

## **Lesson 13**

### **Question for the Lesson/What you need to know in this lesson:**

How and why did Yuan Shikai betray the Republic?

How was he responsible for the rise of warlordism in China?

### **IB Questions**

#### **Reasons for Rise of warlordism**

1. Analyse the factors that led to the rise of warlordism in the period from 1911 to 1926. (N10, Q11)

#### **Role of Yuan Shi-Kai for the rise of warlordism in China**

2. To what extent was Yuan Shikai (Yuan Shih-k'ai) responsible for the rise of warlordism in China in the early twentieth century? (M04, Q14, N12)
3. In what ways, and to what extent was Yuan Shikai (Yuan Shih-k'ai) responsible for the rise of warlordism in China in the early twentieth century? (N07, Q16)
4. 'Yuan Shikai can be held responsible for the disunity of the Warlord era that followed his death in 1916.' To what extent do you agree with this statement about China between 1912 and 1927? (M14)

#### **Role of Yuan Shi-Kai in betraying the 1912 Chinese Republic**

5. In what ways, and with what consequences, did Yuan Shikai betray the 1912 Chinese Republic? (M11, Q11)

#### **Reasons for the defeat of warlordism**

6. To what extent was "warlordism" in China defeated by Jiang Jieshi (Chiang Kai-shek) in the period 1926 to 1937? (M07, Q15)

## Rise of Yuan Shikai to Power

### A. What is a republic?

- A form of government in which a state is **ruled by representatives of the citizen body**. Modern republics are founded on the idea that sovereignty rests with the people
- The **power of government is held by the people**.
- The **people give power to leaders** they elect to represent them and **serve their interests**.
- The representatives are responsible for helping all the people in the country, not just a few people
- It also refer to any form of government in which the **head of state is not a hereditary monarch**

### Provisional constitution?

### B. Recap: Sun's Three People's Principles and detailed procedure for the revolution

The Three People's Principles became the revolutionary philosophy. The first principle, **nationalism**, called for **not only the overthrow of the alien Manchu but also the removal of foreign imperialistic yoke**.

The second principle, **democracy**, aimed at **achieving the Four Rights of the people – initiative, referendum, election, and recall – and the Five Rights for the government: executive, legislative, judicial, control and examination**. However, he also stressed the need for a strong state over individual liberty.

The third principle, **People's Livelihood**, stressed the need for regulating capital and equalizing land (land to the tiller).

In addition, **Sun worked out a detailed procedure for his revolution**. Initially, there would be a **military rule of 3 years** in the areas liberated by the revolutionary force. During this period, the **military government would control all military as well as civil affairs at the district level**. Meanwhile it will cooperate with the local people towards eliminating the old political and social evils such as slavery, foot-binding, opium-smoking and bureaucratic corruption.

The **second stage** would be a **period of political tutelage**, lasting no more than 6 years, **during which time local self-government would be instituted and popular elections for local assemblies and administrators would be held**. However, the military government would still retain control of the central government. During this period, **there would be a provisional constitution to specify the rights and duties of the military government and the people**.

**When the period of tutelage ended, the military government would be dissolved and the country would be governed by a new constitution.**

In sum, Sun envisioned a **3 stage revolution to lead the country into constitutionalism.**

### **C. Yuan Shi-kai's Betrayal of the Republic**

**Once elected the provisional president, Yuan started to make a travesty of the republic.**

#### **(i) Yuan assumed the presidency in Feb 1912.**

He had the support of his own Beiyang Army – China's strongest – in the north and a deal with the National Alliance in the south. He was to rule China till his death in 1916. The constitutional basis for Yuan's rule came from his selection as premier by the Qing's recently founded National Assembly and the official abdication of the Qing. The government of the southern revolutionaries also recognized Yuan, anticipating a republican political system in which they could lay claims to power as well.

#### **(ii) Reduced the Cabinet to a shambles**

**In the first Cabinet, the four substantive ministries – Foreign Affairs, Internal Affairs, War and Navy – all went to his henchmen,** while the four lesser ministries – Education, Justice, Agriculture and Forestry – were allocated to the Tongmenghui. Huang Hsing the choice of the revolutionaries for the Ministry of War was merely made the resident general of Nanking and his troops were disbanded.

**The premier, Tang Shao-i, one of those who had returned from USA, desired to lead the nation toward the rule of law, in apparent opposition to Yuan's secret wishes.** Tang, however, resigned in June 1912 together with 4 Tongmenghui cabinet ministers when Yuan ordered the military governor-designate of Chihli be sent to Nanking to help disband the troops, without the premier's counter-signature as required by the provisional constitution. **Yuan's confidant Chao Ping-chun, the minister of internal affairs, served as acting premier and later became Premier. Under him the cabinet was nothing but a puppet of the president.** Within 5 months, Yuan had succeeded in reducing the responsible cabinet to a shambles

#### **(iii) Parliament to be elected according to the Provisional Constitution**

**According to the provisional constitution, a parliament was to be elected within 6 months of the formation of the government.** Election laws and regulations on the organization of the parliament were promulgated by the provisional government in August 1912, including the adoption of a bicameral system. By the time of election in Dec, the Tongmenghui had absorbed 4 splinter

parties to form the Nationalist Party under the effective guidance of Sung Chiao-jen. Sung had studied parliamentary theories in Japan. Though not opposed to Yuan's election as president, he strongly advocated party government and a responsible cabinet to guide the country into constitutionalism and to check the abuse of the President. Against the Nationalist Party were a number of smaller parties, such as the Unification Party and the Democratic Party under Liang Chi-chao. The elections gave the Nationalist a landslide victory in the lower and upper house. The Nationalist victory was largely the work of Sung Chiao-jen. **His organizing ability and frequent public advocacy of using the responsible cabinet and the loyal opposition systems to check the excesses of the president irritated Yuan greatly. He was eventually assassinated.**

#### (iv) Yuan negotiates loans from foreign powers

**To bolster his position against the Nationalist, in April 1913, Yuan negotiated a so-called reorganization loan of 25 million pounds from the Five-power banking consortium.** When Sun and Huang Hsing urged the parliament to reject this illegal loan, Yuan's acting premier surrounded the parliament building with troops and declared that there was no need for further discussion. Yuan dismissed the Nationalist military governors in Kiangsi, Kwangtung and Anhwei and his army readied for an attack on the south. On July 12, 1913, the military governor of Kiangsi declared independence and in less than a month six other provinces followed suit, **starting what was known as the second revolution. But within a couple of months Yuan had crushed the southern armies and Yuan's generals took over control of the Yangtze area as provincial warlords.**

#### (v) Yuan's monarchical dream

**After suppressing the Second Revolution, Yuan was no longer satisfied with the title of provisional president and he yearned for it to be changed to president with a lifelong tenure, preparatory to his ultimate goal of emperorship.** Yuan had swept aside the inaugural pledge that he would uphold the republic against any reappearance of monarchy.

**The first step in Yuan's scheme was to prompt the parliament to issue the presidency election law on Oct 1913, before the completion of the constitution.** With the use of coercion and force, Yuan was formally inaugurated as president and the provisional government became the regular government.

But within 3 weeks, the parliament promulgated a Constitution, which adopted the cabinet rather than the presidential system, to check Yuan's powers. Incensed, Yuan asked his generals to attack the document as incompatible with the national conditions and as a nationalist device to dominate the parliament. When the parliament stood firm, Yuan simply dissolved the Nationalist Party and revoked the credentials of 358 of its parliamentarians on the pretext of their involvement in the

Second Revolution. The new assembly appointed by Yuan elected him emperor with remarkable unanimity.

**Having brushed aside the parliament, the constitution and the opposition party, Yuan achieved a virtual dictatorship.**

#### **(vi) Yuan revise the provisional constitution**

Mindful of the importance of legality, Yuan called a national conference on March 18, 1914, to revise the 1912 provisional constitution. Each of the twenty-two provinces contributed two delegates, while four each came from the capital and the national chamber of commerce, and eight came from Mongolia, Tibet, and Chinghai, making a total of 60. **The upshot of the conference was the shift from the cabinet to the presidential terms to 10 years, renewable by re-election without limit. Also, the president had the right to nominate his own successor. With this constitution Yuan was assured of the lifelong tenure as well as the right to pass it on to his offspring.** For all intents and purposes, Yuan had become an emperor without the title. Yet he was unsatisfied and by 1915 Yuan was fully prepared to betray the republic.

**To forestall foreign opposition Yuan agreed to accept the infamous Twenty One Demands from Japan.** Aside from the control over shantung, the demands stipulated recognition of Japanese interests in Manchuria and Mongolia, including mining rights, new business rights in Fujian province and a final set of demands that would have led to extensive Japanese participation at all levels of the Chinese government. Although Yuan tried, but he had to eventually agree to all but the last set of demands and it became a day of national humiliation. **He also signed agreements with Britain and Russia recognizing their special interests and positions in Outer Mongolia and Tibet respectively.**

Yuan was also heartened by an intriguing, if non-committal statement of the Japanese premier, Okuma, to the effect that should China become a monarchy her political system would be identical with Japan's and that since Yuan was already in full control of China's political power a change to the monarchy would bring the situation more in accord with reality. Yuan thought this to mean a Japanese endorsement of his monarchical dreams. Yuan's Japanese adviser also stressed constitutional monarchy as the source of national strength, as in Japan and Britain. Hence, a monarchical movement broke out into the open. Yang Tu, chief organizer of the movement publicly advocated national salvation through constitutional monarchy.

Yuan did not seem to see that in spite of all the uncertainties in the early Republican period, one definite thing was the imperial system could never return. His betrayal of the republic and his drive to emperorship went beyond the point of tolerance of his countrymen – including his own followers.

#### D. Responses to Yuan attempt to establish himself as a monarch

By 1914, appointed as generalissimo of a Chinese Revolutionary Army, Sun set out to fight Yuan's illegal destruction of the parliament, the provisional constitution and his abject betrayal of the republic. In addition in Yunnan, a National Protection Army came into being to fight the monarchist movement, under a group of revolutionaries including the former military governor Ts'ai Ao. He and Liang Ch'i Chao vowed to fight Yuan, one with guns and the other with the pen to save the republic. The Yunnan revolutionaries gave Yuan an ultimatum allowing him 2 days to cancel his monarchist movement. When Yuan refused, Yunnan declared independence on Dec 25 and the army set out in 3 direction campaign and on 27 Dec 1915 Kweichow declared independence. On March 1916, Kwangsi too declared independence while a separate anti-monarchist army rose in Shantung, and Japan decided not to support Yuan in the midst of such a political development.

**Facing these discouraging domestic and foreign developments, Yuan had no choice but to forsake his monarchical dream and reign of Glorious Constitution in 1916.** Yuan's attempts to combine new rituals like constitutions and elections with the old appealed neither to traditionalists nor to progressives. **Yet he still hoped to hang on to his presidency by reviving the Cabinet system to appease the revolutionaries. However, few more provinces like Kwangtung declared its independence and various revolutionary groups unified into one Military Affairs Council, which refused to recognize Yuan as the president as did prominent citizens of nineteen provinces.**

Yuan's best and strongest military protégés, seeing that the monarchy might pass on to Yuan's widely despised son instead of themselves, sat out of the coming civil war. They disowned him one-by-one and refused to mobilize generals and military governors to support him for presidency. The southwestern provinces, under defacto warlords declared independence and called Yuan a traitor

Shensi, Hunan and Szechwan too declared their independence and Yuan suddenly dies of uremia in June 16, 1916, bringing an end to the monarchical movement.

#### Overall:

Yuan's mockery of the constitution, his illegal manipulation of the parliament, his methods of bribery, coercion, murder, and enslavement laid the groundwork of lawlessness and disorder in the decade that followed. The disappearance of a strong power-holder generated centrifugal forces, plunging the country into a period of chaos and disorder.

Yuan's rule was marked and marred by the following actions: taking loans from the foreign banks and governments (instead of reforming the tax system), crushing parliamentary politics, repressing the so-called Second revolution, ruling by decree, yielding to most of Japan's "Twenty-one Demands" and finally attempting to found a new dynasty in his own rights. Based on this the 1911 Revolution was judged as a failure. **That Yuan's rule ended in disgrace and disaster, and established an**

**escalating pattern of political crisis, violence and fragmentation, however, was not entirely his fault. (counter-argument –Peter Zarrow)**

## **E. Other Reasons for Failure of the experiment with Republic government and the Rise of Warlordism**

### **(i) Continued presence of the Qing Court in the post-Revolutionary period**

The revolution certainly overthrew the Qing and the entire monarchical system. Yet it is worth noting that Qing court itself was not totally destroyed. As part of the abdication agreement that the Empress Dowager signed recognizing Yuan as premier, part of the deal was to allow the court temporarily to remain in the Forbidden City and receive an allowance from the new government. Yuan took up official residence in the old imperial offices next to Forbidden City. Not until the 1924 was the imperial family expelled from the Forbidden City. The ongoing practice of court rituals in the heart of Beijing into the 1920s – the young emperor receiving courtiers and even government envoys – **might symbolize the limits of the revolution and the compromises it had to make with the past. (weakness of the revolution and the revolutionaries)** In fact, in July 1917 the last Manchu emperor P'ui was restored to the throne and Qing institutions were revived and ranks and appointments were awarded. But it was a short-lived one

### **(ii) Militarisation of Politics in China since the late-Qing period**

Yuan Shikai ruled as a military dictator. His power derived directly from his support from leading army officers. Yuan had personally established the most efficient divisions of the army when he was working for the Qing in the 1890s and early 1900s. The leading generals and the officers were thus his protégés and he was an efficient civil administrator as well. **His career, however, demonstrates the shifting nature of power in modern China: mutating from imperial-bureaucratic forms to more militarized forms of rule. Military men had become politicized during the late Qing and civilian politicians and bureaucratic forms to more militarized forms of rule.** Yuan betrayed the Republic in his monarchical campaign of 1915. But the heart of any critique of Yuan goes not to Yuan's character, although his so-called betrayals could have been a pragmatic response to circumstance, but to **his understanding of the new China that was then emerging.**

The politics of the early Republic was marked by a struggle between the local forces that had emerged in the late Qing on the one hand and the bureaucratic state – which Yuan left largely unchanged from the time of the Qing – on the other. Yuan made no attempt to harness local energies, which he no doubt considered undisciplined and dangerous.

After Yuan's death in 1916, these trends resulted in outright warlordism.

### **(iii) Yuan inherited a financially burdened government**

Yuan shikai inherited a government that was bankrupt, bleeding a deficit of 13 million yuan every month. The bulwark of the imperial tax system, the land tax, had been lost as the powers of the central government weakened. Yuan collected virtually none of the land tax, which remained in local and provincial hands. For all of Yuan's tools of repression, the new government's powers simply did not stretch as far down into local administration as even the Qing's. With customs revenue already in the hands of the foreign powers, the Chinese government had to live off internal transit taxes and miscellaneous goods taxes like the tax on teas. There were not much funds for reforms. **Hence, without the foreign loan that Yuan had attempted to obtain, he would not have been able to pay his troops, and it is difficult to see how his government would have survived. For their money, the foreigners bought peace and continued trade as well as advantageous interest rates.** However, this was new face of imperialism.

#### (iv) Some attempts at reforms

Yuan did attempt to reform the judiciary and financial organs of the government, employ men who had received a modern education encourage industry, build schools, establish a modernized civil service exam system, suppress opium and restore the infrastructure. He thus sought to continue and extend the late Qing's New Policies. But Yuan ruled through a top-heavy bureaucracy, his government was conservative, corrupt and inefficient.

#### Aftermath of Yuan Shikai: Period of Warlordism

The disappearance of a strong power-holder generated centrifugal forces, plunging the country into a period of chaos and disorder. The warlords fought against each other for power and self-aggrandizement without any sense, logic or reason, rendering this period the darkest in republican history.

On June 7, 1916, Vice-President Li Yuan-hung took over the presidency. A question of legality immediately arose as to whether he had succeeded to the office according to the 1912 constitution or acted for the deceased president with Yuan's 1914 constitution. The revolutionaries in the south insisted on the former while Tuan Ch'i-jui in Peking favoured continuation of the 1914 constitution.

In Nov 1917, when Tuan established a new provisional government, instead of reconvening the old parliament dissolved by President Li, the revolutionaries in the south accused him of violating the 1912 constitution. Sun Yat-sen was again established a military government at Canton to launch a Constitution Protection Movement. To crush domestic opposition, Tuan negotiated foreign loans under the pretext of entering the world war. He manipulated the provisional parliament to revise the election and organization laws of the 1912 constitution and formed An-Fu club to rally the support of his military and civilian followers. In the re-elected parliament in 1918, the An-Fu clique controlled more than 330 votes, and the Research Clique about 20.

Thus replenished, Tuan set out to destroy the southern military government. Troops were sent to Hunan to exert pressure on the revolutionaries in Canton, and to Szechwan to check any possible revolt by Yunnan. In doing so Tuan precipitated another civil war. However, President Feng, who was Li's successor, favoured a peaceful solution to the domestic squabble. His clash with Tuan, divided the Peiyang Fleet in two: the group under Tuan became known as the Anhwei Clique and the one under Feng became known as the Chihli clique. Feng's followers sabotaged Tuan's campaign against the Constitution Protection Army, causing a failure of Tuan's military policy and his resignation on Nov 22.

What followed was a period of mad fighting between the two cliques. The Chihli group ultimately won out with the support of yet another clique from Manchuria – the Fengtian army under the leadership of a former bandit, Chang Tso-lin. In April 1922, fighting broke out between the two groups themselves, resulting in the victory of the Chihli Clique. However, Chang Tso-lin was able to retain control of Manchuria, independent of the Peking regime.

The victorious Chihli clique offered the presidency to Li in the hopes of achieving national unification through a peaceful settlement with the Canton government. It encountered opposition from a powerful wing within the clique, and by the middle of 1922 a split took place (i) the Lo-yang faction under Wu P'ei-fu favoured a military conquest of China and support of President Li and (ii) the Tientsin-Paoting faction which opposed Wu favoured Ts'ao K'un for president. In the end the President Li was driven out of office and Ts'ao K'un had himself elected president in Oct 1923 bribing some 500 members of the parliament. Public morale hit rock bottom.

Following the disgraceful election of Ts'ao K'un's disgraceful election to the presidency on Oct 1923, the Fengtien forces advanced from Manchuria toward Peking, precipitating another Chihli-Fengtien war. The Chihli forces collapsed and supported by his own National People's Army Feng reorganized the cabinet and forced the President Ts'ao K'un out of office on Nov 1924.

Now in the interest of national unification, the National People's army, the Fengtien Clique, the Ahwei Clique and the Anhwei clique jointly asked Tuan Ch'i-jui to be the executive of a provisional government and invited Sun to Peking to discuss the problem of peace and unification. Not only was Tuan insincere but Sun died in 1925 while he was there. In his will he wanted his comrades to achieve peace and struggle to save China, his unfinished work.

The revolution and the republic had not brought the anticipated peace and order: if anything, the republican period saw more misery and lawlessness than before. It resembled the traditional disorder and chaos that always followed the fall of a dynasty. In 1926, a young general, Chiang Kai-shek, resumed the unfinished "Northern Expedition" against the warlords and succeeded to a larger extent. In 1928, a nationalist government was established in Nanking, and the long eluded objective of unification was finally achieved, even if only superficially.

The only hope lay with the revolutionary government at Canton.

But Sun's Constitution Protection Movement had made little progress, for ever since the establishment of the military government at Canton in 1917, he had been handicapped by not having direct control of the armed forces, despite his title of generalissimo. The real power of command lay with the southwestern provincial leaders of Kwangtung and Kwangsi. With ambitions of his own, Provincial leader Lu forced Sun out of the military government in May 1918. In 1919, Sun renamed his Chinese Revolutionary Party to the Chinese Nationalist Party (Kuomintang). To chastise the rebels at Canton rather than to fight Tuan in the north, Sun directed his forces southward. He was able to recover Canton and revived the military regime, the formal establishment of a republican government came on 1921.

On Feb 1922, Sun set out northward to continue his Constitution Protection campaign, only to be turned back by an unexpected mutiny in Canton but he had to escape to Shanghai. Thus his Constitution Protection campaign really never got off the ground.