

**In the style of OCR A**

'The 1911 revolution was an incomplete revolution.' How far do you agree?

**Exam tips**

The cross-references are designed to take you straight to the material that will help you to answer the question.

This question asks you to examine the nature of the 1911 revolution, not tell the story of what happened. Do the former and you will score high marks. Do the latter and you will score low marks. Train yourself to look for the key words and phrases in a question – and take a highlighter pen into the exam to pick them out on the question paper. These words and phrases tell you where to focus your attack. In this case, there are three: '1911 revolution', 'incomplete revolution' and 'How far do you agree?' The first tells you the question's topic. The second tells you the question's angle. The third tells you what kind of answer to give. So your task is to judge how far the revolution went and decide how far it left important areas alone. 'How far ...' demands decisions. You are judging the 1911 revolution.

Bringing down the ancient Manchu dynasty was certainly significant (page 19). So too was introducing a constitutional republic (pages 19–20 and 26). Together, they represented a major revolution, so say so. Be clear in your answer that a revolution did take place. But your answer needs balance, so examine also what did not happen. A weak emperor was replaced with a warlord as a powerful president. Yuan Shikai was a dictator in a weak republic. Sun Yatsen's ideas were not followed. China did not become a democracy. Representative government – which Sun saw as vital if China was to modernise and join the Western powers – was not introduced. Your judgement comes in assessing the balance between those two sides. China had already started to modernise. Was democracy needed as well? China had no such political tradition. Did a country as big as China need a powerful central leader to pull it into the modern era? If the answer to that is 'yes', the 1911 revolution was not incomplete.

# 2

## Warlords, Nationalists and Communists 1912–28

**POINTS TO CONSIDER**

The collapse of the Qing and the creation of the Republic brought not peace but increased conflict to China. Sun Yatsen's Nationalists had hoped to take power, but they were unable to stop northern-based Yuan Shikai holding power between 1912 and 1916. However, during his five years in office, Yuan solved none of China's basic problems. His death in 1916 ushered in the chaotic period of the warlords during which central government authority became enfeebled. Internal disruption and humiliation at the hands of the foreign powers stimulated an intense nationalism, which culminated in 1919 in a series of demonstrations known as the 4 May Movement. It was also in 1919 that a number of revolutionaries, enchanted by the example of the Russian Revolution in 1917, embraced Marxism. Two years later in 1921, a group of them founded the Chinese Communist Party (CCP). Within three years the Communists had joined the Guomindang (GMD) in a United Front, committed to the defeat of the warlords. These developments are studied under the following headings:

- The rule of Yuan Shikai 1912–16
- The warlord era 1916–27
- The 4 May Movement 1919–25
- The Nationalists under Sun Yatsen 1912–25
- The founding of the Chinese Communist Party 1921
- The GMD–CCP United Front 1924–7

**Key dates**

1912		Manchu abdication Sun Yatsen ceded presidency of the Republic to Yuan Shikai Guomindang formed
1912–16		Yuan Shikai's rule in China
1913		Yuan negotiated a large international loan for China
1914		Outbreak of the First World War
1915		Japan's 21 Demands
1916	January	Yuan became emperor
	March	Yuan renounced the throne
	June	Death of Yuan



1916–27	Warlord era
1917	June Failed attempt to restore Qing dynasty China joined Allies in the First World War Sun Yatsen's GMD government set up in Guangzhou
1918	Sino-Japanese military alliance
1919	4 May Movement began Reformation of the GMD
1920	GMD's southern base established in Guangzhou
1920–5	Sun Yatsen leader of the GMD
1921	July Creation of the Chinese Communist Party
1923	Pact of friendship between Moscow and the GMD
1924	Founding of the Whampoa Military Academy USSR's seizure of Outer Mongolia GMD-CCP United Front
1925	Death of Sun Yatsen 30 May Incident
1926–8	Northern Expedition

## 1 | The Rule of Yuan Shikai 1912–16

### Yuan becomes president

Soon after the Manchu abdication, Sun Yatsen's Alliance League declared itself to be a **parliamentary party** and adopted the name Guomindang (GMD). Aware of what little power he and his party had in the north of China, Sun conceded the presidency to Yuan Shikai. This was not an act of generosity. Sun's hope was that Yuan would come south to **Nanjing** to set up a new government. Sun calculated that once Yuan was away from his power base in Beijing it would be much easier to control him and oblige him to honour his commitment to the Republic. It was precisely for that reason that Yuan was determined to stay put. His authority was in the north and he was not prepared to weaken it by an ill-judged move. A Nanjing delegation sent to Beijing to provide him with a presidential escort for his journey south had to return without him.

The Republicans under Sun Yatsen could do little to restrict Yuan at this stage. Their influence was limited to parts of southern China, whereas the centre of government and administration was in the north where Yuan held sway. The plain fact was that Sun Yatsen's Republicans had been outmanoeuvred. They could, of course, have refused to recognise Yuan's presidency. But this would have been no more than a gesture. Whatever the GMD's claims to be a national party, they were a

### Key question

What problems confronted Yuan Shikai as president of the Republic?

Manchu abdication: 1912

Sun Yatsen ceded presidency of the Republic to Yuan Shikai: 1912

### Parliamentary party

One willing to work within the Republican constitution.

### Nanjing

One of the GMD's major strongholds in central China.

Key dates

Key terms

Key dates

Guomindang formed: 1912

Yuan Shikai's rule in China: 1912–16

Yuan negotiated a large international loan for China: 1913

Key terms

### Secret society

An organisation which restricts its membership, conceals its activities from the public and often acts outside the law.

### Consortium

A group of financiers drawn from France, Britain, Germany, Russia, Japan and the USA.

### Dollar diplomacy

America's insistence on free trade and fair exchange in international commercial and financial dealings.

regional influence only. Moreover, unused to open political activity, they continued to operate as the **secret society** they had been before the revolution. This was evident in their collaboration with the underworld gangs in China's cities. As Sun Yatsen and some of his more astute supporters acknowledged, the GMD's naivety and lack of experience of democratic politics restricted them to a minor role in the early years of the Republic.

### China's foreign loan 1913

Yuan was strong enough to overcome criticism and resistance from the GMD. A striking example occurred in 1913 when Yuan, desperate for means to finance his government, completed the negotiation of a large foreign loan. To secure the money, Yuan Shikai had to accept the demands of an international banking **Consortium** which had been originally set up in 1911 in the final days of the Qing dynasty. The USA had been instrumental in the formation of the Consortium as part of its **dollar diplomacy**, a modification of the open door doctrine (see page 10). To further America's financial interests, US President Taft had personally contacted the Chinese government in 1909 to urge them to accept increased American investment.



After the abdication of the Qing, Republican troops went round cutting off the pigtails of Chinese men. What was this act meant to symbolise?



In 1913, the Consortium eventually offered a loan of \$100 million (equivalent to £25 million), but on terms that required China to pledge its future tax revenues as **security** and to place the administration of Chinese finances in the hands of foreign controllers. Among other concessions wrung from the Republican government was its recognition of Britain's control of Tibet and Russia's of Outer Mongolia. It was clear that Yuan's successful negotiation of the loan had been achieved only at the price of a further loss of Chinese independence. Equally significant was Japan's use of its newly won influence with the Western powers to insist that it be included as one of the Consortium's members. This was further proof both of Japan's superiority over China and of the West's acceptance of this as a basic fact of international relations.

### The Second Revolution 1913

Republicans bitterly condemned the severe terms of the loan and accused Yuan of being as guilty of compromising China's sovereignty as the Qing had been. In 1913, in an attempted **Second Revolution**, the GMD tried to organise armed resistance in a number of the southern provinces. But Yuan rode the storm. Ignoring the GMD's **impeachment** of him for exceeding his presidential powers, Yuan either dismissed the military commanders in the key provinces or bribed them into staying loyal to him. His army then rapidly crushed such resistance as remained. It was clear that the Republican parties in China were too ill-organised to mount an effective opposition.

Disappointed, although not altogether surprised, by the failure of the Second Revolution, Sun Yatsen fled to Japan in November 1913. He explained the ineffectual showing of the GMD by pointing out that unless the GMD reorganised itself as a disciplined, centrally directed, body it would be unable to exercise real power in China. It was in Japan that Sun Yatsen now began restructuring his party along these lines. However, for the moment, Yuan Shikai appeared to be in control in China. Having overcome the resistance in the provinces, he sought to consolidate his authority by a series of restrictive measures, which included:

- the permanent suspension of parliament
- the outlawing of a number of parties, including the GMD
- the abolition of the regional assemblies, which had been created under the Manchus and incorporated into the 1912 Republican constitution
- the bringing of tax revenues under central control
- the requirement that local civilian administrators were directly answerable to Beijing.

Unsurprisingly, such steps excited further opposition in the provinces. Despite Yuan's success so far in imposing himself on Republican China, there was a limit to the number of times he could enforce his will. His strength was relative. It relied on the willingness of generals in the provinces to support him. It was

#### Security

An agreement in 1913 that if China defaulted on its loan repayments its tax revenue would be forfeit.

#### Second Revolution

An unsuccessful attempt in 1913 by the GMD to remove Yuan Shikai.

#### Impeachment

Formal censure of Yuan Shikai by the Republican parliament.

Key terms

also, as the negotiated loan of 1913 indicated, dependent on his ability to raise enough capital to run his government. His financial needs had already forced him to borrow heavily, a move that had left China with crippling foreign debts. Significantly, a key member of the international consortium that had advanced the loan had been Japan. It was that country that in 1915 seized the moment to emphasise its superiority over China.

### Japan's 21 Demands 1915

The outbreak of the First World War in 1914 had provided Japan with further opportunity to strengthen its grip on China. Both the Japanese and Chinese had good reasons for offering to help the Allies: each hoped to gain the territories which Germany held in the Far East. In response to Britain's appeal for naval assistance, Japan actively supported the Allies from August 1914 onwards. China, however, did not enter the war until 1917. This gave Japan an obvious precedence over China in the eyes of the Allies. The struggle in Europe also gave Japan a freer hand to interfere in China while the Western powers were preoccupied with their own war effort. In 1915 the Japanese government presented Yuan Shikai with the '21 Demands', a set of impositions that, if fully accepted, would have destroyed China's independence. The following extracts indicate the character of the Japanese demands:

The Chinese government engages to give full assent to all matters upon which the Japanese government may hereafter agree with the German government relating to the disposition of all rights, interests, and concessions which Germany possesses in relation to the Province of Shandong.

The Chinese central government shall employ influential Japanese as advisers in political, financial, and military affairs.

The police departments of the important places (in China) shall be jointly administered by Japanese and Chinese.

China shall purchase from Japan a fixed amount of munitions of war (say 50 per cent or more of what is needed by the Chinese).

The Chinese appealed to the Western powers for support but received little help. The USA accepted that Japan's **territorial contiguity** with China entitled it to the Chinese areas it claimed. Britain was disturbed by those demands which it considered would result in too great an extension of Japanese naval power in the Far East, but, once Japan had shrewdly withdrawn those particular clauses, the British insisted that China accept the remainder. Yuan, who, for political and financial reasons, wanted to keep on good terms with Japan and the West, finally gave in to the demands.

Yuan's surrender created a violent outburst of anger among the Chinese. Demonstrations and strikes occurred widely in Beijing and other provincial cities. Significantly, the resentment was

Key dates

Outbreak of the First World War: 1914

Japan's 21 Demands: 1915

China joined Allies in the First World War: 1917

Key term

**Territorial contiguity**

Geographical proximity.



directed as much against the new Republican government as against Japan. All the main sections of the Chinese community currently dissatisfied with the Republic – students, traders, lawyers, teachers and even some local officials – came together in open and spontaneous defiance. Yuan's capitulation to the Japanese had further weakened his position as president and had damaged the reputation of the young Republic.

### Yuan becomes emperor 1916

Yuan's basic problem was that while he was certainly more powerful than any single group or interest in China, his authority was never absolute. It was his awareness of this that pushed him towards the idea that he had long held of resurrecting the monarchy with himself as monarch. If he were to become emperor, he would command a degree of obedience that he could not hope to obtain merely as president. In response to what he claimed to be a spontaneous appeal from the people, but which, in fact, had been organised by his supporters at his prompting, Yuan announced late in 1915 that for the sake of the nation he would restore the imperial title and accept it for himself. On New Year's Day 1916, he was ceremonially enthroned as emperor.

It was a vainglorious affair. Rather than unite the nation and make his rule more acceptable, Yuan's self-elevation to emperor aroused fiercer and more determined opposition. A succession of provinces declared their independence from Beijing and rose in revolt. More serious still was the defection of the generals in Yuan's own army. For some time they had been increasingly resentful of Yuan's dictatorial and dismissive treatment of them and they informed him they would not serve him as emperor. No commander can survive without the loyalty of his officers. Seeing the writing on the wall, Yuan renounced the throne in March 1916. Three months later he died from stomach cancer.

**Key question**  
What did Yuan Shikai hope to gain from re-creating the imperial system?

Yuan became emperor: January 1916

Yuan renounced the throne: March 1916

Death of Yuan: June 1916

Key dates

### Profile: Yuan Shikai 1859–1916

- 1859 – Born in Henan province
- 1876 – First of his 10 marriages, during which he fathered 32 children
- 1876 – Failed to gain entry to civil service, developed a military career
- 1885–90 – Appointed Chinese imperial representative in Korea
- 1894 – His diplomacy failed to prevent Sino-Japanese war
- 1895 – Recalled to China, thereby avoiding personal responsibility for China's defeat
  - Appointed commander of the New Imperial Army
- 1898 – Played an ambiguous role in attempted anti-Qing coup
- 1908 – Dismissed from court
- 1908–11 – Plotted revenge on Qing
- 1911 – Following Wuhan rising, appointed prime minister of Qing government
  - Did a deal with the rebels and called on the Qing to abdicate
- 1912 – Became president of the Chinese Republic
- 1913 – Began repressive measures against GMD
  - Negotiated with international financiers for a large loan for China
- 1914 – Attempted to remove all democratic limits on his power
- 1915 – Obligated to accept Japan's 21 Demands
- 1916 – Installed as emperor on New Year's Day
  - Abandoned imperial title in March
  - Died from cancer in June

Yuan Shikai was undoubtedly a self-seeking opportunist but he should not be dismissed simply as a careerist who subordinated China's needs to his own wish for power. Modern historians, while accepting that he was motivated by personal ambition, point out that he did attempt to tackle China's most pressing needs. Despite being eventually overwhelmed by the problems he faced, Yuan's attempts at administrative and economic reform had merit. Arguably, his struggle to impose himself on the localities was a recognition on his part of a fundamental problem; unless there was an effective restoration of strong central authority, China stood little chance of developing the cohesion that would enable it to grow into a modern nation state. Yuan has been aptly called a 'modernising conservative'.

There is also the consideration that, though Yuan Shikai had his faults, so, too, did his Republican opponents. The Republic that replaced the Manchus was not well served by the mixture of naivety and corruption that passed for politics in that period. After Yuan's death, events were to show that none of the individuals or parties involved in the early Republic had any real answers to China's constitutional and political problems. Whatever Yuan Shikai's failings may have been, he had represented some degree of authority and order. With his passing there was no one capable of preventing China from sliding into further confusion and fragmentation.