

INAUGURAL ADDRESS OF THE PROVISIONAL PRESIDENT

中華民國臨時大總統宣言書

1 January, 1912

壹玖壹貳年壹月壹日

Dr. Sun Yat-sen

Translated by Christopher C. Heselton

孫中山

譯•史崢

As the Republican revolution gained momentum in the fall of 1911, many of the disparate revolutionary factions affiliated with the United League (同盟會) began to demand that a central provisional government be formed. In November 28th, representatives from those territories held by revolutionary groups met to outline the provisional government in the British Concession in Hankou. By December 3^d a draft constitution was approved and representatives agreed to meet in Nanjing (which had been captured the day before) to vote on the constitution and presidency in seven days. Each province was given one representative (not including Xinjiang, Xizang, Mongolia, or Manchuria), who were rounded up in Shanghai by Chen Qimei (陳其美) and Song Jiaoren (宋教仁), supporters of Dr. Sun Yat-sen (孫中山) – stacking the vote in Sun's favor. On December 29th, seventeen representatives elected Dr. Sun Yat-sen as the first Provisional President of the Republic of China (中華民國大總統), a position he would hold for only 68 days. Former Qing General Li Yuanhong (黎元洪) was also elected as the first Provisional Vice-President as a compromise with non-United League factions since Li was not a member of the United League and had been reluctant to join the revolution. Li would continue to serve as Vice-President until June 7th, 1916 when he was made China's third president officially upon the death of Yuan Shikai (袁世凱).

Sun was inaugurated into office at Midnight January 1st, 1912 in Nanjing where he declared the Provisional Government of the Republic of China (中華民國臨時政府), which keeping with imperial traditions, became the first day of the first year of the Republican calendar and is still in use today in Taiwan. The Inaugural Address of the Provisional President of the Republic of China was Sun's first public speech to the nation at the inaugural ceremony – much like in the United States – but was viewed by most people in this written form. The address announced the formation of the provisional government, outlined the future republic which he imagined, and attempted to address the worries that many Chinese – newly made citizens – had about the revolution. In January 1912, when this address was given, the revolutionaries had accomplished much, but victory was far from assured. Many frontier provinces like Mongolia and Tibet had declared their independence just as many southern provinces had, but it was not clear whether they would join the Republic of China; moreover, much of northern China remained firmly in the Qing government's hands, and many Chinese and Westerners alike feared that the revolution would turn into a protracted civil war.

Since the founding of the Republic of China, I, Wen, have reluctantly borne the office of the Provisional President and have remained vigilant day and night, ever ready to raise warning in aid to the hopes of our citizens.¹ The poison of Chinese authoritarianism has been profound over the past two centuries, but now that the strength of our citizens is working to eliminate it, it has only taken a few weeks since these events first transpired and already we have restored some ten provinces. Never in history has so much been achieved at such speed. Some citizens believe that without any united domestic organization or any group abroad to handle these problems, it is even more crucial that there be no delay in establishing [a government]; hence, it is our task to organize a provisional government.² In terms of ideas of meritocracy, I should not take up this office; in terms of ideas of service and responsibility, I dare not relinquish this office.³ Only after I have worked tirelessly to serve the people in removing the poison of authoritarianism, ensure that the republic meets with the principles of the revolution, and fulfill the wishes of our citizens, will I relinquish my position on that day. At this I profess to the citizens that the root of the nation lies with the people. The land of the Han, Manchus, Mongols, Muslims, and Tibetans are one country;⁴ and thus, the Han, Manchus, Mongols, Muslims, and Tibetan nations are one people. This is a united race.

中华民国缔造之始，而文以不德，膺临时大总统之任，夙夜戒惧，虑无以副国民之望。夫中国专制政治之毒，至二百年来而滋甚，一旦以国民之力踣而去之，起事不过数旬，光复已十余行省，自有历史以来，成功未有如是之速也。国民以为于内无统一之机关，于外无对待之主体，建设之事更不容缓，于是以组织临时政府之责相属。自推功让能之观念以言，文所不敢任也；自服务尽责之观念以言，则文所不敢辞也。是用勉从国民之后，能尽扫专制之流毒，确定共和以达革命之宗旨，完国民之志愿，端在今日。敢披沥肝胆为国民告：国家之本在于人民，合汉、满、蒙、回、藏诸地为一国，即合汉、满、蒙、回、藏诸族为一民，是曰民族之统一。

Since the uprising in Wuhan, ten provinces have declared independence one after another. This so-called independence is, to the Qing court, a separation, but for the provinces, a unification, and this is just as much the case for Mongolia and Tibet. Their actions speak together, and there is certainly no difference of opinion of this matter. The crux of the matter is a triumph over the central government, and its principles are to preserve our borders. This is a united territory.

¹ *wén* (文) is Sun Yat-sen referring to himself. Sun Wen (孙文) was Sun Yat-sen's real name and was how he referred to himself publicly. The name Sun Yat-sen is the Cantonese pronunciation of Sun Yixian (孙逸仙), which was a nickname he received while attending medical school in Hong Kong and later became the name Westerners used to refer to him. In China, however, Sun Yat-sen is more commonly referred to as Sun Zhongshan (孙中山). This name was a fake name Sun used to hide from Japanese authorities while he was in Japan. While hiding out at a Japanese hotel, Sun's life-long friend Miyazaki Tōten (宫崎滔天), a Japanese philosopher and supporter of the Republican Revolution, registered Sun under the name Nakayama (中山). This name later became popularized in China.

² This refers to criticisms that the revolution was fragmented and disorganized. In late 1911, the revolutionaries were a very broad and loosely affiliated coalition that even included former Qing officials

³ A less literal translation would be "I do not believe I am the right man for the job, but my sense of duty will not allow me to resign."

⁴ *hui* (回), here translated as "Muslims," was a broader ethno-religious category than it is today. Presently, the term *hui* refers to Chinese-speaking Muslims and their descendants (regardless of religious affiliation), particularly in Gansu and Shaanxi, but can be found around the People's Republic of China. In 1912, however, the term *hui* referred to all Muslims in the Northwest, including Uighurs, Kazaks, Kirghiz, Uzbeks, and Salars. In fact, the idea of "Uighurs," in the sense we understand it today, was not a term used at the time. In 1912, Uighurs referred to themselves as "Turki" while Chinese referred to present day Hui and Uighurs all as *hui*. The creation of these broader ethnic classifications that were not recognized by the local population could also be said of Mongols, Tibetan, and to a lesser extent Manchus, but over the course of the 20th century, these categories were increasingly recognized by the local population, whereas the term *hui* did not survive to the end of the 20th century.

武汉首义，十数行省先后独立，所谓独立，对于清廷为脱离，对于各省为联合，蒙古、西藏意亦同此，行动既一，决无歧趋，枢机成于中央，斯经纬周于四至，是曰领土之统一。

Since the alarm has been raised, our righteous army has arisen across the land. Our warriors, clad in armor and spear in hand, have marched across ten provinces. Although some of our armies may not be of equal strength and when the bugle calls some remain disorderly,⁵ but none differ when it comes to our goals. From our common goals come united action, and with that a single plan. How could this be difficult? This is a united military government.

血钟一鸣，义旗四起，拥甲带戈之士遍于十余行省，虽编制或不一，号令或不齐，而目的所在则无不同，由共同之目的以为共同之行动，整齐划一，夫岂其难，是曰军政之统一。

Our country is vast and each province has its own customs. In the past, the Qing court controlled them through a centralized government, and remained the theory of their false constitution. Presently, the provinces are working together for their own autonomy. From hence forth administration will be based on a relationship between the central government and the provinces where suitable adjustments are made, greater principles are proposed [by the central government], and the conditions are determines on one's own [by the provinces].⁶ This is a united government.

国家幅员辽阔，各省自有其风气所宜，前此，清廷强以中央集权之法行之，遂其伪立宪之术；今者各省联合互谋自治，此后行政，期于中央政府与各省之关系，调剂得宜，大纲既挈，条目自举，是曰内治之统一。

In the Manchu-Qing era, they taxed in the name of the constitution but extorted wealth in truth through excessive miscellaneous fees and donations that made it so that the people could not live.⁷ From hence forth, the expenses of the state come from the people and must be managed in accordance to principles of finance for the purpose of improving the economic organization of society and allow people to know the joys of life. This is a united financial system.

满清时代藉立宪之名，行敛财之实，杂捐苛细，民不聊生，此后国家经费取给于民，必期合于理财学理，而尤在改良社会经济组织，使人民知有生之乐，是曰财政之统一。

⁵ This passage refers to the ragtag and poorly provisioned nature of some of the revolutionary army.

⁶ This passage is vague but clearly denoting a federalist political system wherein the provinces would have a lot of room to make policy under general guidelines from the central government.

⁷ The reference to "miscellaneous fees and donations" refers to a host quasi-official fees imposed often by the local government for certain government services like having a lawsuit heard before the magistrate's court, and "donations" refers to a host of practices that were less-than voluntary donations solicited by the local government from local elites to meet funding needs for projects – particularly infrastructure – and were increasingly used in the last half century of the Qing. The problem with these systems of government procurement of funds was that they were inconsistent, unpredictable, and at times unreliable, which frustrated many Qing subjects.

The aforementioned clauses are the guiding policy of the government's administration, and shall be carried out accordingly and without major alterations.

以上数者，为政务之方针，持此进行，庶无大过。

If this revolution goes as my compatriots and I have said, then the nations of the world will come to understand [the revolution]. Although in the past there have been many ups and downs [in China's foreign relations], foreigners will not be able to help but be moved when they reflect upon this [revolution]. Since October, our righteous flag has waved high, and many friendly states hold to the hope of peace for [the revolution] and maintain neutrality [in the revolution]. Newspapers and public opinion [abroad], in particular, have expressed sympathy with the sincerity and admiration of neighbors. Upon establishing a provisional government, we hope to enjoy the same rights as any other civilized country is entitled to by committing ourselves to the responsibilities of a civilized country to the greatest extent possible. The actions that humiliated the country in the Manchu-Qing era and their xenophobic psychology will be no more. As our friendship deepens with kindly nations and we maintain peace, we will see that this will allow China to gain recognition in international society, and lead the world gradually to a greater peace, continuous progress, and an end to seeking personal gain.⁸ This is the truth of our foreign policy.

若夫革命主义为吾侪所昌言，万国所同喻，前此虽屡起屡蹶，外人无不鉴其用心，八月以来，义旗颺发，诸友邦对之抱和平之望，持中立之态，而报纸及舆论，尤每表其同情，邻谊之笃，良足深谢。临时政府成立后，当尽文明国应尽之义务，以期享文明国应享之权利。满清时代辱国之举措，与排外之心理，务一洗而去之，与我友邦益增睦谊，持和平主义，将使中国见重于国际社会，且将使世界渐趋于大同，循序以进，不为幸获，对外方针，实在于是。

When our republic is newly built and foreign relations and domestic government begin to bring prosperity, I, Wen, will reflect upon myself and know that victory has been achieved. The provisional government is the government of a time of revolution. Those that have worked for the revolution over the last decade are all sincere and pure of spirit and know that the difficulties that they will face to achieve victory will lie in the days ahead. And it is my hope to preserve this spirit of revolution so that this moment shall never be hindered and that it be allowed to lay the foundations of the Chinese republic and ensure its place upon the earth. Only then shall the duty of the provisional government be complete and I can show before the republic a vindicated man. Today - this day that we for the first time reveal our republic - I have laid bear my feelings, and I hope that my Four-hundred million compatriots will take heed.

夫民国新建，外交、内政，百绪繁生，文自顾何人，而克胜此！然而临时之政府，革命时代之政府也，十余年来从事于革命者，皆以诚挚纯洁之精神，战胜所遇之艰难，远逾于前日；而吾人惟保此革命之精神，一往而莫之能阻，必使中华民国之基础，确定于大地，然后临时政府之

⁸ *bù wéi xìng huó* (不为幸获), here translated as "an end to seeking personal gain," more literally translated means "not to do something that obtains something through good fortune," but more figuratively means "not to gain something at someone else's expense," at which Sun is referring to imperialism.

INAUGURAL ADDRESS OF THE PROVISIONAL PRESIDENT
DR. SUN YAT-SEN

职务始尽，而吾人始可告无罪于国民也。今以与我国民初相见之日，披布腹心，惟我四万万同胞共鉴之！



The First Day of the First Year of the Great Republic of China

大中华民国元年元旦

The Provisional President of the Republic of China

中华民国临时大总统

Handwritten signature of Sun Yat-sen in cursive script.