

A Proposal for the Unification of China

Chen Jiongming

Contents

The Political Capability of the Chinese People	3
The Real Causes of the Turmoil over the Past Sixteen Years	3
1. The Problem of the Provisional Constitution	3
2. The Problem of the Parliament	3
3. The Problem of the Presidency	3
4. The Problem of the Government	4
5. The Problem of the Military	4
6. The Problem of Political Parties	4
Tools That Failed to Restore Order	4
Military and Party Rules	4
The Meaning of Unification	5
What Is Needed to Achieve Unification	5
A Government of Law	5
How to Achieve Democracy	5
“Good-People Politics”	5
Restoration of National Sovereignty	6
Two Phases to Federation	6
On the Ills of China	6
On the Nationalist Party and the Object of Revolution	6
Usurpation of Power by a Few	7
Why follow the Russian Example?	7
On Political Tutelage	7
On Danghua Education	7
The Meaning of a Political Party	7
Room for Other Parties	8
The Third Party	8

The Political Capability of the Chinese People

There are some who doubt that the Chinese people are capable of creating a truly democratic state. We emphatically disagree. The political environment in any country is created by its leaders. The perceptions and habits of the people can be changed to follow those of the leadership. Furthermore, Chinese society has been traditionally rich in self-governing organizations, which can be effectively used to reconstruct [China as] a democratic state.

The Real Causes of the Turmoil over the Past Sixteen Years

1. The Problem of the Provisional Constitution

[First,] no provision was made in the Provisional Constitution of 1912 to provide proper checks and balances against the assertions of legislature power and executive power. When the parliament went beyond its bounded [purpose] to make laws directed against the executive on a personal basis, the latter had no choice but to illegally dissolve it. [Second,] there was no clear definition of the authority and limitations of the cabinet. Disputes between the president and the cabinet resulted in many political crises. [Third,] the parliament was responsible for the drafting of the constitution, as well as for the election of the president, making its members potential prey to threats and bribery. [Finally,] no provision was made for provincial governments. There was no constitutional protection of the relationship between the central government and the provinces, or regarding the powers and limitations of the provinces. This resulted in the arbitrary assumption of powers by various provinces and the usurpation of civil administration by the military.

Every political crisis we have witnessed in the past sixteen years (1911–1927) has invariably been caused by constitution-related disputes.

2. The Problem of the Parliament

When the Republic was first established, the parliament was expected to deal with the several most pressing problems of the nation, namely, the drafting of the constitution, the budget system, and a system of local government, as well as the abolition of military governorships. Instead of dealing with these problems, the parliament engaged in endless disputes with the executive branch.

3. The Problem of the Presidency

The president of the Republic is a public servant and should be elected by the people. However, the presidency is viewed by the old bureaucrats from the monarchical era as a position of power and prestige, to be gained by bribery or intrigue. Moreover, every president, whether “legal” or “illegal,” has derived his support primarily from the military.

4. The Problem of the Government

Peking, the capital of the Republic, was also the old capital of the monarchy, where the lingering malaise of the decadent old bureaucracy has hardly been conducive to the conduct of good, clean modern government.

5. The Problem of the Military

Generals, not soldiers, cause the trouble. It does not matter what they are called—dudu, dujun, military governor, or commander-in-chief—as long as they possess the actual military power. The big generals control several provinces; the small ones, one province. They are responsible neither to the president nor to the provincial governments. This situation breeds warlordism and is the greatest obstacle to be overcome on the road to national tranquility.

6. The Problem of Political Parties

There have been no real political parties (*zhengdang*) but only party cliques (*dangpai*), except for the short period in 1912 when the Nationalist Party and the Progressive Party (*Jinbudang*) possessed some semblance of a modern political party. Since then these parties have split into cliques based on the self-interest of individual groups rather than on policy or political principles. The Northern militarists and politicians separate themselves into the Anhui, Zhili, and Fengtian cliques. The Southern party, being excluded from participation in government, has resorted to revolution and thus lost the character of a political party.

Tools That Failed to Restore Order

Since 1912, two tools have been used alternately, but to little effect, in restoring order to the nation. These tools are peace negotiation and military action. For example, both the 1919 peace conference in Shanghai and the 1925 rehabilitation conference in Peking dissolved almost as soon as they convened. In the case of military action, no matter what it is being called—national revolution or unification by force—the tactics used have been the same, namely, those of a conqueror.

Why these tools have failed is not because of the tools themselves, but because those who used them are ignorant of the basic principle of democracy—that is, the power of the government must be distributed amongst the entire people. It is a grave mistake to concentrate all power in the military and “use the military to rule the country” (*yi jun zhi guo*), or to concentrate all power in a single political party and “use the party to rule the country” (*yi dang zhi guo*).

Military and Party Rules

At present, the North and the South are virtually in a state of war. Chinese and foreigners alike, ignorant of all the facts, have hoped for the victory of one side or the other, which, they reason, will permanently remove a major obstacle to the reunification of China. This is a completely mistaken point of view. For the military rule of the North and the party rule of the South are both directly contrary to the principle of democracy, and to the will of the Chinese people. Neither can be depended on to effect a permanent unification of China.

The Meaning of Unification

What is unification? First, unification means the reconstruction of the nation, not just a settlement of disputes. If the North and South do make peace and the central government receives support from all the provinces, this is not a true unification. A true unification would mean the building of a true Republic on a solid foundation. Second, unification is a matter of accomplished fact, not a question for legal arguments or maintenance of the status quo. Third, unification is a matter of permanency, not a temporary solution to a problem.

What Is Needed to Achieve Unification

Unification requires (1) a foundation built in the spirit of democracy; (2) the sponsorship of a concentrated power group; (3) the support of foreign powers; and (4) the support of public opinion.

Therefore, we have proposed (in this book) the following : (1) a unification plan; (2) a program to effect a North-South compromise; (3) a plan to solicit diplomatic support; and (4) a movement to promote the strong, unifying force of public opinion.

A Government of Law

Our most urgent task today is to reconstruct the nation's political system, which must be flawless and suitable for fostering the activities of the people and protecting their safety. Without a system of law, even a superior man cannot effect good government. Although China has a long history of civilization, she has never gone through the process of organizing a rule-of-law system through a representative government. Since the founding of the Republic, there have been certain attempts at organizing a government that looks good on the surface, but [these governments have proved] full of flaws that have caused political crises and internal chaos.

How to Achieve Democracy

It is clearly stated in the Provisional Constitution of 1912 that China shall be organized as a democratic state. But how to achieve democracy? We certainly cannot say that we have achieved democracy merely by getting rid of an emperor, electing a president, and decorating a Parliament [Hall] and the courts. For a democracy has its own organizational structure, even though it may exist in different form . Above all, every part of this structure must be suitable for the implementation of a democratic constitution.

“Good-People Politics”

Today we have bureaucratic politics in Peking controlled by the militarists in the North and the oppressive politics of the Nationalists in Canton in the South. They are really the same thing-the complete antithesis of good-people politics. The term “good-people politics” does not

mean the politics of especially moral, talented, or saintlike persons. Rather, it means an anti-bureaucratic and anti-oppressive politics, devoid of all gangsters, hoodlums, local ruffians, corrupt gentry, politicians, and Nationalist Party hacks.

Restoration of National Sovereignty

Sixteen countries (Britain, U.S.A., France, Japan, etc.) have unequal treaties with China, while twelve countries (Germany, Soviet Union, Austria, Cuba, etc.) have equal treaties. Since the late Qing dynasty, China has lost to Russia, Great Britain, Japan, France, and Portugal a territorial area greater than that of a large European country. First of all, China must strive for unification and to restore peace and order. A strong, stable, and united government is absolutely necessary to represent China in her dealings with the Foreign Powers. Steps must be taken immediately to reform the judicial and taxation systems.

The restoration of national sovereignty should proceed in two phases: (1) after a united government is established, those foreign countries that have unequal treaties with China will be invited to renegotiate; (2) after a legally elected federal government is established, the National Conference will review all those unequal treaties that have not been revised after renegotiation and proclaim China's unilateral abolition of such treaties. China will be willing to treat with those countries that reject revision of unequal treaties on an equal basis without signing any new treaties.

Two Phases to Federation

In the first phase we will jointly establish an interim de facto united government through a unification alliance to work under a "provisional constitution of compromise." The North and South should both abandon their conqueror tactics and devote themselves to the task of compromise.

In the second phase we will establish a legally elected federal government to implement the national constitution, which is to be drafted by the National Conference.

On the Ills of China

Of all the ills in China today, none is worse than saying one thing and doing another. One talks about benefits to the people, but acts like a robber, spreading nothing but misery and sorrow. All crimes committed against the people are being covered up in an organized campaign of deception.

On the Nationalist Party and the Object of Revolution

Nationalist Party members are always shouting for a national revolution. If they were truly nationalist, they would not promote the one-party totalitarian rule of the country, nor would they depend on the help of Soviet Russia. Above all, they would not accept orders from the Communist Third International. In reality, they are making secret deals with a foreign government in the name of "nationalism." To speak of revolution, one needs an object. If the object is to overthrow

the Northern warlords, then what about the warlords of the South? [Resolving] the problem of warlordism is a matter of military reform, not the object of revolution.

To speak of overthrowing imperialism comes close to advocating world revolution. What the Russian Communist Party has in mind is no less than world revolution. It is conceivable that it used anti-imperialism as its slogan in the overthrow of its own imperialist czarist government. But there is no imperialism in China today that needs to be overthrown. If we want to overthrow foreign imperialism, that is a problem of diplomacy and should be addressed by diplomatic means.

Usurpation of Power by a Few

The nationalist revolution proclaimed by the Nationalist Party is simply the age-old game of an ambitious few usurping power under the guise of a new name. The slogans used by the Nationalists, such as “one-party totalitarian rule” (*yidang zhuanzheng*), “political tutelage” (*xunzheng*), “party-guided education” (*danghua jiaoyu*), “No parties other than the Nationalist Party” (*dangwai wu dang*), ... etc., are words that can only be uttered by a madman.

Why follow the Russian Example?

There is no room in democracy for “one-party totalitarian rule”; they are absolutely incompatible. Anyone with some notion of democracy would not dream of one-party rule for his country.

On Political Tutelage

“Political tutelage” belongs to the era of monarchies. It is inconceivable that the Nationalists should revive it for the Republic. The principle of democracy lies in the self-government of the people. If the people cannot exercise their right to govern, it is simply bureaucratic government, with which China has had sad experience for thousands of years.

On Danghua Education

The phrase “party-guided” (*danghua*) itself is meaningless. To make education “party-guided or party-determined” (*danghua jiaoyu*) is absurd and dangerous in the extreme. Although the civilizations of advanced nations in Europe and America have been blessed with religion, politics and religion are strictly separated in daily practice to ensure freedom of thought. It is unbelievable that the Nationalists now want to propagate their doctrine as religion and control the minds of China’s youth.

The Meaning of a Political Party

To say that there will be no political parties other than the Nationalist Party (*dangwai wu dang*) is contrary to the meaning of a political party. This kind of barbarous thinking reflects an ignorance of what a political party really is. For a political party brings into focus certain views

or aspirations of the people, gives them an organized representation, and operates under the constraints of a constitution. In any country, the collective views or aspirations of its people fall into three categories: the conservative, the reformative, and the very new. Without political parties, these different views will scatter in all directions and cannot be represented effectively. With political parties, each can be represented in such a manner that the working of the constitution is made flexible and elastic, thus allowing the establishment of majority rule, which is, after all, the cornerstone of democracy.

If there is only one political party, it would be impossible to combine the three into an effective representation. If forced to do this, the result is that there will be parties within the party (*dangnei you dang*). This inevitably leads to self-destruction of the party through internal power struggles. This is a plain truth that needs no experiential proof; it may be deduced by simple reasoning. But the Nationalists do not understand this and continue to preach that there will be no political parties other than the Nationalist Party. What they get is “parties within the party.” Look at the repeated splits between the so-called leftists and the rightists. Are these not a consequence of what they preach?

Room for Other Parties

We cannot agree with the argument that because the Nationalist Party is a revolutionary party it should not be considered an ordinary political party. Even for a revolutionary party, there is no need to claim that it has the sole right to exist. It is not the object of the Revolution to exclude those who disagree. There should be room for other political parties, ... so long as they do not engage in activities detrimental to the (Nationalist) Party.

The Third Party

A third party would include those who are dissatisfied with the warring Northern and Southern groups and seek a different formula to effect the peaceful unification of the country. Actually, the sentiment of this “Third Party” coincides with that of the majority of the people, but through lack of organization, it has exerted little influence as a political force.

The Third Party in essence represents the will of the Chinese people. It should be organized as an effective political force. Its leaders should put the nation above the party and avoid the mistake of “fighting fire with fire.”

The militarists in the North and the Nationalists in the South are today’s obstacles to China’s progress. They must be removed through a process of compromise. When the three groups—the North, the South, and the Third Party—join together in the reconstruction of China, then permanent unification will be at hand.

The Anarchist Library (Mirror)
Anti-Copyright



Chen Jiongming
A Proposal for the Unification of China
1927

Published in *Chen Jiongming and the Federalist Movement* by Leslie H. Dingyan Chen.

usa.anarchistlibraries.net