic capitalism of the self-strengthening movement. Whenever their projects' under-capitalization and lack of market demand necessitated the securing of foreign loans, the aim of rights recovery was quite thwarted. Chinese gentry business managers, by aiming at political goals, courted financial disaster.

When Japan's constitutional monarchy defeated Russia's tsarist autocracy in 1905, constitutionalism seemed to have proved its efficacy as a basis for unity between rulers and ruled in a national effort. Even Russia now moved in 1905 toward parliamentary government. Constitutionalism in China, it was hoped, if combined with government reorganization to strengthen the central administrative power, might give the rising provincial interests a meaningful share in the government and so keep them loyal to it. Between 1906 and 1911 Beijing actively pursued this dual program, combining administrative modernization and consti-

tutionalism. Such changes, however, precipitated a struggle for power, both within the central government and between it and the provinces.

In the power struggle at the capital, the Empress Dowager's supporters succeeded in maintaining, or even enlarging, their grip on key posts. This pro-Manchu and therefore anti-Chinese coloration at the capital handicapped Beijing's efforts to create a new and more centralized relationship with the provinces. It ran into anti-Qing sentiment that came not only from the revolutionary students in Tokyo but also from a rising spirit of nationalism within China. This was manifest in 1905 in China's first modern boycott against the United States' discriminatory treatment of Chinese, particularly the total exclusion of laborers. In this boycott, the old tradition of cessation of business by local merchant guilds was expanded nationwide to most of the treaty ports, especially Shanghai and Guangzhou, where students joined merchants in mass meetings and modern press agitation. American trade was damaged for some months, and Beijing hesitated to repress this popular anti-imperialist movement lest it become antidynastic also.

Under the pressure of rising nationalistic sentiment, the court sent two official missions in the first half of 1906 to study constitutionalism abroad. One visited mainly the United States and Germany; the other, Japan, England, and France. Japan's Prince Itō lectured the visitors on the necessity of the emperor's retaining supreme power, not letting it fall into the hands of the people. On their return they recommended following this Japanese view, that a constitution and civil liberties including "public discussion," all granted by the emperor, could actually strengthen his position because he would remain above them all. In September 1906 the Empress Dowager promised a "constitutional polity" after due preparation. Further missions visited Japan and Germany in 1907–1908.

In order to build up a modern central government, the Six Boards in November 1906 were expanded to make eleven ministries (Foreign Affairs, Civil Appointments, Internal Affairs, Finance, Rites, Education, War, Justice, Agriculture-Industry-and-Commerce, Posts-and-Communications, and Dependencies). Parallel with this executive echelon of government it was proposed to retain the old military and censorial structures and add on a purely advisory "popular assembly" to give voice to public opinion. This would be very far indeed from the creation of a legislative branch equal in power to executive and judicial branches. The idea of the separation of powers could not take root in the absence of the supremacy of law.

In August 1908 the Empress Dowager proclaimed a set of constitutional principles to guide a nine-year program to prepare for constitutional self-government. Accordingly, consultative provincial assemblies were to be convened in 1909 and a consultative national assembly in 1910. The electorate for the provincial assemblies of 1909 was carefully limited to those qualified by education (having taught for three years or graduated from middle school, or gained mid-level examination degrees) or by property (worth at least 5,000 Chinese dollars). On this basis about 1,700,000 men were registered to vote, say 0.4 percent of a population of 400 million. Each electoral district was allotted a number of provincial assemblymen according to its number of registered voters. John Fincher (1981) has noted that about nine tenths of those elected were degree-holders of the gentry elite. They were a third generation, counting from the 1850s, and also a final generation. They would have no successors as an identifiable, indoctrinated, and relatively like-minded stratum of society.

Once the provincial assemblies came together in 1909, new patterns of conduct were required. A few members became orators, while most avoided such embarrassing ostentation. The principle of organization was by loyalty to leaders of factions or personal cliques rather than according to legislative programs or principles. The clear definition and support of interests, which would seem selfish, was generally obscured by the utterance of admirable platitudes. Trained lawyers who could draft legislation were hard to find.

Along with constitutionalism, the movement for self-government aimed to mobilize the populace under local elite leadership in support of the reforming imperial state. There were precedents for self-government not only in the ancient *fengjian* idea of local administration by local people but also in modern cities. In Chinese Shanghai outside the foreign-run areas, a Shanghai city council had been set up in 1905. In 1907 a Tianjin county assembly had been established as a model by the reformist official Yuan Shikai. In 1908 Beijing issued regulations to specify the tax levies that could finance subcounty government—mainly excise and land taxes. Local self-government measures at the county level and below were pursued by the local elite, who tried to avoid the onerous taxation and corrupt administration to be expected from sub-officials at that level. Their opening of new schools to educate and mobilize new citizens was combined with the inauguration of police networks for purposes of control. Yuan set the style by having the new

police bureaus compile electoral lists for the new local assemblies. As with the national assembly, these local bodies would allow the elite to advise and even participate in reform by setting up public services like electrification and waterworks that would have been customary for gentry in the past. Political power would remain with the officials. The issue of mobilization versus control thus was joined.

The reformist elite wanted separate and honest financing for the reforms. In 1909–1910 self-government regulations were issued for cities, market towns, rural townships, counties, and prefectures, all of which would have assemblies. New commercial and land taxes were levied separate from the old bureaucratic structure. As it turned out, however, the old-style gentry-elite would become fewer and lose their position of leadership in the countryside, and in the end a new official system would supervene.

Insoluble Systemic Problems

The late Qing reformers, too late, made a vigorous effort to increase the dynasty's central power. Two principal means were to build new railways and train the New Army to enhance their control of the state, while the new ministries after 1906 tried to deal with all the specialized aspects of government. But the late Qing official reformers faced impossible tasks, first of all in remaking the structure of state power. The imperial autocracy, undiminished in its claims to absolutism, presided over two bureaucratic structures, one at the capital, the other in the provinces.

At Beijing the Inner Court centered in the Grand Council. Every day its half dozen ministers read incoming memorials and prepared the imperial edicts in reply that energized official action over the land. They used the memorial–edict loop between the high provincial officials and the imperial court directly via the official horse post. The Outer Court of the six ministries, censorate, and other bodies at Beijing handled routine business in correspondence with their subordinate counterparts in the provinces, but on important matters they were also in a memorial–edict loop with the emperor. For this the telegraph was coming into use.

All administration headed up in Beijing. Both reporting memorials and decision-making edicts flowed to and from the emperor, but at two levels, routine and urgent. For routine matters it was a rather centralized unitary system. Provincial offices of personnel, finance, and so on re-

ported to their superior ministries at Beijing. On urgent matters, however, the provincial governors and the capital ministers were on an equal footing under the emperor. There was no way to centralize power so that provincial governors could be put under Beijing ministries.

It was even more impossible to marry the memorial–edict procedure of the imperial law-giver and executive with the attempted legislative efforts of assemblies still labeled "advisory." The incipiently "representative" nature of the assemblies and their voting by majority rule were not held to their credit. No Confucian had ever believed in simply counting heads.

Reform was also checked at every step by Beijing's fiscal weakness. Payment of the Boxer indemnity of 1901 was now taking much of the central government's revenue just at the moment when uncommitted funds were most needed. Here foreign imperialism—the punitive demands of the powers—was plainly holding China back. At the same time, however, the Qing government's capacity to meet the demands of modernization was limited by the revenue system inherited from the Ming. Financial reform was difficult, not only because it threatened so many "rice bowls" (individual incomes) but also because the inherited fiscal system was so superficial and weak to begin with.

In the first place, the actual tax collections over the empire remained largely unknown, unbudgeted, and unaccounted for. Local tax collectors, as well as the provincial regimes above them, had to live on what they collected. What they should report to Beijing was fixed by traditional quotas. At a guess, it was perhaps a third, possibly only a fifth, of the actual collection.

Second, the taxes officially received, more or less according to quota, were not centralized in a "common purse." Instead, they were listed as a congeries of fixed sums due from a multitude of specific sources and allotted to a multitude of specific uses. Sums listed at Beijing were seldom received or disbursed there, for revenues from a province were allotted in bits and pieces to meet needs in it or elsewhere. Of the 18 provinces, 13 regularly forwarded fixed allotments for specific purposes to other provinces. This ad hoc procedure tied the imperial revenues to an infinite number of vested interests, mainly the support of officials and soldiers.

Moreover, even at Beijing there was no single fiscal authority. The imperial revenues around 1905 totaled on the books roughly 102 million taels (say 70 million dollars or 14.5 million pounds sterling), a small sum for so large a country. To make up this total, the Board of Revenue

listed its receipts from the land tax and tribute grain still at the traditional figure of about 33 million taels, to which the salt tax added 13 million and other taxes about 7 million. After 1869 the Board had listed the provincial *likin* collections at the nominal figure reported to it (14 million taels in 1905). Meanwhile, the new and growing Maritime Customs revenue, 35 million taels in 1905, was handled separately, and in any case was earmarked for foreign indemnity and loan payments. Thus, the new trade taxes—customs and *likin*—were hardly under Beijing's control, while the traditional land-tax quotas remained inelastic. With authority thus divided, actual revenues unknown, and many expenditures entrenched as vested interests, fiscal reform could come only through an unprecedented assertion of central power, changing the balance on which the Manchu dynasty had so long maintained itself.

Late Qing fiscal development had occurred mainly in the provinces outside or in addition to the established system. When Beijing tried in 1884 to regularize and secure central revenue from the various provincial measures for military financing, the provinces objected to so many details that the effort had to be given up. New provincial agencies like arsenals, factories, steamship lines, and banks were administered by deputed officials *(weiyuan)* or others commissioned for the purpose by provincial officials. Not appointed by Beijing, they did not usually report to Beijing. The ancient Board of Revenue, though reorganized in 1906 as a Ministry of Finance, could not centralize fiscal control. Other ministries continued to receive and expend their traditional revenues and even set up their own banks, like the Bank of Communications (1907).

A novel effort to make a national budget began with nationwide revenue surveys in 1908 and the compilation of budget estimates in 1910, in which central and provincial government revenues and expenditures were differentiated from local. This produced estimates of total revenues (297 million taels) and expenditures (national, including provincial, 338 million taels; local, 37 million taels) which presaged a sizable deficit (78 million taels). Unfortunately, planning and budgeting, collecting statistics, and setting tax rates went on in both the central ministries and the provinces, uncoordinated, with the provinces not subordinate to the ministries and yet expected to supply the revenues.

These inadequacies of the old regime in administration and finance were deeply rooted in Chinese custom, political values, and social structure. It became apparent that the Qing government had been superficial, passive, and indeed parasitic for too long. It could not become modern.

The Revolution of 1911 and Yuan Shikai's Dictatorship

The issue of the Manchu central power's dominating the provinces in the new age of industrial growth and Chinese nationalism came to a head in 1911 over railway-building in Sichuan. Local elite who had invested in promoting railways there were determined not to let central government officials profit from this new venture, to be financed by foreign loans. Qing military efforts at suppression backfired. On October 10 ("double ten"), 1911, a revolt at Wuchang (opposite Hankou) touched off the defection of most provinces, which declared their independence of the Qing regime. The professional agitators of the Revolutionary League, who had made Sun Yatsen their leader in Tokyo in 1905, set up the Chinese Republic on January 1, 1912, at Nanjing, with Sun as provisional president.

There was general agreement that China must have a parliament to represent the provinces, that unity was necessary to forestall foreign intervention, and that the reform-minded Yuan Shikai, Li Hongzhang's successor and chief trainer of China's New Army, was the one man with the capacity to head a government. Through a noteworthy series of compromises, China avoided both prolonged civil war and peasant risings as well as foreign intervention. The Qing emperor abdicated, Dr. Sun resigned, and in March 1912 Yuan became president.

Of the forces active in the 1911 revolution, the strongest in each province was the combination of the military governor with his New Army and the urban reformist elite in the new provincial assembly. These two elements headed each seceding province. In a general way the military governor was the third-generation product of the militarization movement that had defeated the Taipings, while the provincial assembly stemmed from the gentry managers of public projects in the preceding late Qing generation. Constitutionalism had become the slogan of the day, but constitutional monarchy was made impossible by the narrow-minded and self-concerned Manchu princes left in charge by the Empress Dowager after her death in November 1908 (one day after that of the reformist Guangxu Emperor—what a coincidence!). She evidently preferred to be succeeded by a three-year-old baby rather than an adult reformer.

The Chinese Republic began its history with certain attributes of liberalism—an uncontrolled press; elected assemblies representing the local elite in many counties, prefectures, and provinces; and a national parliament organized mainly by the newly created Nationalist Party

(Guomindang). Unfortunately, China's imperial autocracy had not been extirpated, and nothing was found adequate to take its place.

Yuan Shikai, like a dynastic founder, was a military man, later to be called the "father of the warlords." As an experienced Qing official, Yuan was versed in the inherited repertoire of legal, administrative, fiscal, and military arrangements that could manipulate the people from the top down by using regulations as well as arms, rewards, and punishments, playing upon their hopes and fears to secure their compliance. The discordant proposals and political factionalism of 800 parliament members impressed Yuan as adversely as the moralistic rhetoric of his bureaucrats had impressed the Wanli Emperor of the Ming three centuries before. Authority must have a single source, and so Yuan concluded that his only hope of governing China lay in a reassertion of autocracy. He began by eliminating the new revolutionary leader, Song Jiaoren, who had combined Revolutionary League members with smaller groups to form the Nationalist Party. It had won election in 1913 from some 40 million qualified voters, making Song leader of the parliament. In March 1913 Yuan had him assassinated, and then went on to intimidate and abolish the parliament.

The new provincial, prefectural, and county assemblies still threatened to create a pluralistic semirepresentative polity not under central control. By 1914 county assemblies of 20 members drawn from the elite eligible to vote were generally functioning along with the county magistrates, and both coexisted with subcounty assemblies. Yuan abolished all these assemblies in 1914 and followed this by requiring that magistrates appoint a deputy to serve as county self-government manager. In short, the local elite lost their assemblies, and the magistrates regained control. Assemblies continued in demand, however, and in the 1920s would make a comeback, but magistrates still controlled policy and finances by setting up executive boards. As R. Keith Schoppa (1982) would find in studying Zhejiang's political development in the 1920s, the modernizing elite could lead the way in managing public functions in core areas, but the official bureaucracy in league with old-style elite oligarchies would still dominate peripheral areas.

Unfortunately, the centralized polity of the Qing had fragmented. As Ernest Young (1977) demonstrates, Yuan's efforts to modernize were hamstrung by his lack of central government revenues coming in from the provinces. As a result, his reforms (carried over from the late Qing program) often became plans on paper not realized in action. Much talk of an independent judiciary (which would facilitate the abolition of for-

eign rights of extraterritoriality) led to setting up an active supreme court at Beijing and courts at provincial, prefectural, and county levels, but soon the county-level courts were abolished to save expense and to go back to relying on the magistrate. Prison reform was also pursued. In education Yuan subscribed to four years of universal free schooling plus a second track of special preparatory schools for an elite seeking higher education. Economic development was also on the drawing boards.

Yet all these many programs for modernization were handicapped by a basic assumption that they must be centrally decreed and controlled. The provincial regimes could not be allowed to develop new institutions on their own lest the central government be weakened beyond repair. Yuan's philosophy was not "Trust the people" nor even "Trust the educated men of talent," but "Trust only the central power." Democracy, in short, was not on Yuan's agenda. In 1915 he tried to make himself emperor but died without success in 1916. While provincial and local assemblies had a second vogue in the 1920s, mobilizing popular participation in China's political modernization would soon become the prerogative of a new central power, to be known as party dictatorship. The job could be done from the top down but not from the bottom up.

The young revolutionaries nominally headed by Sun Yatsen, after half a dozen failures to start a conflagration, had no experience in government and little following at the ruling-class level. Their exploits in 1911–1912 later enlivened the heroic founding myth of the Nationalist Party dictatorship. However, the fact that the military governors and provincial assemblies of 1911–1912 had inherited the dominant power of the gentry upper class gave them an aversion to prolonged disorder because it could energize peasant violence. They favored stability. Joseph Esherick (1976) concludes that the imperial autocracy "had not only limited the political freedom and initiatives of the Chinese people, it had also prevented the local elite from excessively oppressing the rest of the population." Having initiated the 1911 revolution that ended the imperial check on their power, the provincial elite now resumed their stance for stability and so "gave pivotal support in 1913," says Esherick, for Yuan's assumption of dictatorial powers. Their instinct was to save China from the chaos that they feared further change would create.

In this way conservatism thwarted any social revolution. Military governors whose power rested on the newly increased armed forces could become no more than regional militarists or warlords. Conservative gentry could not revive the Neo-Confucian faith so as to mobilize

the new urban classes in support of a Chinese nationalism. On the contrary, local elites had broken out of the gentry mold, and lineages were preserving their local dominance by all manner of means. Recent research shows in detail how these means included commerce, industries such as silk and salt, warlord power, corporate property, and overall cultural hegemony. Yet these new sprouts of local elite dominance had no new philosophy. It was time for a new leadership to make a fresh beginning with new ideas.