

HISTORY OF CHINA AND JAPAN FROM 1900 TO 1976 A.D

18BHI63C (UNIT II)

V.VIJAYAKUMAR

9025570709

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Yuan Shikai

Yuan Shikai ([Chinese](#): 袁世凱; [pinyin](#): *Yuán Shìkǎi*; 16 September 1859 – 6 June 1916) was a Chinese military and government official who rose to power during the late [Qing dynasty](#), becoming the [Emperor](#) of the [Empire of China \(1915–1916\)](#). He tried to save the dynasty with a number of modernization projects including bureaucratic, fiscal, judicial, educational, and other reforms, despite playing a key part in the [failure](#) of the [Hundred Days' Reform](#). He established the first modern army and a more efficient provincial government in North China in the last years of the Qing dynasty before the abdication of the [Xuantong Emperor](#), the last monarch of the Qing dynasty, in 1912. Through negotiation, he became the first [President of the Republic of China](#) in 1912.^[1] This army and bureaucratic control were the foundation of his autocratic. He was frustrated in a [short-lived attempt](#) to [restore hereditary monarchy in China](#), with himself as the **Hongxian Emperor** ([Chinese](#): 洪憲皇帝). His death shortly after his abdication led to the [fragmentation of the Chinese political system](#) and the end of the [Beiyang government](#) as China's central authority.



On 16 September 1859, Yuan was born as Yuan Shikai in the village of Zhangying (張營村), [Xiangcheng County](#), [Chenzhou Prefecture](#), [Henan](#), China. The Yuan clan later moved 16 kilometers southeast of Xiangcheng to a hilly area that was easier to defend against bandits. There the Yuans had built a fortified village, Yuanzhaicun ([Chinese](#): 袁寨村; [lit.](#) 'the fortified village of the Yuan family').^[2]

Yuan's family was affluent enough to provide Yuan with a traditional Confucian education.^[3] As a young man he enjoyed riding, boxing, and entertainment with friends. Though hoping to pursue a career in the civil service, he failed the [Imperial examinations](#) twice, leading him to decide on an entry into politics through the [Huai Army](#), where many of his relatives served. His career began with the purchase of a minor official title in 1880, which was a common method of official promotion in the late Qing.^[4] Using his father's connections, Yuan travelled to [Tengzhou](#), Shandong, and sought a post in the [Qing Brigade](#). Yuan's first marriage was in 1876 to a woman of the Yu family who bore him a first son, [Keding](#), in 1878. Yuan Shikai married nine more [concubines](#) throughout the course of his life.^[5]

Years in Joseon Dynasty Korea[[edit](#)]

In the early 1870s, [Korea](#) under the [Joseon dynasty](#) was in the midst of a struggle between isolationists under [King Gojong](#)'s father [Heungseon Daewongun](#), and progressives, led by [Empress Myeongseong](#), who wanted to open trade. After the [Meiji Restoration](#), Japan had adopted an aggressive foreign policy, contesting Chinese domination of the peninsula. Under the [Treaty of Ganghwa](#), which the Koreans signed with reluctance in 1876, Japan was allowed to send diplomatic missions to [Hanseong](#), and opened trading posts in [Incheon](#) and [Wonsan](#). Amidst an internal power struggle which resulted in the queen's exile, the [Viceroy of Zhili](#), [Li](#)

[Hongzhang](#), sent the 3,000 strong Qing Brigade into Korea. The Korean king proposed training 500 troops in the art of modern warfare, and Yuan Shikai was appointed to lead this task in Korea. Li Hongzhang also recommended Yuan's promotion, with Yuan given the rank of *sub-prefect*.

In 1885, Yuan was appointed Imperial Resident of Seoul.^[6] On the surface the position equalled that of ambassador but in practice, as head official from the [suzerain](#), Yuan had become the supreme adviser on all Korean government policies. Perceiving China's increasing influence on the Korean government, Japan sought more influence through co-suzerainty with China. A series of documents were released to Yuan Shikai, claiming the Korean government had changed its stance towards Chinese protection and would rather turn to [Russia](#) for protection. Yuan was outraged yet skeptical and asked Li Hongzhang for advice.

In a treaty signed between Japan and Qing, the two parties agreed only to send troops into Korea after notifying the other. Although the Korean government was stable, it was still a protectorate of Qing. Koreans emerged advocating modernization. Another more radicalised group, the [Donghak Society](#), promoting an early nationalist doctrine based partly upon [Confucian](#) principles, rose in rebellion against the government. Yuan and Li Hongzhang sent troops into Korea to protect Seoul and Qing's interests, and Japan did the same under the pretext of protecting Japanese trading posts. Tensions boiled over between Japan and China when Japan refused to withdraw its forces and placed a blockade at the [38th Parallel](#). Li Hongzhang wanted at all costs to avoid a war with Japan and attempted this by asking for international pressure for a Japanese withdrawal. Japan refused, and war broke out. Yuan, having been put in an ineffective position, was recalled to [Tianjin](#) in July 1894, before the official outbreak of the [First Sino-Japanese War](#) (甲午戰爭).

Yuan Shikai had three Korean concubines, one of whom was Korean Princess Li's relative, concubine Kim. 15 of Yuan's children came from these three Korean women.^{[7][8][9]}

Late Qing dynasty^[edit]

Yuan's rise to fame began with his nominal participation in the [First Sino-Japanese War](#) as commander of the Chinese garrison forces in Korea. Unlike other officers, however, he avoided the humiliation of Chinese defeat by having been recalled to Beijing several days before the outbreak of conflict.

As an ally of [Li Hongzhang](#), Yuan was appointed the commander of the first [New Army](#) in 1895. Yuan's training program modernized the army, creating enormous pride, and earning him the loyalty of capable senior officers. By 1901, five of China's seven divisional commanders and most other senior military officers in China were his protégés.^[10] The Qing court relied heavily on his army due to the proximity of its garrison to the capital and their effectiveness. Of the new armies that formed part of the [Self-Strengthening Movement](#), Yuan's was the best trained and most effective. His success opened the way for his rise to the top in both military and political sectors.^[11]

The Qing Court at the time was divided between progressives under the leadership of the [Guangxu Emperor](#), and conservatives under the [Empress Dowager Cixi](#), who had temporarily retreated to the [Summer Palace](#) as a place of "retirement". After the Guangxu Emperor's [Hundred Days' Reform](#) in 1898, however, Cixi decided that the reforms were too drastic, and plotted to restore her own regency through a coup d'état. Plans of the coup spread early, and the Emperor was very aware of the plot. He asked reform advocates [Kang Youwei](#), [Tan Sitong](#) and others to develop a plan to save him. Yuan's involvement in the coup remains a matter of debate among

historians. Tan Sitong reportedly spoke with Yuan several days before the coup, asking Yuan to assist the Emperor against Cixi. Yuan refused a direct answer, but insisted he was loyal to the Emperor. Meanwhile, Manchu General [Ronglu](#) was planning manoeuvres for his army to stage the coup.

According to sources, including the diary of [Liang Qichao](#) and contemporary Chinese news sources, Yuan Shikai arrived in [Tianjin](#) on 20 September 1898 by train. It was certain that by the evening, Yuan had talked to Ronglu, but what was revealed to him remains ambiguous. Most historians suggest that Yuan had told Ronglu of all details of the Reformers' plans, and asked him to take immediate action. The plot being exposed, Ronglu's troops entered the [Forbidden City](#) at dawn on 21 September, forcing the Emperor into seclusion in a lake palace.

Making a political alliance with the Empress Dowager, and becoming a lasting enemy of the Guangxu Emperor, Yuan left the capital in 1899 for his new appointment as Governor of [Shandong](#). During his three-year tenure the [Boxer Rebellion](#) (1899–1901) erupted; Yuan ensured the suppression of [Boxers](#) in the province, though his troops took no active part outside Shandong itself. Yuan took the side of the pro-foreign faction in the Imperial Court, along with [Prince Qing](#), [Li Hongzhang](#), and [Ronglu](#). He refused to side with the Boxers and attack the [Eight-Nation Alliance](#) forces, joining with other Chinese governors who commanded substantial modernized armies like [Zhang Zhidong](#) not participating in the Boxer Rebellion. He and Zhang ignored Empress Dowager Cixi's declaration of war against the foreign powers and continued to suppress the Boxers. This clique was known as [The Mutual Protection of Southeast China](#).^[12] In addition to not fighting the Eight-Nation Alliance and suppressing the Boxers in Shandong, Yuan and his army (the Right Division) also helped the Eight-Nation Alliance suppress the Boxers after [the Alliance captured Beijing](#) in August 1900. Yuan Shikai's forces

massacred tens of thousands of people in their anti-Boxer campaign in [Zhili](#).^[13] Yuan operated out of [Baoding](#) during the campaign, which ended in 1902.^[14]

He also founded a provincial junior college (Shandong College, the forerunner of [Shandong University](#)) in [Jinan](#), which adopted western ideas of education.

In June 1902 he was promoted to [Viceroy of Zhili](#), the lucrative Commissioner for North China Trade, and Minister of [Beiyang](#) (北洋通商大臣), comprising the modern regions of [Liaoning](#), Hebei, and [Shandong](#).^[15] Having gained the regard of foreigners after helping crush the [Boxer Rebellion](#), he successfully obtained numerous loans to expand his [Beiyang Army](#) into the [most powerful army](#) in China. He created a 2,000-strong police force to keep order in Tianjin, the first of its kind in Chinese history, as a result of the [Boxer Protocol](#) forbidding any troops to be staged close to Tianjin. Yuan was also involved in the transfer of railway control from [Sheng Xuanhuai](#), leading railways and their construction to become a large source of his revenue. Yuan played an active role in late-Qing political reforms, including the creation of the Ministry of Education (學部) and Ministry of Police (巡警部). He further advocated ethnic equality between Manchus and [Han Chinese](#).

In 1905, acting on Yuan's advice, Dowager-Empress Cixi issued a decree ending the traditional Confucian examination system that was formalized in 1906. She ordered the Ministry of Education to implement a system of primary and secondary schools and universities with state-mandated curriculum, modeled after the educational system of [Meiji-period](#) Japan. On 27 August 1908, the Qing court promulgated "Principles for a Constitution", which Yuan helped to draft. This document called for a [constitutional government](#) with a strong monarchy (modeled after

Meiji Japan and Bismarck's Germany), with a constitution to be issued by 1916 and an elected parliament by 1917.^{[\[16\]](#)}

In the hunting-park, three miles to the south of Peking, is quartered the Sixth Division, which supplies the Guards for the Imperial Palace, consisting of a battalion of infantry and a squadron of cavalry. With this Division Yuan Shi Kai retains twenty-six modified Krupp guns, which are the best of his artillery arm, and excel any guns possessed by the foreign legations in Peking.

The Manchu Division moves with the Court and is the pride of the modern army.

By his strategic disposition Yuan Shi Kai completely controls all the approaches to the capital, and holds a force which he may utilize either to protect the Court from threatened attack or to crush the Emperor should he himself desire to assume Imperial power. Contrary to treaty stipulations made at the settlement of the Boxer trouble, the Chinese have been permitted to build a great tower over the Chien Men, or central southern gate, which commands the foreign legations and governs the Forbidden City. In the threatening condition of Chinese affairs it might be assumed that this structure had been undermined by the foreign community, but this has not been done, and if trouble again arise in Peking the fate of the legations will depend upon the success of the first assault which will be necessary to take it. The foreign legations are as much in the power of Yuan Shi Kai's troops in 1907 as they were at the mercy of the Chinese rabble in 1900.

The ultimate purpose of the equipped and disciplined troops is locked in the breast of the Viceroy of Chihli. Yuan Shi Kai's yamen in Tientsin is connected by telegraph and telephone with the Imperial palaces and with the various barracks of his troops. In a field a couple of hundred yards away is the long pole of a wireless telegraph station, from which he can send the message that any day may set all China ablaze.

To-morrow in the East, Douglas Story, pp. 224–226.^[17]

Yuan Shikai's Han-dominated [New Army](#) was primarily responsible for the defense of Beijing, as most of the modernized Eight Banner divisions were destroyed in the Boxer Rebellion and the new modernized Banner forces were token in nature.

Retreat and return^{[[edit](#)]}

The Empress Dowager and the Guangxu Emperor died within a day of each other in November 1908.^[6] Sources indicate that the will of the emperor ordered Yuan's execution. Nonetheless, he avoided death. In January 1909, he was relieved of all his posts by the regent, [Prince Chun](#). The public reason for Yuan's resignation was that he was returning to his home in the village of Huanshang (洹上村), the [prefecture-level city](#) of [Anyang](#), due to a foot disease.

During his three years of effective exile, Yuan kept contact with his close allies, including [Duan Qirui](#), who reported to him regularly about army proceedings. Yuan had arranged for the marriage of his niece (whom he had adopted) to Duan as a means to consolidate power. The loyalty of the Beiyang Army was still undoubtedly behind him. Having this strategic military support, Yuan held the balance of power between various revolutionaries (like [Sun Yat-sen](#)) and the Qing court. Both wanted Yuan on their side.

Wuchang Uprising and republic^{[[edit](#)]}

Yuan Shikai in uniform

The [Wuchang Uprising](#) took place on 10 October 1911 in [Hubei](#) province. The southern provinces subsequently declared their independence from the Qing court, but neither the northern

provinces nor the Beiyang Army had a clear stance for or against the rebellion. Both the Qing court and Yuan were fully aware that the Beiyang Army was the only Qing force powerful enough to quell the revolutionaries. The court requested Yuan's return on 27 October, but he repeatedly declined offers from the Qing court for his return, first as the [Viceroy of Huguang](#), and then as [Prime Minister of the Imperial Cabinet](#). Time was on Yuan's side, and Yuan waited, using his "foot ailment" as a pretext to his continual refusal.

After further pleas by the Qing Court, Yuan agreed and eventually left his village for Beijing on 30 October, becoming Prime Minister on 1 November 1911. Immediately after that he asked the Regent to withdraw from politics, which forced Zaifeng to resign as regent. This made way for Yuan to form a new, predominantly [Han Chinese](#), [cabinet](#) of confidants, with only one Manchu as Minister of Suzerainty. To further reward Yuan's loyalty to the court, the [Empress Dowager Longyu](#) offered Yuan the noble title Marquis of the First Rank (一等侯), an honour only previously given to 19th century General [Zeng Guofan](#) for his raising of the [Xiang Army](#) to suppress the [Taiping Rebellion](#). Meanwhile, in the [Battle of Yangxia](#), Yuan's forces recaptured [Hankou](#) and [Hanyang](#) from the revolutionaries. Yuan knew that complete suppression of the revolution would end his usefulness to the Qing regime. Instead of attacking [Wuchang](#), he began to negotiate with the revolutionaries.

Abdication of child emperor[\[edit\]](#)

The revolutionaries had elected [Sun Yat-sen](#) as the first Provisional [President of the Republic of China](#), but they were in a weak position militarily, so they negotiated with the Qing, using Yuan as an intermediary. Yuan arranged for the abdication of the child emperor [Pu Yi](#) in return for being granted the position of President of the Republic of China.^[6] Yuan was not present when the Abdication edict was issued by [Empress Dowager Longyu](#) on 12 February 1912.

Sun agreed to Yuan's presidency after some internal bickering, but asked that the capital be situated in [Nanjing](#). Yuan, however, wanted the geographic advantage of having the nation's capital close to his base of military power. Many theorized that [Cao Kun](#), one of his trusted subordinate Beiyang military commanders, fabricated a coup d'état in Beijing and [Tianjin](#), apparently under Yuan's orders, to provide an excuse for Yuan not to leave his [sphere of influence](#) in [Zhili](#) (present-day [Hebei](#) province). However, the claim that the coup was organized by Yuan has been challenged by others.^[18] The revolutionaries compromised again, and the capital of the new republic was established in Beijing. Yuan Shikai was elected Provisional President of the Republic of China by the Nanjing Provisional Senate on 14 February 1912, and sworn in on 10 March of that year.^{[19][20]}

Democratic elections[\[edit\]](#)

In February 1913, democratic elections were held for the [National Assembly](#) in which the [Kuomintang](#) (KMT – "Chinese Nationalist Party") scored a significant victory. [Song Jiaoren](#) of the KMT zealously supported a cabinet system and was widely regarded as a candidate for Prime Minister.

One of Song's main political goals was to ensure that the powers and independence of China's Parliament be properly protected from the influence of the office of the President. Song's goals in curtailing the office of the President conflicted with the interests of Yuan, who, by mid-1912, clearly dominated the provisional cabinet and was showing signs of a desire to hold overwhelming executive power. During Song's travels through China in 1912, he had openly and vehemently expressed the desire to limit the powers of the President in terms that often appeared openly critical of Yuan's ambitions. When the results of the 1913 elections indicated a clear victory for the KMT, it appeared that Song would be in a position to exercise a dominant role in

selecting the premier and cabinet, and the party could have proceeded to push for the election of a future president in a parliamentary setting. On 20 March 1913, Song Jiaoren was shot by a lone gunman in Shanghai, and died two days later. The trail of evidence led to the secretary of the cabinet and the provisional premier of Yuan's government. Although Yuan was considered by contemporary Chinese media sources as the man most likely behind the assassination, the main conspirators investigated by authorities were either themselves assassinated or disappeared mysteriously. For lack of evidence, Yuan was not implicated.^[21]

Becoming emperor

Tensions between the KMT and Yuan continued to intensify. After arriving in Peking, the elected Parliament attempted to gain control over Yuan, to develop a permanent constitution, and to hold a legitimate, open presidential election. Because he had authorized \$100 million of "reorganization loans" from a variety of foreign banks, the KMT in particular were highly critical of Yuan's handling of the national budget. Yuan's crackdown on the KMT began in 1913, with the suppression and bribery of KMT members in the two legislative chambers. Anti-Yuan revolutionaries also claimed Yuan orchestrated the collapse of the KMT internally and dismissed governors interpreted as being pro-KMT.^[22]

Second revolution^[edit]

Seeing the situation for his party worsen, Sun Yat-sen fled to Japan in August 1913, and called for a Second Revolution, this time against Yuan Shikai.^[23] Subsequently, Yuan gradually took over the government, using the military as the base of his power. He dissolved the national and provincial assemblies, and the House of Representatives and Senate were replaced by the newly formed "Council of State", with [Duan Qirui](#), his trusted Beiyang lieutenant, as Prime Minister. He relied on the American-educated [Tsai Tingkan](#) for English translation and connections with

western powers. Finally, Yuan had himself elected president to a five-year term, publicly labelled the KMT a seditious organization, ordered the KMT's dissolution, and evicted all its members from Parliament. The KMT's "Second Revolution" ended in failure as Yuan's troops achieved complete victory over revolutionary uprisings. Provincial governors with KMT loyalties who remained willingly submitted to Yuan. Because those commanders not loyal to Yuan were effectively removed from power, the Second Revolution cemented Yuan's power.^{[24][25]}

In January 1914, China's Parliament was formally dissolved. To give his government a semblance of legitimacy, Yuan convened a body of 66 men from his cabinet who, on 1 May 1914, produced a "constitutional compact" that effectively replaced China's provisional constitution. The new legal status quo gave Yuan, as president, practically unlimited powers over China's military, finances, foreign policy, and the rights of China's citizens. Yuan justified these reforms by stating that representative democracy had been proven inefficient by political infighting.^[26]

After his victory, Yuan reorganized the provincial governments. Each province was supported by a military governor (都督) as well as a civil authority, giving each governor control of their own army. This helped lay the foundations for the warlordism that crippled China over the next two decades.

During Yuan's presidency, a silver "dollar" (yuan in Chinese) carrying his portrait was introduced. This coin type was the first "dollar" coin of the central authorities of the Republic of China to be minted in significant quantities. It became a staple silver coin type during the first half of the 20th century and was struck for the last time as late as the 1950s. They were also extensively forged.^[27]

Japan's 21 demands[\[edit\]](#)

Main article: [Twenty-One Demands](#)

In 1914, Japan captured the German colony at [Qingdao](#). In January 1915, Japan sent a secret ultimatum, known as the [Twenty-one Demands](#), to Beijing. Japan demanded an extension of [extraterritoriality](#), the sale of businesses in debt to Japan and the cession of Qingdao to Japan, and virtual control of finance and the local police. When these demands were made public, hostility within China was expressed in nationwide anti-Japanese demonstrations and an effective national boycott of Japanese goods. With support from Britain and the United States Yuan secured Japan's dropping part five of the demands, which would have given Japan a general control of Chinese affairs. However he did accept the less onerous terms and that led to a decline in the popularity of Yuan's government.^{[\[28\]](#)}

Revival of hereditary monarchy[\[edit\]](#)

To build up his own authority, Yuan began to re-institute elements of state Confucianism. As the main proponent of reviving Qing state religious observances, Yuan effectively participated as emperor in rituals held at the Qing Temple of Heaven. In late 1915, rumors were floated of a popular consensus that the hereditary monarchy should be revived. With his power secure, many of Yuan's supporters, notably monarchist [Yang Du](#), advocated for a revival of the hereditary monarchy, asking Yuan to take on the title of Emperor. Yang reasoned that the Chinese masses had long been used to monarchic rule, the Republic had only been effective as a transitional phase to end Manchu rule, and China's political situation demanded the stability that only a dynastic monarchy could ensure. The American political scientist [Frank Johnson Goodnow](#) suggested a similar idea. Negotiators representing Japan had also offered to support Yuan's ambitions as one of the rewards for Yuan's support of the Twenty-One Demands.^{[\[29\]](#)}

On 20 November 1915, Yuan held a specially convened "Representative Assembly" which voted unanimously to offer Yuan the throne. On 12 December 1915, Yuan "accepted" the invitation and proclaimed himself Emperor of the Chinese Empire ([simplified Chinese](#): 中华帝国大皇帝; [traditional Chinese](#): 中華帝國大皇帝; [pinyin](#): *Zhōnghuá Dìguó Dà Huángdì*) under the [era name](#) of Hongxian ([simplified Chinese](#): 洪宪; [traditional Chinese](#): 洪憲; [pinyin](#): *Hóngxiàn*; i.e. *Constitutional Abundance*). The new [Empire of China](#) was to formally begin on 1 January 1916, when Yuan, the Hongxian Emperor, intended to conduct the accession rites. Soon after becoming emperor, the Hongxian Emperor placed an order with the former imperial potters for a 40,000-piece porcelain set costing 1.4 million yuan, a large jade seal, and two imperial robes costing 400,000 yuan each.^{[4][19]}

Public and international reactions to dynastic monarchy's revival^[edit]

The Hongxian Emperor expected widespread domestic and international support for his reign. British diplomats and bankers worked hard to help them succeed. They set up a five nation consortium that loaned his government £25 million in April 1913.^[30] However, he and his supporters had badly miscalculated. Many of the emperor's closest supporters abandoned him, and the solidarity of the emperor's Beiyang clique of military protégés dissolved. There were open protests throughout China denouncing the Hongxian Emperor. Foreign governments, including Japan, suddenly proved indifferent or openly hostile to him, not giving him the recognition anticipated.^[31] [Sun Yat-sen](#), who had fled to Tokyo and set up a base there, organized efforts to overthrow the Hongxian Emperor. The emperor's sons publicly fought over the title of "Crown Prince", and formerly loyal subordinates like [Duan Qirui](#) and [Xu Shichang](#) left him to create their own factions.

Abandonment of monarchy and death^[edit]

Faced with widespread opposition, the Hongxian Emperor repeatedly delayed the accession rites in order to appease his foes, but his prestige was irreparably damaged and province after province continued to voice disapproval. On 25 December 1915, [Yunnan](#)'s military governor, [Cai E](#), rebelled, launching the [National Protection War](#). The governor of [Guizhou](#) followed in January 1916, and [Guangxi](#) declared independence in March. Funding for the Hongxian Emperor's accession ceremony was cut on 1 March.

Yuan formally abandoned the empire on 22 March after being emperor for only 83 days; primarily due to these mounting revolts as well as declining health from [uremia](#). This was not enough for his enemies, who called for his resignation as president, causing more provinces to rebel. Yuan died of uremia at 10 a.m. on 6 June 1916, at the age of fifty-six.^{[19][31]}

Yuan's remains were moved to his home province and placed in a large mausoleum. In 1928, the tomb was looted by [Feng Yuxiang](#) and his soldiers during the [Northern Expedition](#).

Yuan had a wife and nine concubines, who bore him 17 sons, but only three were prominent: Prince [Yuan Keding](#), Prince [Yuan Kewen](#), and Prince Yuan Keliang.

Evaluation and legacy[

Historians in China have considered Yuan's rule mostly negatively. He introduced far-ranging modernizations in law and social areas, and trained and organized one of China's first modern armies. But the loyalty Yuan had fostered in the armed forces dissolved after his death, undermining the authority of the central government. Yuan financed his regime through large foreign loans, and is criticized for weakening Chinese morale and international prestige, and for allowing the Japanese to gain broad concessions over China.^{[32][33]}

[Jonathan Spence](#), however, notes in his influential survey that Yuan was "ambitious, both for his country and for himself", and that "even as he subverted the constitution, paradoxically he sought to build on late-Qing attempts at reforms and to develop institutions that would bring strong and stable government to China." To gain foreign confidence and end the hated system of extraterritoriality, Yuan strengthened the court system and invited foreign advisers to reform the penal system.^[34]

After Yuan's death, there was an effort by [Li Yuanhong](#) to revive the Republic by recalling the legislators who had been ejected in 1913, but this effort was confused and ineffective in asserting central control. Li lacked any support from the military. There was a short-lived effort in 1917 to [revive the Qing dynasty](#) led by the loyalist general [Zhang Xun](#), but his forces were defeated by rival warlords later that year.^[35]

After the collapse of Zhang's movement, all pretense of strength from the central government collapsed, and China descended into a period of warlordism. Over the next several decades, the offices of both the president and parliament became the tools of militarists, and the politicians in Peking became dependent on regional governors for their support and political survival. For this reason, Yuan is sometimes called "the Father of the Warlords". However, it is not accurate to attribute China's subsequent [age of warlordism](#) as a personal preference, since in his career as a military reformer he had attempted to forge a modern army based on the Japanese model. Throughout his lifetime, he demonstrated an understanding of staffing, military education, and regular transfers of officer personnel, combining these skills to create China's first modern military organisation. After his return to power in 1911, however, he seemed willing to sacrifice his legacy of military reform for imperial ambitions, and instead ruled by a combination of violence and bribery that destroyed the idealism of the early Republican movement.^[36]

In the CCTV Production [*Towards the Republic*](#), Yuan is portrayed through most of his early years as an able administrator, although a very skilled manipulator of political situations. His self-proclamation as Emperor is largely depicted as being influenced by external forces, especially that of his son, prince [Yuan Keding](#).

A [bixi](#) (stone tortoise) with a stele in honor of Yuan Shikai, which was installed in [Anyang's](#) Huanyuan Park soon after his death, was (partly) restored in 1993.^[37]

May Fourth Movement

The **May Fourth Movement** was an [anti-imperialist](#), cultural, and political movement which grew out of student protests in Beijing on 4 May 1919.

In retaliation to the Chinese government's weak response to the [Treaty of Versailles](#), students protested against the government's decision to allow [Japan](#) to retain territories in Shandong that had been surrendered by [Germany](#) after the [Siege of Tsingtao](#) in 1914. The demonstrations sparked nation-wide protests and spurred an upsurge in [Chinese nationalism](#), a shift towards political mobilization, a shift away from cultural activities, a move towards a [mass](#) base and a move away from traditional intellectual and political elites.

The May Fourth Movement was an anti-feudal movement in the form of an interweaving of new and old ideas, it was carried out step by step, not overnight. As [Wesleyan University](#) professor [Vera Schwarcz](#), said: "At the beginning of the May Fourth Movement, self-styled 'new youths' still saw themselves in terms of a traditional modal".^[1] Many radical, political, and social leaders of the next five decades emerged at this time. In a broader sense, the

term "May Fourth Movement" is often used to refer to the period during 1915–1921 more often called the "[New Culture Movement](#)".



"The atmosphere and political mood that emerged around 1919," in the words of [Oxford University](#) historian [Rana Mitter](#), "are at the center of a set of ideas that has shaped China's momentous twentieth century."^[2] The [Qing dynasty](#) had disintegrated in 1911, marking the end of thousands of years of powerful imperial rule, and theoretically ushered a new era in which political power rested with the people. However, China became a fragmented nation [dominated by warlords](#), who were more concerned with political power and regional armies than national interest. After the death of [Yuan Shikai](#) in 1916, the government in Beijing focused on suppressing internal dissent and could do little to counter foreign influence and control.^[3] The [March 1st Movement](#) in Korea in 1919, the [Russian Revolution](#) of 1917, defeats by foreign powers and the presence of [spheres of influence](#) inflamed [Chinese nationalism](#) among the emerging middle class and cultural leaders.

Leaders of the New Culture Movement believed that traditional Confucian values were responsible for the political weakness of the nation.^{[4][5]} Chinese nationalists called for a rejection of traditional values and the adoption of Western ideals of "Mr. Science" (賽先生; 赛先生; *sài xiānsheng*) and "Mr. Democracy" (德先生; *dé xiānsheng*) in place of "Mr. Confucius" in order to strengthen the new nation.^[6] These [iconoclastic](#) and anti-traditional views and programs have shaped China's politics and culture down until the present.^[7]

Shandong Problem[[edit](#)]

Main article: [Shandong Problem](#)

China had entered World War I on the side of the Allied [Triple Entente](#) in 1917. Although in that year 140,000 Chinese laborers (as a part of the [British Army](#), the [Chinese Labor Corps](#)) were sent to France,^[8] the [Versailles Treaty](#) of April 1919 awarded German rights in [Shandong Province](#) to Japan. The representatives of the Chinese government put forth the following requests:

1. abolition of all privileges of foreign powers in China, such as [extraterritoriality](#)
2. cancelling of the "[Twenty-One Demands](#)" with the Japanese
3. return to China of the territory and rights of [Shandong](#), which Japan had taken from Germany during World War I.

The Western Allies dominated the meeting at Versailles, and paid little heed to Chinese demands. Britain and France were primarily interested in punishing Germany. Although the United States promoted [Woodrow Wilson's Fourteen Points](#) and the ideals of [self-determination](#), they were unable to advance these ideals in the face of stubborn resistance by [David Lloyd George](#), [Georges Clemenceau](#) and the U.S. Congress. American advocacy of [self-determination](#) at the [League of Nations](#) was attractive to Chinese intellectuals, but their failure to follow through was seen as a betrayal. Chinese diplomatic failure at the [Paris Peace Conference](#) touched off the May Fourth Movement, and became known as the "Shandong Problem".

Participants^{[[edit](#)]}

On May 4, 1919, the May Fourth Movement, as a student patriotic movement, was initiated by a group of Chinese students full of blood and passion for protesting the contents of the Paris Peace

Conference. Under the pressure of the May Fourth Movement, the Chinese delegation refused to sign the [Versailles Treaty](#).

The original participants of the May Fourth Movement were students in [Paris](#) and Some in Beijing. They joined forces to strike or took to the streets to strike crudely to express their dissatisfaction with the government. Later, some advanced students in Shanghai and Guangzhou joined the protest movement, gradually forming a wave of mass student strikes across China. Until June 1919, the Beijing government carried out the "June 3" arrests, arresting nearly 1,000 students one after another, but this did not suppress the patriotic student movement but angered the whole Chinese people, leading to a greater revolutionary storm. Shanghai workers went on strike, and businessmen went on strike to support students' patriotic movement across the country. The Chinese working class entered the political arena through the May Fourth Movement.

With the emergence of the Chinese working class, the May Fourth Movement developed to a new stage. The center of the movement shifted from Beijing to [Shanghai](#), and the working class replaced students as the main force of the movement. The Shanghai working class staged a strike of unprecedented scale. The growing scale of the national strike and the increasing number of its participants led to the country's paralysis of economic life and posed a serious threat to the northern warlord government. The success of the May Fourth Movement was unexpected by the imperialists and the reactionaries at that time. The working class took the place of the students to stand up and resist. The support for this movement throughout the country reflected the enthusiasm of nationalism, which was also the foundation for the development and expansion of the May Fourth Movement step by step. As Benjamin mentioned: " [Nationalism](#) which was, of course, a dominant passion of the May Fourth experience was not so much a separate ideology as

a common disposition."^[9] This is not unreasonable, because unlike western countries, which value [democracy](#), China has always attached great importance to nationalism. Many reform movements in Chinese history have been carried out with nationalistic fervor.

Days of protest[\[edit\]](#)

On the morning of 4 May 1919, student representatives from thirteen different local universities met in Beijing and drafted five resolutions:

1. to oppose the granting of Shandong to the Japanese under former German concessions.
2. to draw and increase awareness of China's precarious position to the masses in China.
3. to recommend a large-scale gathering in Beijing.
4. to promote the creation of a Beijing student union.
5. to hold a demonstration that afternoon in protest to the terms of the Treaty of Versailles.

On the afternoon of May 4 over 4,000 students of [Yenching University](#), [Peking University](#) and other schools marched from many points to gather in front of [Tiananmen](#). They shouted such slogans as "struggle for the sovereignty externally, get rid of the national traitors at home", "do away with the [Twenty-One Demands](#)", and "don't sign the [Versailles Treaty](#)".

They voiced their anger at the Allied betrayal of China, denounced the government's spineless inability to protect Chinese interests, and called for a [boycott of Japanese products](#). Demonstrators insisted on the resignation of three Chinese officials they accused of being collaborators with the Japanese. After burning the residences of these officials and beating some of their servants, student protesters were arrested, jailed, and severely beaten.^[10]

The next day, students in Beijing as a whole went on strike and in the larger cities across China, students, patriotic merchants, and workers joined protests. The demonstrators skillfully appealed to the newspapers and sent representatives to carry the word across the country. From early June, workers and businessmen in Shanghai also went on strike as the center of the movement shifted from Beijing to Shanghai. Chancellors from thirteen universities arranged for the release of student prisoners, and Cai Yuanpei, the principal of Peking University resigned in protest.

Newspapers, magazines, citizen societies, and chambers of commerce offered support for the students. Merchants threatened to withhold tax payments if China's government remained obstinate.^[11] In Shanghai, a general strike of merchants and workers nearly devastated the entire Chinese economy.^[10] Under intense public pressure, the Beijing government released the arrested students and dismissed [Cao Rulin](#), [Zhang Zongxiang](#) and [Lu Zongyu](#) that had been accused of being collaborators with the Japanese. Chinese representatives in Paris refused to sign the Versailles Treaty: the May Fourth Movement won an initial victory which was primarily symbolic, since Japan for the moment retained control of the Shandong Peninsula and the islands in the Pacific. Even the partial success of the movement exhibited the ability of China's social classes across the country to successfully collaborate given proper motivation and leadership.^[10]

Birth of Chinese communism^[edit]

For many years, the orthodox view in the People's Republic of China was that after the demonstrations of 1919 and their subsequent suppression, the discussion of possible policy changes became more and more politically realistic. People like Chen Duxiu and [Li Dazhao](#) shifted more to the left and were among the leading founders of the [Communist Party of China](#) in 1921, whilst other intellectuals, such as the [anarchist](#) writer and agitator, Ba Jin also

took part in the movement. Originally [voluntarist](#) or [nihilist](#) figures like [Li Shicen](#) and [Zhu Qianzhi](#) made similar turns to the left as the 1920s saw China become increasingly turbulent.^[12]

In 1939, [Mao Zedong](#) claimed that the May Fourth Movement was a stage leading toward the fulfillment of his vast [Communist Revolution](#):

The May Fourth Movement twenty years ago marked a new stage in China's bourgeois-democratic revolution against imperialism and feudalism. The cultural reform movement which grew out of the May Fourth Movement was only one of the manifestations of this revolution. With the growth and development of new social forces in that period, a powerful camp made its appearance in the bourgeois-democratic revolution, a camp consisting of the working class, the student masses and the new national bourgeoisie. Around the time of the May Fourth Movement, hundreds of thousands of students courageously took their place in the van. In these respects the May Fourth Movement went a step beyond the Revolution of 1911.^[13]

The May Fourth Movement served as an intellectual turning point in China; it was a seminal event that radicalized Chinese philosophical thought. Western-style liberal democracy had previously had a degree of traction amongst Chinese intellectuals. Still, after the [Versailles Treaty](#) (which was viewed as a betrayal of China's interests), it lost much of its attractiveness. [Woodrow Wilson's Fourteen Points](#), despite being rooted in [moralism](#), were also seen as Western-centric and hypocritical.^[12]

October Revolution of Russia

Many in the Chinese intellectual communities believed that the United States had done little to convince the imperialist powers (mainly Britain, France, and Japan) to adhere to the Fourteen

Points and observed that the United States had declined to join the [League of Nations](#). As a result, they turned away from the Western liberal democratic model. The victory of the [Russian October Revolution](#) in 1917 gave direction to the development goals of the Chinese working class. Marxism began to take hold in Chinese intellectual thought, particularly among those already on the Left. During this time, that communism was studied seriously by some Chinese intellectuals such as Chen Duxiu and [Li Dazhao](#).^[14]

Historical significance^[edit]

Scholars rank the New Culture and May Fourth Movements as significant turning points ,as David said: "was the turning point in China's search for literary modernity.",^[15] along with the abolition of the civil service system in 1905 and the overthrow of the monarchy in 1911. Participants at the time, such as Hu Shih, referred to this era as the Chinese [Renaissance](#) because there was an intense focus on science and experimentation.^[16] In [Chinese literature](#), the May Fourth Movement is regarded as the watershed after which the use of the vernacular language (*baihua*) gained currency over and eventually replaced the use of [Literary Chinese](#) in literary works. Intellectuals were driven toward expressing themselves using the spoken tongue under the slogan 我手写我口 ('my hand writes [what] my mouth [speaks]'), although the change was actually gradual: Hu Shih had already argued for the use of the modern vernacular language in literature in his 1917 essay "Preliminary discussion on literary reform" (文学改良刍议), while the first short story written exclusively in the vernacular language, *[The True Story of Ah Q](#)* by Lu Xun, was not published until 1921.

The challenge to traditional Chinese values, however, was also met with strong opposition, especially from the [Nationalist Party](#). From their perspective, the movement destroyed the positive elements of Chinese tradition and placed a heavy emphasis on direct political actions and radical attitudes, characteristics associated with the emerging Chinese Communist Party. On the other hand, the Communist Party, whose two founders, Li Dazhao and Chen Duxiu, were leaders of the movement, viewed it more favorably, although remaining suspicious of the early phase which emphasized the role of enlightened intellectuals, not revolution.^[17] In its broader sense, the May Fourth Movement led to the establishment of radical intellectuals who went on to mobilize peasants and workers into the Communist party and gain the organizational strength that would solidify the success of the [Communist Revolution](#).^[11]

The May 4th Movement was a thorough struggle against imperialism and feudalism. Before the May 4th Movement, many revolutions were explored how to save the country and the people, such as the Reform movement of 1898 and the Revolution of 1911. But since China was still semi-colonial and semi-feudal, these revolutions could not save China in a real sense. But under the leadership of the advanced intellectuals, the May 4th Movement struck at the imperialist forces.

During the May 4th Movement, a group of intellectuals with communist ideas grew steadily, such as [Chen Tanqiu](#), [Zhou Enlai](#), Chen Duxiu, and others, who gradually appreciated [Marxism's](#) power. These people vigorously propagated Marxism among intellectuals. Thus, under the guidance of the progressive world outlook, the working class and the peasants gradually developed. This promoted the [Sinicization](#) of Marxism and provided a great theme for the birth of the [Communist Party of China](#) and [socialism with Chinese characteristics](#). It has enabled China's development towards a modern society.

Other Significances[[edit](#)]

Cultural[[edit](#)]

The May Fourth Movement was not a Renaissance, but an Enlightenment movement. The May Fourth Movement focused on opposing the old culture and promoting the new culture. As a continuation of the New Cultural movement, the May Fourth Movement greatly influenced the cultural field. The slogans of "democracy" and "science" advocated in the New Culture Movement were designed to attack the old feudal culture and promote the new culture. Influenced by the New Culture Movement, the May Fourth Movement combined the spirit of democracy and science and inspired the society to change continuously under the leadership of the main force of the May Fourth Movement. This purpose can be summed up in a sentence from David: "was the turning point in China's search for literary modernity.".^[15] [Lu Xun's](#) "Diary of a Madman" and [Hu Shi's](#) vernacular Chinese show the writer's ideological and cultural changes during the May Fourth Movement. More ordinary people also began to try to get in touch with new cultures and learn excellent foreign cultures. Joseph once said: "This intellectual ferment had already had an effect in altering the outlook of China's new youth.".^[18] This new cultural atmosphere was of great help to China to abandon feudalism and promote modern literature development. After the May Fourth Movement, the [Chinese modern female literature](#) became literature with modern humanistic spirit, taking women as the subject of experience, thinking, aesthetics, and speech.

Diplomacy[[edit](#)]

Before the May Fourth Movement, Chinese diplomats had a gentle approach to many unequal contracts. China's diplomatic backpedals have emboldened foreign exploiters, who see China as a weakling who does not know how to refuse. The first direct effect of the May Fourth

Movement was to get the [Beiyang government](#) to refuse to sign contracts that were unfavorable to China. The move shocked many western countries and made them realize that the weak China, which had only run away from it, had begun to stand up to it. Since then, China has changed its usual diplomatic policy of compromise and compromise and started to strive for the country's interests.

Economic[\[edit\]](#)

During the movement, anger erupted in China against Japan because the Paris peace Treaty gave it the right to occupy the [Shandong Peninsula](#). Many members of the society and students joined together to publicize the boycott of Japanese products. A wave of a boycott of Japanese products began to rise among the Chinese masses. When Japanese products were suppressed, China's national industry developed rapidly with the government's support, which promoted the rapid development of China's national economy.

Overall[\[edit\]](#)

"They exhorted the Chinese people to place China's national interest above all other considerations."^[18] From this we can see that a fundamental significance of the May Fourth Movement is that it made more Chinese people start to focus on China's overall situation instead of being limited to China's internal contradictions.

Criticism and resistance[\[edit\]](#)

Although the Movement was highly influential, many of the intellectuals at the time opposed the anti-traditional message and many political figures ignored it. "this limited May Fourth individualist enlightenment did not lead the individual against the collective of the nation-state, as full-scale, modern Western individualism would potentially do."^[19]

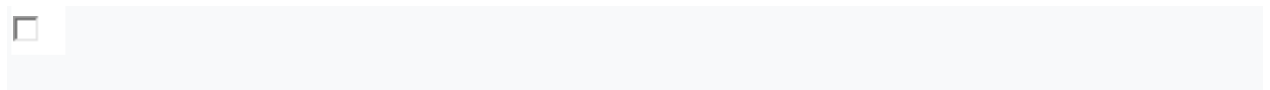
[Chiang Kai-shek](#), as a nationalist and Confucianist, was against the iconoclasm of the May Fourth Movement. As an anti-imperialist, he was skeptical of western ideas and literature. He and [Dr. Sun Yat-sen](#) criticized these May Fourth intellectuals for corrupting the morals of youth.^[20] When the Nationalist party came to power under Chiang's rule, it carried out the opposite agenda. The [New Life Movement](#) promoted Confucianism, and the Kuomintang purged China's education system of western ideas, introducing Confucianism into the curriculum. Textbooks, exams, degrees, and educational instructors were all controlled by the state, as were all universities.^[21]

Some conservative philosophers and intellectuals opposed any change, but many more accepted or welcomed the challenge from the West but wanted to base new systems on Chinese values, not imported ones. These figures included [Liang Shuming](#), [Liu Shipei](#), [Tao Xisheng](#), [Xiong Shili](#), [Zhang Binglin](#) and Lu Xun's brother, [Zhou Zuoren](#).^[22] In later years, others developed critiques, including figures as diverse as [Lin Yutang](#), [Qian Mu](#), [Xu Fuguan](#), and [Yu Yingshi](#). Li Changzhi believed that the May Fourth Movement Copied foreign culture and lost the essence of its own culture. ([Ta Kung Pao](#), 1942). This is consistent with what Vera has said: "critically-minded intellectuals were accused of eroding national self-confidence, or more simple, of not being Chinese enough."^[23]

[Chinese Muslims](#) ignored the May Fourth movement by continuing to teach Classical Chinese and literature with the Qur'an and Arabic along with officially mandated contemporary subjects at the "Normal Islamic School of Wanxian."^[24] Ha Decheng did a Classical Chinese translation of the Quran.^[25] Arabic, vernacular Chinese, Classical Chinese and the Qur'an were taught in Ningxia Islamic schools funded by Muslim General [Ma Fuxiang](#).^[26]

China during World War I

China participated in **World War I** from 1917 to 1918 in an alliance with the Entente Powers. China never sent troops overseas, however, 140,000 Chinese labourers (as a part of the British Army, the Chinese Labour Corps) served for both British and French forces before the end of the war.^[1] Although neutral since 1914, Duan Qirui, Premier of the Republic of China, spearheaded Chinese involvement in World War I. Duan wanted to integrate China with Europe and the United States by declaring on the side of the Allies against the Central Powers.^[2] On 14 August 1917, China ended its neutrality, declaring war on the German Empire and the Austria-Hungary Empire.^[3]



China was neutral at the start of the war, as the country was financially chaotic, unstable politically, and militarily weak.^[4] In 1914, Japanese and British military forces liquidated Germany's holdings in China. Yuan Shikai secretly offered British diplomat John Jordan 50,000 troops to retake the German military colony in Qingdao, but he was refused.^[5] Japan went on to capture Qingdao and occupy portions of Shandong Province.^[6]

In January 1915, Japan issued an ultimatum called the Twenty-One Demands to the Chinese government. They included Japanese control of former German rights, 99-year leases in southern Manchuria, an interest in steel mills, and concessions regarding railways.^[7] After China rejected Japan's initial proposal, a reduced set of "Thirteen Demands" was transmitted in May, with a two-day deadline for response. Yuan Shikai, competing with other local warlords to become the ruler of all China, was not in a position to risk war with Japan, and accepted appeasement. The final form of the treaty was signed by both parties on 25 May 1915.^[8]

Events of 1916^[edit]

As China was initially not a belligerent nation, her citizens were not allowed by the Chinese government to participate in the fighting. However, in 1916, the French government began a scheme to recruit Chinese to serve as non-military personnel. A contract for China to supply 50,000 labourers was agreed upon on 14 May 1916, and the first contingent left [Tientsin](#) for [Dagu](#) and [Marseille](#) in July 1916. The British government also signed an agreement with the Chinese authorities to supply labourers. The recruiting was launched by the War Committee in London in 1916, who formed the Chinese Labour Corps.^[9] A recruiting base was established in [Weihaiwei](#) (then a British colony) on 31 October 1916.^[1]

The Chinese Labour Corps comprised Chinese men who came mostly from Shandong,^[10] and to a lesser extent from [Liaoning](#), [Jilin](#), [Jiangsu](#), [Hubei](#), [Hunan](#), [Anhui](#) and [Gansu provinces](#).^[9] Most travelled to Europe via the Pacific and by [Canada](#).^[1] The tens of thousands of volunteers were driven by the poverty of the region and China's political uncertainties, and also lured by the generosity of the wages offered by the British. Each volunteer received an embarkment fee of 20 yuan, followed by 10 yuan a month to be paid over to his family in China.^[2]

Workers cleared mines, repaired roads and railways, and built munitions depots. Some worked in armaments factories and in naval shipyards. At the time they were seen as cheap labour, not even allowed out of camp to fraternise locally, and dismissed as mere [coolies](#).^[11]

Events of 1917

On 17 February 1917, the [SS *Athos*](#) was sunk by the German U-boat [SM U-65](#). The ship carried 900 Chinese workers, 543 of which were killed, and China subsequently severed diplomatic ties

with Germany in March.^[12] The Chinese officially declared war on the Central Powers on 14 August, one month after the failed [Manchu Restoration](#). German and Austro-Hungarian [concessions in Tientsin](#) and [Hankow](#) were swiftly occupied by China.^[13]

By entering the war, Duan Qirui, Premier of the Republic of China, hoped to gain international prestige from China's new allies. He sought the cancellation of many of the indemnities and concessions that China had been forced to sign in the past.^[3] The major aim was to earn China a place at the post-war bargaining table, to regain control over the Shandong Peninsula, and to shrink Japan's [sphere of influence](#).^[4]

After the Chinese declaration of war, the [Labour Department of the Chinese government](#) began officially organizing the recruitment of Chinese nationals as labourers.^[9] The government considered sending a token combat unit to the [Western Front](#), but never did so.^[14]

Events of 1918

The [USS *Monocacy* incident](#) occurred in January 1918. It involved an attack on the American [gunboat *Monocacy*](#) by Chinese soldiers along the [Yangtze River](#). The incident left one American dead. An apology was issued by the Chinese government after protests broke out in [Shanghai](#), and \$25,000 in reparations was paid to the United States. It was one of multiple incidents at the time involving armed Chinese firing on foreign vessels.^[15]

Although no Chinese troops saw combat in the theaters of World War I, 2,300 Chinese troops were sent to [Vladivostok](#) in August 1918 to protect Chinese interests during the [Siberian intervention](#). The Chinese army fought against both [Bolsheviks](#) and [Cossacks](#). This conflict is considered part of the [Russian Civil War](#).^[16]

After the [Armistice of 11 November 1918](#), most of the Chinese labourers serving abroad were shipped home.^[17]

Aftermath^[edit]

Celebration of the ending of World War I in Beijing

When the war ended, some Chinese labourers remained employed to clear mines, to recover the bodies of soldiers, and fill in miles of trenches.^[11] While most eventually returned to China, some remained in Europe after the 1920 collapse of the [National Industrial Bank of China](#). About 5,000 to 7,000 stayed in France, forming the nucleus of [later Chinese communities](#) in [Paris](#).^[17]

The number of Chinese nationals who died in the war is unknown, and estimations are controversial. European records put the number at only 2,000, while Chinese scholars estimate the number to be as high as 20,000.^[18] While most died of the [Spanish flu epidemic of 1918](#), there were also victims of shelling, landmines, and poor treatment. Their remains are interred in dozens of European graveyards. The cemetery at [Noyelles-sur-Mer](#), for example, contains 838 Chinese gravestones.^[11]

Paris Peace Conference^[edit]

China sent a delegation to the [Paris Peace Conference](#). China was only given two seats, as they had not supplied any combat troops.^[5] The Chinese delegation was led by [Lou Tseng-Tsiang](#), who was accompanied by [Wellington Koo](#) and [Cao Rulin](#). They demanded for the [Shandong Peninsula to be returned to China](#), and for an end to imperialist institutions such as [extraterritoriality](#), [legation](#) guards, and foreign leaseholds. The Western powers refused these

claims, and allowed Japan to retain territories in Shandong that had been surrendered by Germany after the Siege of Qingdao.

The apparent weak response of the Chinese government led to a surge in Chinese nationalism. Widespread student protests began in China on 4 May 1919, which were later known as the [May Fourth Movement](#). This pressured the government into refusing to sign the [Treaty of Versailles](#). Thus, the Chinese delegation at the conference was the only one not to sign the treaty at the signing ceremony.^[]

Twenty-One Demands

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This article is about the Japanese demands on the Chinese government in 1915. For Solidarity workers' demands of 1980, see [21 demands of MKS](#).

"21 Demands" redirects here. For other uses, see [21 Demands \(disambiguation\)](#).

The **Twenty-One Demands** ([Japanese](#): 対華21ヶ条要求, [romanized](#): *Taika Nijūikkajō Yōkyū*; [simplified Chinese](#): 二十一条; [traditional Chinese](#): 二十一條; [pinyin](#): *Èrshíyī tiáo*) was a set of demands made during the [First World War](#) by the [Empire of Japan](#) under [Prime Minister Ōkuma Shigenobu](#) to the [government](#) of the [Republic of China](#) on 18 January 1915. The secret demands would greatly extend Japanese control of China. It would keep the former German areas it had conquered at the start of World War I in 1914. It would be strong in [Manchuria](#) and South Mongolia. It would have an expanded role in railways. The most extreme demands (in section 5) would give Japan a decisive voice in finance, policing, and

government affairs. The last part would make China in effect a protectorate of Japan, and thereby reduce Western influence. Japan was in a strong position, as the Western powers were in a stalemated world war with Germany. Britain and Japan had [a military alliance since 1902](#), and in 1914 London had asked Tokyo to enter the war. Beijing published the secret demands and appealed to Washington and London. They were sympathetic and forced Tokyo to drop section 5. In the final 1916 settlement, Japan gave up its fifth set of demands. It gained a little in China, but lost a great deal of prestige and trust in Britain and the U.S.^[1]

The Chinese public responded with a spontaneous nationwide boycott of Japanese goods; Japan's exports to China fell drastically. Britain was affronted and no longer trusted Japan as an ally. With the First World War underway, Japan's position was strong and Britain's was weak; nevertheless, Britain (and the United States) forced Japan to drop the fifth set of demands that would have given Japan a large measure of control over the entire Chinese economy and ended the [Open Door Policy](#).^[2] Japan and China reached a series of agreements which ratified the first four sets of goals on 25 May 1915.



Japan had gained a large [sphere of influence](#) in [northern China](#) and [Manchuria](#) through its victories in the [First Sino-Japanese War](#) and the [Russo-Japanese War](#), and had thus joined the ranks of the European [imperialist](#) powers in their scramble to establish political and economic domination over Imperial China under the [Qing dynasty](#). With the overthrow of the Qing dynasty in the [Xinhai Revolution](#), and the establishment of the new Republic of China, Japan saw an opportunity to further expand its position in China.^[3]

The German Empire was in control of the [Shandong province](#) as part of the [Kiautschou Bay concession](#) since 1898. With the onset of the First World War, Japan declared war against Germany on 23 August 1914. Japanese and British forces quickly seized all German holdings in the Far East, after the [Siege of Tsingtao](#).^[*citation needed*]

Initial negotiations^{[[edit](#)]}

Japan, under [Prime Minister Ōkuma Shigenobu](#) and [Foreign Minister Katō Takaaki](#), drafted the initial list of Twenty-One Demands, which were reviewed by the *genrō* and [Emperor Taishō](#), and approved by the [Diet](#). This list was presented by the diplomat [Hioki Eki](#) in a private audience to President [Yuan Shikai](#) of the [Beiyang government](#) on January 18, 1915,^{[[4](#)][\[\[5\]\(#\)\]\[\\[\\[6\\]\\(#\\)\\]\\[\\\[\\\[7\\\]\\\(#\\\)\\\]\\]\\(#\\)\]\(#\)](#)} with warnings of dire consequences if China were to reject them.

The Twenty One Demands were divided into five groups:^{[[8](#)]}

- Group 1 (four demands) confirmed Japan's recent seizure of German ports and operations in [Shandong Province](#), and expanded Japan's sphere of influence over the railways, coasts and major cities of the province.
- Group 2 (seven demands) pertained to Japan's [South Manchuria Railway Zone](#), extending the leasehold over the territory for 99 years, and expanding Japan's sphere of influence in southern [Manchuria](#) and eastern [Inner Mongolia](#), to include rights of settlement and [extraterritoriality](#), appointment of financial and administrative officials to the government and priority for Japanese investments in those areas. Japan demanded access to Inner Mongolia for raw materials, as a manufacturing site, and as a strategic buffer against Russian encroachment in Korea.^{[[9](#)]}

- Group 3 (two demands) gave Japan control of the Han-Ye-Ping ([Hanyang](#), [Daye](#), and [Pingxiang](#)) mining and metallurgical complex in central China; it was deep in debt to Japan.
- Group 4 (one demand) barred China from giving any further coastal or island concessions to foreign powers.
- Group 5 (seven demands) was the most aggressive. China was to hire Japanese advisors who could take effective control of China's finance and police. Japan would be empowered to build three major railways, and also Buddhist temples and schools. Japan would gain effective control of [Fujian](#), across the [Taiwan Strait](#) from [Taiwan](#), which had been ceded to Japan in 1895.

Knowing the negative reaction "Group 5" would cause, Japan initially tried to keep its contents secret. The Chinese government attempted to stall for as long as possible and leaked the full contents of the Twenty-One Demands to European powers in the hope that due to a perceived threat to their own political and economic spheres of interest, they would help contain Japan.

Japanese ultimatum[[edit](#)]

After China rejected Japan's revised proposal on 26 April 1915, the *genrō* intervened and deleted ‘Group 5’ from the document, as these had proved to be the most objectionable to the Chinese government. A reduced set of "Thirteen Demands" was transmitted on May 7 in the form of an ultimatum, with a two-day deadline for response. Yuan Shikai, competing with other local [warlords](#) to become the ruler of all China, was not in a position to risk war with Japan, and accepted [appeasement](#), a tactic followed by his successors. The final form of the treaty was signed by both parties on May 25, 1915.^[10]

[Katō Takaaki](#) publicly admitted that the ultimatum was invited by Yuan to save face with the Chinese people in conceding to the Demands. American Minister [Paul Reinsch](#) reported to the US State Department that the Chinese were surprised at the leniency of the ultimatum, as it demanded much less than they had already committed themselves to concede.^{[[citation needed](#)]}

Consequences^{[[edit](#)]}

Further information: [Shandong Problem](#)

The results of the revised final (Thirteen Demands) version of the Twenty-One Demands were far more negative for Japan than positive. Without "Group 5", the new treaty gave Japan little more than it already had in China.^{[[citation needed](#)]}

On the other hand, the United States expressed strongly negative reactions to Japan's rejection of the [Open Door Policy](#). In the Bryan Note issued by Secretary of State [William Jennings Bryan](#) on 13 March 1915, the U.S., while affirming Japan's "special interests" in Manchuria, Mongolia and Shandong, expressed concern over further encroachments to Chinese sovereignty.^[11]

Great Britain, [Japan's closest ally](#), expressed concern over what was perceived as Japan's overbearing, bullying approach to diplomacy, and the British Foreign Office in particular was unhappy with Japanese attempts to establish what would effectively be a Japanese [protectorate](#) over all of China.^[12]

Afterwards, Japan and the United States looked for a compromise; as a result, the [Lansing–Ishii Agreement](#) was concluded in 1917. It was approved by the [Paris Peace Conference](#) in 1919.^{[[citation needed](#)]}

In China, the overall political impact of Japan's actions was highly negative, creating a considerable amount of public [ill-will towards Japan](#), contributing to the [May Fourth Movement](#), and a significant upsurge in [nationalism](#).^[13]

Japan continued to push for outright control over Shandong Province and won European diplomatic recognition for their claim at the [Treaty of Versailles](#) (despite the refusal of the Chinese delegation to sign the treaty). This, in turn, provoked ill-will from the United States government, as well as widespread hostility within China; a large-scale boycott against Japanese goods was just one effect. In 1922, the U.S. brokered a solution: China was awarded nominal sovereignty over all of Shandong, while in practice Japan's economic dominance continued.^[14]