

84

GENERALISSIMO JIANG ON NATIONAL IDENTITY

Among the ideas originally from the West, nationalism proved particularly potent. In the early twentieth century, Chinese intellectuals and political leaders thought that ideas of national identity and destiny then reshaping European politics could help China. Revolutionaries called for the overthrow of the Manchus on the grounds that they were alien. Sun Yatsen (1866–1925) made national self-determination one of his "Three People's Principles." China could not be strong until it rid itself of imperialist encroachments and was reconstituted as the nation of the Chinese people.

Nationalist principles as formulated by Sun were a central part of the ideology of the Nationalist Party (Guomindang), led after 1928 by Jiang Jieshi (Chiang Kai-shek, 1887–1975). During this period the gravest threat to China's national autonomy came from Japan, which occupied Manchuria in 1931 and started a full-scale invasion in 1937.

Below are two speeches in which Jiang dealt with issues of national identity. They were both delivered to meetings of high-level party committees, the first in January 1939, near the beginning of the war, and the second soon after Japan had surrendered in August 1945. In the first Jiang appeals to anti-imperialist sentiments to arouse determination to defeat Japan. In the second he considers what these principles might mean for a postwar China. If the Japanese should not rule parts of China, was it right for the Chinese to rule lands occupied by Tibetans, Mongols, or other nationalities? When were ethnic groups nationalities?

CHINA CANNOT BE CONQUERED

Comrades, this assembly meets as we enter upon the second stage in our War of Resistance. It is, therefore, an especially significant session which lays heavy responsibilities upon us. As I have repeatedly pointed out, our war may be divided into two periods. During the first period, which ended

with the fall of Canton and Wuhan, we tried to wear down the enemy's strength and at the same time protect our rear so that solid foundations might be laid for the second period of protracted resistance. . . . We are fighting this war for our own national existence and for freedom to follow the course of national revolution laid down for us in the Three Principles of the People. We are fight-

ing an enemy who would deny us not only our freedom but our very life, an enemy with whom we cannot compromise without bringing utter ruin upon our nation. Only resistance can preserve us from national slavery. Only resistance can save the world from the collapse of international morality and the breakdown of all guarantees of peace. Dr. Sun Yatsen devoted his life to the movement for the salvation of his country and at the same time of the world. All that he planned and achieved our enemy would throw to the winds. . . .

Japan has failed to realize the mighty power of our national resistance, the irresistible growth of our national spirit, and the true significance of our national history. The Japanese blindly hold that China can be tricked and subdued as she was by the Khitans and the Jin at the time of the Song dynasty, by the Mongols of the Yuan dynasty, and by the Manchus of the Qing dynasty. They do not understand the reasons for China's subjection in those times. They do not realize that it was the weakness of a few officials which brought about the submission of the government, a thing that should not be confused with the surrender of a whole nation. Today the Japanese cry, "Build a new order in East Asia," and expect in a short time to rule over all China. They forget that it has taken them more than forty years, a huge army, and vast expenditures to get even a tenuous hold upon our Northeastern Provinces. They refuse to take warning from past experiences, and now foolishly overstretch themselves to conquer the whole of China. Again they will fail.

Japan fails because she does not understand the characteristics of our nation, the force of the Three Principles enunciated by Dr. Sun Yatsen, the temper of our government, the signs of the times, and China's revolutionary military strategy and tactics. When Napoleon was attacking Imperial Russia, the strategy of all-front and prolonged resistance was not known. But even with his remarkable military genius and huge armies Napoleon was not able to avert defeat. How can Japan possibly succeed against republican China with its new and fervent national spirit? United against

a common enemy and under the guidance of the national government, our people have been able to carry out modern revolutionary military tactics, and no armed force can subdue us. . . .

Comrades, after eighteen months as the responsible commander-in-chief of our fighting forces, I have reached the following solemn conclusion. I commend it to your special consideration. You should instruct our people to take lessons from the annals of the Song and Ming dynasties. The fall of these two dynasties was not caused by outside enemies with a superior force, but by a dispirited and cowardly minority in the governing class and the society of the time. Today the morale of our people is excellent; the foundation of our revolution is deep and strong; and the Three Principles of the People give us a charter of liberty in harmony with the spirit of the modern age. If we do not destroy ourselves, no outside force can destroy us. . . . In more than five thousand years our nationality has never been really conquered and has most certainly never been exterminated. Furthermore, the dynastic downfalls were due to the cowardice, ignorance, lack of integrity, and selfishness of a small number of corrupt officials. The happiness and welfare of the common people did not concern them. During those despotic regimes a great gap existed between the government authorities and the common people. There were no ways by which the authorities could mobilize the power of resistance residing in the people. Yet, as a matter of fact, the spirit of the nation as a whole did not suffer from outside oppression and the people steadily opposed aggression. After an interval of two or three hundred years, the aggressors would be driven out and the nation's territory would be recovered.

Our present government, which is republican in form and revolutionary in spirit and which fights for the welfare of the nation and the people, has a far greater chance of expelling the invader. Our government is fully aware of its responsibilities and intends to complete the revolution and carry out the Three Principles of the People. It has no fear of bullying aggressors. Our resistance is a united effort of government and people. Sunzi

says, "A virtuous government has the support of the people; it can command life or death from the people without exciting fear or complaint." Concord between government and people is the first essential to victory.

In our present struggle against Japan we have been able to live up to this high principle. The hearts of our people are absolutely united. Under the guidance of the government even the old and the weak, the women and the children, are conscious of the necessity of defending themselves against the enemy and of obeying implicitly the orders of the high command. Indeed, their spirit is such that they are willing to lay down their lives without a murmur. No one will barter his national birthright for slavery to Japan. The barbarism of the Japanese has everywhere aroused the spirit voiced in our ancient saying, "Prefer death to disgrace." Judging from the history of the past and the national consciousness and strong morale of our people today, China cannot be conquered.

From the geographical point of view, our country possesses natural advantages for defense. Our ancestors, two thousand years ago, took advantage of the mountainous terrain in constructing the Great Wall. From east to west our country extends through more than sixty-five degrees of longitude. From north to south it includes the climates of the frigid, temperate, and torrid zones. In any discussion of military success or failure we have always considered topography and climate of great importance. River, mountains, and deserts abound in our interior and in the west; arctic cold alternates with tropical heat. Invaders in the past have succeeded only in holding a part of our country for a limited time. They have never permanently controlled the whole of our country for a long time. Even in the Yuan and Qing dynasties, when the strongest forces attempted to conquer us, they were able to occupy only certain strategic points and the spirit of resistance among the people was not crushed. Today a nation of only seventy million people thinks it can absorb a nation of six times its population and with a far older history and civilization. What a mad dream! Topography and climate are again combining

against China's invaders. No weapon in the world will be effective against this combination, reinforced by the firm determination and mighty strength of our people. Geographically, our country cannot be conquered.

China is the only nation in the Far East with an independent cultural achievement. This is borne out by history. Chinese civilization has been adopted by other peoples, but no alien civilization has ever succeeded in replacing China's own. China's civilization is imbued with a special spirit. I need not amplify this point. It is only necessary to recall the heroic behavior of our people in face of the enemy to realize the deep roots of our civilization. Japan is now trying with her mongrel civilization, of neither the East nor the West, to destroy our national spirit. But she has met with repeated failures in the occupied areas. If we are united at heart, and if we struggle with determination, the spirit of our people will be further strengthened. This resistance will infuse into our civilization a new splendor and power. Our civilization and our national national spirit can never be conquered or destroyed.

Economically we have the advantage. Modern wars usually arise out of economic conflicts and the outcome is determined by the economic strength and resources of the belligerents. China is essentially an agricultural country. Aggression descended upon us while we were in the period of national reconstruction. At first this seemed a major crisis, yet during the eighteen months of hostilities our financial structure has not been seriously injured, our currency has remained steady, and the livelihood of the people in the rear has been little affected. Owing to the excellent harvests in several provinces last year and the campaign of thrift, there are signs of plenty among our people. This is possible because we are an agricultural nation and strong in endurance, whereas industrial nations suffer more quickly from the consequences of war. . . .

Since the invasion of Manchuria in 1931 we have seen clearly that the only road upon which all mankind can march together is the road of justice and righteousness. A nation that aspires to

become strong and independent cannot allow itself to be checked by temporary hardships and sacrifices. In the course of time it is bound to earn the sympathy and cooperation of other just nations. The international developments of the past seven years have fully borne out our judgment. We claim no prescience; we have only maintained the position held by our revolutionary leader, Dr. Sun Yatsen: to save our country is also to save the world. Our judgment has been guided by this principle.

Dr. Sun often said that after China had recovered her independent national status she would have a large responsibility to the world. In his addresses on nationalism and on other occasions, Dr. Sun frequently declared, "China is the pillar of the Far East and the largest country in Asia; when China is strong, her four neighbors will be safe and on cordial terms with each other, and the surrounding peoples can retain their independence and share peace and happiness." Dr. Sun pointed out also that "China has never attempted by economic weapons to oppress other peoples. China's aspirations for peace were fully evolved even at the time of the Han dynasty." We do not oppress the weak and we do not bow before tyranny. We favor mutual assistance and we seek to strengthen ourselves. Dr. Sun further observed, "China had been strong for several thousand years without affecting the existence of Korea; but Korea was annexed after Japan had been strong for only twenty years. China's traditional policy has been to aid the weak and to support the falling, to live and to let live. Our national revolution is reinforcing our own historic love of justice and peace and is hastening the advent of enduring security and happiness for all mankind. . . ."

Comrades, you must know that before our resistance began our country was regarded by the world as weaker than a third-rate power. Nevertheless, we succeeded in holding Japan, a first-class power, for more than a year and a half without being overcome. We must be ready to encounter more difficulties but we need no longer be frightened by our brutal enemy. Having entered this second period of resistance we believe that

the military operations will daily turn in our favor. The only question is whether we have the strength of will to continue resistance, and whether our unity and determination will increase with every day of the struggle. . . .

NATIONAL INDEPENDENCE AND EQUALITY AMONG PEOPLES

Japan has been defeated and is surrendering. The forces of violent aggression have been completely crushed by the concerted efforts of the United Nations. At the end of the First World War, Dr. Sun Yatsen said that nations working together for the good of all would certainly succeed while individuals or nations working for their own selfish ends would inevitably fail. The truth embodied in Dr. Sun's frank words has been abundantly confirmed by the recent war with its even greater sacrifices.

At this great turning point in history, the national government should make clear to the people of China and of the whole world the main objectives in its policy of realizing national independence and completing the national revolution. . . . The aim of our national revolution is twofold. In our relations with other nations we seek national independence and freedom. Within the nation we seek equality for all ethnic groups. For fifty years we faced the ever-growing menace of Japanese aggression; national armed resistance began when we had no other alternative. Therefore the main emphasis of our national revolutionary movement was upon consolidating the strength of all our ethnic groups. We knew that we must unite in resisting foreign aggression if we were to attain national independence and freedom.

We had three most important goals and the attainment of these constituted our most urgent task. First, we had to regain our sovereign rights in the northeastern provinces and reestablish territorial and administrative integrity there. Second, we had to recover Formosa (Taiwan) and the Pescadores Islands. Third, we had to restore to Korea her independence and freedom. Should Korea not be given freedom, Formosa not be allowed to re-

return to its mother country, and the territorial and administrative integrity of the Northeastern Provinces not be restored, all talk of national independence and freedom would be useless and the objectives of our armed resistance could not be achieved. These objectives follow the policies handed down to us by Dr. Sun Yatsen. They have been the leading aims in our armed resistance against Japan, which has meant for us the loss of millions of lives. During the war we had to unite all the ethnic groups within the nation and strive together to complete our threefold task. Only if this is done can we expect our country to be independent and make secure the political equality of all ethnic groups.

Japanese imperialism has been defeated and Japan is suing for peace. . . . We may say that the international aspect of our principle of nationalism is approaching completion. Therefore, we must formulate definite policies and take positive action to realize the domestic phase of the same principle, that is, ensure equality for all the ethnic groups within the nation and thus fulfill the entire program of our national revolution. We must also ensure the permanency of the victorious peace which we have won at the sacrifice of countless lives and enormous losses in property.

Upon the basis of Dr. Sun Yatsen's teachings, I shall now state, as a representative of the Guomindang (Nationalist Party), our policy toward carrying out the principle of nationalism and safeguarding world peace and national security. I shall first take up the nationality questions in Outer Mongolia and Tibet. Outer Mongolia and Tibet both have a long history. The ethnic groups in these two areas have always lived by themselves and are totally different from the ethnic groups inhabiting the border provinces which mix freely with other groups. Following the Guomindang reorganization in 1924, Outer Mongolia sent representatives to extend greetings and felicitations to our party. Dr. Sun Yatsen was at that time already treating them as members of a friendly neighboring country and as honored guests. Such facts are recorded in Dr. Sun Yatsen's teachings and are widely known. We have never regarded

the people of Outer Mongolia as colonials or oppressed them as the Beijing government did. Ever since the inauguration of the national government we have maintained friendly relations not only with the Outer Mongolians but also with the Tibetans. Our people should realize that if we ignore the aspirations of these ethnic groups for freedom and restrain their urge for independence and self-government, it will not only be contrary to the spirit of our national revolution but will also tend to increase friction between ethnic groups and jeopardize our entire program of national reconstruction. This in turn will adversely affect world peace and security.

The ethnic group in Outer Mongolia had, in effect, declared its independence from the mother country as early as 1922 when the Beijing government was in existence. That was almost a quarter of a century ago. The world is undergoing rapid changes and this is a propitious time for renewing old friendships. Therefore, we should, in accordance with our revolutionary principles and the Guomindang's consistent policy, recognize, with bold determination and through legal procedure, the independence of Outer Mongolia and establish friendly relations with it. We must seek a satisfactory solution of this question. If we fail, happy relations between China and Mongolia will be impossible and not only our own domestic tranquillity but also the peace of the world will be seriously jeopardized.

I must here point out three fundamental points in the realization of our principle of nationalism. First, the Chinese government and people should resolve with noble, sincere, and firm determination never to imitate the way of Japan toward Korea. We should honestly aid all ethnic groups which have given evidence of their capacity for self-government and have shown a spirit of independence. We should help them achieve national independence through self-determination, freedom, and equality on the Asian continent in the bright light of total victory. For fifty years, the national revolution of the Guomindang, as it overthrew the Manchu government and resisted Japan, has been a movement not only for China's

own freedom and equality, but also for the liberation and independence of Korea. From today, we shall, in this same spirit and together with all Allied nations concerned, fully respect the principle of Korean independence and equality and the position that Korea will soon attain.

Second, if frontier ethnic groups situated in regions outside the provinces have the capacity for self-government and a strong determination to attain independence, and are politically and economically ready for both, our government should, in a friendly spirit, voluntarily help them to realize their freedom and forever treat them as brotherly nations, as equals of China. We should entertain no ill will or prejudices against them because of their choice to leave the mother country. Our frontier ethnic groups should, in a friendly spirit and through legal channels, make known their wishes to the government of their mother country. In this way, they may be able to realize their aspirations. They should not defy the mother country and stir up mutual hatred.

Third, we should accord the large and small ethnic groups inside the provinces legal and political equality, and unhindered economic and religious freedom, so that a warm community spirit and friendly collaboration may develop among all the groups.

As regards the political status of Tibet, the Sixth National Guomindang Congress decided to grant it a very high degree of autonomy, to aid its political advancement, and to improve the living conditions of the Tibetans. I solemnly declare that if the Tibetans should at this time express a wish for self-government, our government would, in conformity with our sincere tradition, accord it a very high degree of autonomy. If in the future they fulfill the economic requirement for independence, the national government will, as in the case of Outer Mongolia, help them to gain that status. But Tibet must give proof that it can consolidate its independent position and protect its continuity so as not to become another Korea.

Finding a solution for the ethnic problems of Outer Mongolia and Tibet is a very great task of our national revolution. It will be a touchstone

of the success of our principle of nationalism. We should be ready to assume responsibility for a solution. I hope that all the Chinese people, in accordance with our revolutionary principles and spirit of national independence, assist the government in finding an answer to these questions. For world peace and security as well as for the solidarity and reconstruction of our own nation, we must deal with the world's national questions in conformity with the spirit of the Atlantic Charter and the Three Principles of the People. . . .

The world war that has just ended was an unprecedented conflict in human history. All the United Nations hope that this horrible war will be the last war. China has fought the longest and suffered the most. Our hope for peace is therefore the most ardent. Any measure that will strengthen our national unity and promote international peace will receive our strongest support.

In collaboration with our allies, we shall strive to bring about friendly relations between all free and independent nations, ensure the continuance of peace and prevent the reemergence of power politics. We should see to it particularly that the peoples of the world do not again suffer from inequality, the want of freedom, scarcity, and fear. If we keep this in mind, we shall see how supremely important it is that the principles of national equality and national independence be everywhere realized. The national government, guided by its own vital principles and its consistent revolutionary policy, will complete the unfinished phase of the principle of nationalism as peace dawns upon the world. This is one of our fondest hopes and I am sure our allies will understand. World peace will thus be guaranteed and our national security be made certain. Let our people with one heart and one mind strive toward this goal. National revival and reconstruction will then become a living reality and the millions of our officers and soldiers and people who gave their lives in eight years of war will rest in peace knowing that they have not sacrificed in vain, and the truth of Dr. Sun's words pronounced after the First World War will be fully verified.