

THREE PRINCIPLES OF THE PEOPLE—A political philosophy developed by Sun Yat-sen grouped into the three guiding principles of nationalism, democracy, and livelihood.

court in accordance with the Constitutional timetable but not yet given full parliamentary rights, promoted the creation of a political structure like the constitutional monarchies of Japan and Great Britain (6.2). The revolutionaries, who had focused on abolishing the Qing dynasty and forestalling any monarchy, had no common vision of the future or of how to force the abdication of the Qing emperor (6.4). As a result, even six months after the Wuchang Uprising, China's first attempts to form a solid democracy faltered and quickly disintegrated into disunity and infighting among the revolutionaries, provincial leaders, and the former imperialists.

6.1 THREE PEOPLE'S PRINCIPLES AND THE FUTURE OF THE CHINESE PEOPLE (1906)

Perhaps no single political ideology of early twentieth-century China is better known than Sun Yat-sen's "Three People's Principles: Nationalism, Democracy and Livelihood." The Three Principles themselves never changed, though the way Sun described them evolved over time (compare with 7.1). His description often depended on the audience being addressed. The following explication he gives, written in 1906, five years before the Wuchang Uprising, captures the key concerns of the Chinese in the twilight of the Qing but before the Republic of China actually existed. Sun neatly summarizes three main forces that will ultimately fuel the 1911 Revolution: the strong anti-Manchu sentiment, a desire for a democratic government, and China's need to modernize. His ideas also reflect a new generation of political leaders who unabashedly embraced Western political philosophy. His explanation, unlike many of his predecessors, avoids a defense of Western methods while revealing that his listeners are quite familiar with competing modes of governance in place around the world. The following appeared in the official newspaper of the Tongmenghui (the leading revolutionary party of the period of which Sun Yat-sen was a central figure).

Questions

1. Why does Sun suggest the need for five separate branches of government instead of the three employed in the American constitution?
2. Sun's third principle, livelihood, is often translated as "Socialism" because of its emphasis on the redistribution of wealth. From Sun's description, why do you think he felt it so crucial to the republic's success?

It is not necessary to do research in order to know what nationalism is. A person always recognizes his parents and never confuses them with strangers. Nationalism is analogous to this. It has to do with human nature and applies to everyone. Today, more than 260 years have passed since the Manchus entered China proper, yet even as children we Han would certainly not mistake them for fellow Han. This is the root of nationalism. On the other hand, we should recognize that nationalism does not mean discriminating against people of a different nationality. It simply means not allowing such people to seize our political power, for only when we Han are in control politically do we have a nation. If that political control is in the hands of people of another nationality, then there is no Han nation.

Let us pause to consider for moment: where is the nation? Where is the political power? Actually, we are already a people without a nation! The population of the globe is only one billion, several hundred million; we Han, being 400 million, comprise one-fourth of that population. Our nation

is the most populous, most ancient, and most civilized in the world, yet today we are a lost nation. Isn't that enormously bizarre? . . . We Han are now swiftly being caught up in a tidal wave of nationalist revolution, yet the Manchus continue to discriminate against the Han. They boast that their forefathers conquered the Han because of their superior unity and military strength and that they intend to retain these qualities so as to dominate the Han forever. There is a certain amount of truth in this statement, but it ignores another important factor: the disunity of the Han. Certainly, once we Han unite, our power will be thousands of times greater than theirs, and the success of the nationalist revolution will be assured.

On the other hand, I have heard claims that the nationalist revolution is aimed at exterminating the Manchus as a people. This is utterly mistaken. The reason for the nationalist revolution is our unwillingness to let the Manchu extinguish our nation and dominate us politically, and our determination to restore our nation by liquidating their regime. Thus, we do not hate the Manchus per se, but only those Manchus who are harming the Han. . . .

If the Manchus stubbornly continue to hold on to political power and keep the Han under their yoke, then as long as breath remains in the Han, the Han will refuse to accept it meekly. I presume you gentlemen will agree. These are the basic ideas behind the nationalist revolution.

As for the Principle of Democracy, it is the foundation of the political revolution. In the future, to be sure, the vicious politics of today will be swept away after the nationalist revolution triumphs, but it will also be necessary to eradicate the roots of such politics. For several thousand years China has been a monarchical autocracy, a type of political system intolerable to those living in freedom and equality. . . . The study of what a political revolution entails is a very difficult undertaking. As to practice, a political revolution must proceed simultaneously with the nationalist revolution. When we overthrow the Manchu regime, we will achieve not only a nationalist revolution against the Manchus but also a political revolution against monarchy. They are not to be carried out at two different times. The aim of the political revolution is to create a constitutional, democratic political system. In the context of the current political situation in China, a revolution would be necessary even if the monarch were a Han. Neither the French Revolution nor the Russian Revolution involved racial issues; the issues were strictly political. A democratic political system has been achieved in France, and in Russia the Nihilist party will also ultimately reach this goal. After the revolution in China, this will be the most appropriate political system. This, too, everyone knows.

[. . .]

Now, let me begin by discussing the origins of the Principle of the People's Livelihood, a principle that began to flourish only in the latter part of the nineteenth century. Before that it did not flourish because civilization was not as highly developed. The more civilization developed, the more pressing its social problems became. The reasons are very difficult to explain, but we can use a simple analogy. As civilization advanced, people relied less on physical labor and more on natural forces, since electricity and steam could accomplish things a thousand times faster than human physical strength. . . . In view of this, everyone in Europe and America should be living in a state of plenty and happiness undreamed of in antiquity. If we look around, however, we see that conditions in those countries are precisely the opposite. Statistically, Britain's wealth has increased more than several thousand-fold over the previous generation, yet the poverty of the people has also increased several thousand-fold

over the previous generation. Moreover, the rich are extremely few, and the poor extremely numerous. . . . The reason the Socialist party advocates the Principle of the People's Livelihood is precisely that it seeks to remedy the unequal distribution of wealth. As its advocates grew in number, the principle became a highly complex science that has given rise to numerous schools. Some of them advocate getting rid of the capitalists and replacing them with state ownership. Others want to distribute wealth evenly among the poor, while still others propose public ownership. There are many opinions, but every informed person knows that a social revolution is inevitable in Europe and America. . . .

After all, at present it will be much easier to implement the Principle of the People's Livelihood in China than in Europe and America because social problems are caused by the advance of civilization and are correspondingly less serious where civilization is less advanced. . . .

I have heard it said that the Principle of the People's Livelihood would entail killing half of our 400 million people and taking the land of the rich for ourselves. This irresponsible talk is based on ignorance, and we can ignore it. With respect to a solution, although the socialists have different opinions, the procedure I most favor is land valuation. For example, if a landlord has land worth 1,000 dollars, its price can be set at 1,000 or even 2,000 dollars. Perhaps in the future, after communications have been developed, the value of his land will rise to 10,000 dollars; the owner should receive 2,000, which entails a profit and no loss, and the 8,000 increment will go to the state. Such an arrangement will greatly benefit both the state and the people's livelihood. Naturally, it will also eliminate the shortcomings that have permitted a few rich people to monopolize wealth. This is the simplest, most convenient, and most feasible method. . . .

In short, the objective of our revolution is to promote the well-being of our people as a whole. Because we are unwilling to let a small number of Manchus enjoy all the privileges, we want a nationalist revolution. Because we do not want one man, the monarch, to enjoy all the privileges, we want a political revolution. And because we do not want a small number of rich people to enjoy all the privileges, we want a social revolution. Anything short of these three revolutions will not fulfill our original aims. When they have been accomplished, our nation of China will be a most perfect nation.

There remains another issue worth studying: the future constitution of the Republic of China. Recently, the word *constitution* has been on everyone's lips. Even the Manchu government has been shrewd enough to send lackeys abroad to inquire into the political situation there so that they can concoct some imperial edicts having to do with constitutionalism. They're only creating a disturbance for themselves. . . . As to the future constitution of the Republic of China, I propose that we introduce a new principle, that of the "five separate powers."

Under this system, there will be two other powers in addition to the three powers just discussed. One is the examination power. Citizens have the right to freedom and equality, and officials are public servants of the citizenry. American officials are either elected or appointed. Formerly there were no civil service examinations, which led to serious shortcomings with respect to both elected and appointed officials. . . . Therefore, the future constitution of the Republic of China must provide for an independent branch expressly responsible for civil service examinations. Furthermore, all officials, however high their rank, must undergo examinations in order to determine their qualifications. Whether elected or appointed, officials must pass those examinations before assuming office.

This procedure will eliminate such evils as blind obedience, electoral abuses, and favoritism. From the beginning, China selected its officials according to their qualifications, and those qualifications received great emphasis. . . .

The other power is the supervisory power, responsible for monitoring matters involving impeachment. For reasons that should be evident to all, such a branch is indispensable to any nation. The future constitution of the Republic of China must provide for an independent branch. . . .

With this added to the four powers already discussed, there will be five separate powers. As such a system is unknown among the nations of the world and has rarely been mentioned even in theory, it should be termed a political innovation. I have invented only the foundations of that system, leaving the details and the rest of the structure to the devoted efforts of all my comrades, who, by remedying my own inadequacies, will create the future constitution of the Republic of China. The constitution will form the basis of the sound government of a nation that belongs to its own race, to its own citizens, and to its own society. This will be the greatest good fortune for our 400 million Han people. I presume that you gentlemen are willing to undertake and complete this task. It is my greatest hope.

6.2 DEMANDS OF THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY, SUBMITTED IN A MEMORIAL TO THE THRONE (NOVEMBER 3, 1911)

In the weeks after the Wuchang Uprising, the National Assembly sought to persuade the imperial court to make parliamentary concessions by agreeing to maintain the monarchy and to establish the emperor as the ceremonial head of government. For most revolutionaries, however, the time for such half-measures had already passed. As the following memorial suggests, the National Assembly sought to attain legitimacy through an imperial mandate and not through popular or “revolutionary” activity. This approach would produce a China with two competing political bodies: the National Assembly, maintaining a connection with the Qing, and the provisional government, rooted in revolution and headed by Sun Yat-sen in Nanjing. The two political groups claimed authority through radically different processes, and neither was based on an open and comprehensive selection process.

Questions

1. What aspects of the following demands would have been threatening to the throne? Why?
 2. Why does the National Assembly seek to retain the emperor?
1. The Qing Dynasty shall be maintained in perpetuity.
 2. The person of the Emperor shall be inviolable.
 3. The prerogative of the Emperor shall be limited by the Constitution.
 4. The succession to the Throne shall be prescribed in the Constitution.
 5. The Constitution shall be drafted and determined by the National Assembly and promulgated by the Emperor.
 6. All amendment of the Constitution lies within the province and power of Parliament.
 7. Members of the Upper House of Parliament are to be elected by the people from specially qualified classes.
 8. Parliament will elect but the Emperor shall appoint the Prime Minister, on whose recommendation the other members of the Cabinet shall be appointed by the Emperor; but Imperial princes shall be ineligible for any ministerial office or for the governorship of a province.