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## The *Minsheng* Principle of Sun Yat-sen\*

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Among the “Three People’s Principles”, *minsheng* or “People’s Livelihood”, was the most important and complex doctrine which Dr. Sun Yat-sen conceived as part of China’s nationalist revolution. While the other two principles of “Nationalism” and “Democracy” played a vital role in Sun’s plan for a new political structure in China, the new economic system that *minsheng* was to provide became a challenge more difficult than toppling the decadent Manchu empire. The problems created by years of autocratic rule and imperial neglect of China’s economic development, aggravated further by financial ruin, was inherited by the new republican government in 1912. Consequently, Sun Yat-sen emphasized that the overthrow of the Qing dynasty was only the beginning of the revolution, and it would not be completed until China’s economic development brought about a modern society in which the people’s standard of living was raised throughout the new nation.

### Origins of *Minsheng*

Sun Yat-sen’s early revolutionary thought, leading him to the *minsheng* principle, grew out of the reformist ideas he began to develop while a medical student in the early 1890s. His concepts came from various associates including the writings on agriculture by Zheng Guanying, an official and native of Sun’s home district, to whom Sun had written urging improved agricultural techniques for Chinese farming.<sup>1</sup> In these early years, Sun understood the importance of developing new technologies and economic programmes, supported by an expanded education system that encouraged scholarly pursuits. He particularly saw the value of machines in the development of natural resources and increasing productivity. These

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1 *Nong Gong* (Agricultural Operations), [approximately 1891], pp. 3–6, first printed in Zheng Guanying, *Shengshi weiyuan* (Warnings to the Seemingly Prosperous Age), vol. 3, n.p., Sun Wen [Sun Yat-sen], *Guofu quanji* (Complete Collected Works of the Founding Father of the Nation [Sun Yat-sen]), edited by the publisher, 6 vols. in 7 (Taipei: Zhongguo Guomindang zhongyang weiyuan hui dangshi weiyuan hui [Committee for the compilation of party history of the Central Executive Committee of the Guomindang of the Republic of China], 1973; 2nd ed., 1981, supplementary vol., 1985), [hereafter cited: Taipei, GFQJ], suppl. vol., pp. 13–16.

concepts contributed to the foundations of his later proposal to improve the “People’s Livelihood”. The most urgent initial concern to Sun, however, was the necessity to increase agricultural productivity through the use of modern machinery, an idea he emphasized in an important letter articulating his views to Li Hongzhang.<sup>2</sup>

Sun Yat-sen continued to focus his thoughts on agriculture and the welfare of the Chinese farmer after 1900 as he considered the “principles” upon which China’s restructured society should be built. “Nationalism” and “Democracy” — *minzu* and *minquan* — were firmly in mind before the Tongmeng hui was formed, but “People’s Livelihood” or *minsheng* was still evolving as a major principle. In 1903 Sun considered the need to “equalize land ownership” in China and included it in the oath for the Chinese revolutionary army. Although not fully developed, Sun regarded this concept essential for the general welfare of the people. All three principles, enunciating the ideological foundations of Sun Yat-sen’s thought, were included in the manifesto of the Tongmeng hui in 1905.

In the following years before the revolution of 1911, Sun advocated progressive ideas and sought to improve the social consciousness of the people and the welfare of the destitute. Among his early concerns were the plight of the poor (especially among the peasantry), women’s rights, the affliction of opium smoking, and the reconstruction of China to bring about a higher standard of living throughout the country. Perennial tension between the ethnic minorities and the Han Chinese also caught his attention as he viewed the need to improve the “People’s Livelihood”. Even before the revolution was completed and the fate of the Manchus remained unsettled, Sun began to consider various methods to achieve the “Principle of Democracy” and the “Principle of People’s Livelihood”. He regarded “Nationalism” as having been accomplished with the advent of the revolution, but afterwards the remaining two principles became most prominent in his thinking.<sup>3</sup>

Because of the early formulation of his “Principles”, there is nothing perplexing about Sun’s interest to attempt to resolve critical social issues during the brief time he served as President of the Republic of China in the early months of 1912. After April 1 and his departure from the presidency, Sun continued to promote his three “Principles”. At a farewell meeting of the Tongmeng hui on the day he left office, Sun reaffirmed his intense feeling for *minsheng* in a speech entitled “The Principle of People’s Livelihood and Social Revolution”.

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- 2 Sun Yat-sen to Li Hongzhang, June 1894, Taipei, GFQJ, vol. 3, pp. 1–11; Sun Wen, *Guofu quan shu* (Complete Works of the Founding Father of the Nation [Sun Yat-sen]), edited by Zhang Qiyun (Taipei: Guofang yanjiuyuan, 1960) [hereafter cited: Chang (ed.), GFQS], pp. 352–357; Sun Zhongshan [Sun Yat-sen], *Sun Zhongshan quanji* (Complete Collected Works of Sun Chung-shan [Sun Yat-sen]), 12 vols. (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1981–1990) [hereafter cited: Beijing, SZSQJ], vol. 1, pp. 8–17; first printed in *Wanguo Gongbao*, no. 69 (Sept. 1894), pp. 36, no. 70 (Oct. 1894), pp. 9–12; Sun Zhongshan [Sun Yat-sen], *Sun Zhongshan xuanji* (Selected Works of Sun Zhongshan [Sun Yat-sen]), edited by the publisher, 2 vols. (Beijing: Renmin chubanshe, 1956) [hereafter cited: Beijing, SZSXJ], vol. 1, pp. 7–18; selected portions translated in Ssu-yü Teng and John K. Fairbank, *China’s Response to the West: A Documentary Survey, 1839–1923* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1954), pp. 224–225; see also Ng Lun Ngai-ha, “The Hong Kong Origins of Dr. Sun Yat-sen’s Addresses to Li Hung-chang,” *Journal of the Hong Kong Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society*, no. 22 (1981), pp. 168–178.
- 3 Sun Yat-sen to Wu Zhihui, Nov. 11, 1911, Taipei, GFQJ, vol. 3, pp. 162–163; Beijing, SZSQJ, vol. 1, p. 546; Zhang (ed.), GFQS, p. 439.

Sun believed only the initial phase of the revolution was accomplished in 1911, and the most significant phase would be to restructure China's government and economy, and more pointedly, to improve the people's livelihood. Despite the special attention Sun gave to *minsheng* throughout his revolutionary career, he did not leave a complete written record of his views. In 1924, a year before his death, when Sun rewrote his "Three People's Principles" in lecture form, he left two chapters on the "Principle of People's Livelihood" unwritten. Although the number of chapters Sun intended to write on *minsheng* and the precise reasons for his delay in completing them are not entirely clear, he anticipated that his comrades would do so. Chiang Kai-shek eventually contributed two supplementary chapters in November 1953. Nevertheless, Sun's personal legacy on *minsheng* is sufficient to make an examination of his views and to analyse his ideology more precisely.

### The Meaning of *Minsheng*

China's difficulties in the early quarter of the twentieth century exacerbated the nation's effort to fulfill the *minsheng* principle. Political instability, rampant poverty, limited technical skills, debts owed to foreign countries, and depleted financial resources all hindered the economic progress Sun realized was so essential for China. His awareness of these problems and the urgent need to improve China's living standards compelled Sun to write his treatise on reconstruction.<sup>4</sup> The decadent situation in China unquestionably aroused Sun's social consciousness, leading him to devote his primary attention to economic revival.

A primary objective in the implementation of *minsheng* throughout China was to achieve a more equitable distribution of wealth. In this regard, the Kuomintang manifesto of January 1, 1923 declared "those who strive for good government are obliged to devote wholehearted effort to the labour of curbing the rich and powerful and preventing the seizure ... of property belonging to others".<sup>5</sup> Sun gave serious thought to improving his *minsheng* principle along these lines, and his interest mounted as he engaged in frequent discussions with socialist members of the Comintern.

The obvious need to improve living standards and redistribute wealth throughout China led to Sun's inclusion of socialist content in *minsheng*. Consequently, these concepts made *minsheng* the most controversial of Sun's three principles. While this principle was frequently equated with "socialism" (*shehui zhuyi*), Sun preferred the term "People's Livelihood" (*minsheng zhuyi*). Various writers have had differing interpretations on the motivation behind Sun's preference. Martin Bernal, who has written on early Chinese socialism, contended that Sun switched from *shehui zhuyi* to *minsheng zhuyi* after two years of using the former simply because of its euphony with the other two principles: *minzu* and

4 Sun Yat-sen to Tang Jiyao, April 15, 1919, Beijing, SZSQ, vol. 5, p.43; original draft in Guomindang Archives, Taipei.

5 Milton J. Shieh, *The Kuomintang: Selected Historical Documents, 1894-1969* (New York: Saint John's University Press, 1970), p. 65.

*minquan*.<sup>6</sup> Other writers, such as Harold Z. Schiffrin and Robert A. Scalapino, thought Sun regarded both terms interchangeable but chose *minsheng* to distinguish socialist ideas from strict western concepts of socialism; but they also believed Sun considered *minsheng* to be a branch of socialism.<sup>7</sup> Sun, in fact, consciously attempted to combine Chinese and Western ideas into a formula suitable to Chinese preferences, and therefore *minsheng* evolved into a combination of selected elements from socialism, capitalism, and Chinese traditionalism.

As Sun Yat-sen gave further study and thought to Karl Marx, he began to question some aspects of Marx's socialist doctrine. Despite Sun's attraction to selected economic principles enunciated by Marx, Sun rejected several important concepts. For example, Sun did not accept Marx's emphasis on historical materialism nor his doctrine that social change could only be brought about by class struggle. In his rejection of the latter principle, Sun clearly remarked that "Marx's assumption that class struggle is a cause of social progress puts effect before cause". Believing Marx to be confused, Sun thought the theory was "contradicted by subsequent facts in social history".<sup>8</sup> Sun believed that it was not possible to extract "surplus wealth" from the workers but that cooperation, not class struggle, was the best strategy to generate social progress. Coincidentally, Sun prepared his *San Min Zhuyi* lectures at the time the Ford automotive industry was in the process of developing the assembly-line technique of production. Inspired by this new method, Sun noticed that worker's hours were reduced and wages and prices increased. All this ran counter to Marxian expectations. The traditional view of human behaviour which Sun enunciated contrasted sharply with Marxist materialism.<sup>9</sup>

Nevertheless, socialist principles are indeed evident in Sun Yat-sen's *minsheng*, particularly the regulation of private capital, the development of state capital, and the equalization of land rights. In addition to these selected aspects of Western socialism, American progressivism also impressed Sun with its adaptability to China. The ideas of Henry George, author of *Progress and Poverty* (1879) and Edward Bellamy, author of *Looking Backward: 2000-1887* (1888), a utopian novel about monopolistic growth and inequality in the United States, influenced Sun Yat-sen.<sup>10</sup> Like George, Sun was disturbed about rural land monopoly and the concentration of urban wealth. Sharing George's concern for equality in fostering

6 Martin Bernal, *Chinese Socialism to 1907* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1976), p. 68.

7 Harold Z. Schiffrin and Robert A. Scalapino, "Early Socialist Currents in the Chinese Revolutionary Movement", *Journal of Asian Studies*, vol. 18, no. 3 (May 1989), pp. 324-328, 332, 334.

8 Sun Yat-sen, *San Min Chu I: The Three Principles of the People*, trans. by Frank W. Price (Shanghai: The Commercial Press, 1928), [edited by L. T. Chen, published under the auspices of the China Committee, Institute of Pacific Relations], p. 395.

9 For a lengthier account of Sun's views on socialism, see Key Ray Chong, "The Sources and Development of Sun Yat-sen's Nationalistic Ideology as Expressed in his *San Min Chu I*" (Ph.D. dissertation, Claremont Graduate School, 1967), pp. 48-51; for some early brief accounts, see Frank R. Millican, "A Study of the Teachings of Sun Yat Sen by King Chu", *The Chinese Recorder*, no. 57 (Nov. 1926), pp. 781-783; Emory S. Bogardus, "Social Thought of Sun Yat-sen", *Sociology and Social Research*, vol. 22, no. 2 (Sept.-Oct. 1937), pp. 160-171.

10 Chang Chung-tung, "Dr. Sun Yat-sen's Principle of Livelihood and American Progressivism", *Chinese Studies in History*, vol. 15, nos. 3-4 (Spring-Summer 1982), pp. 6-7, 11.

greater economic opportunity, Sun added his endorsement of capital regulation.<sup>11</sup> Like Bellamy, Sun registered his dismay about problems caused by the expanding power of private capitalists, and he advocated making “all the national industries of China into a Great Trust owned by the Chinese people”.<sup>12</sup> Sun also agreed with Bellamy that when industries were nationalized a people’s government should be responsible for managing those industries in the people’s interest. Sun’s concern about democratic procedures in the control of economic programmes remained prominent in his thinking, and he cautioned that the government should be neither absolutist nor autocratic and must genuinely represent the people. He feared that a government monopolizing both political and economic responsibilities would be more destructive than monopolistic capitalism.<sup>13</sup>

Sun Yat-sen’s rejection of class struggle and preference for social cooperation was a significant difference between him and the Marxists, and his views on this matter were similar to those of the American progressives. In his lectures on *minsheng*, Sun emphasized this distinction with Marx. Recognizing that poverty and deprivation of ordinary people could lead to social conflict, he said “what Marx gained through his studies of social problems was a knowledge of diseases in the course of social progress”, and he called Marx a “social pathologist”.<sup>14</sup> In addition to selected socialist concepts espoused by Marx and the ideas of American progressives, Sun also drew upon the experiences of German state socialism, the American anti-trust agitation, the British labour movement, and the Russian revolution. Sun’s liberal orientation was influenced, in varying degrees, by all these sources and contributed to his belief in the necessity for government leadership and regulation of economic growth. Although it is sometimes difficult to measure the precise extent to which a particular influence played a role in shaping Sun’s ideas on *minsheng*, there appears to be substantial agreement among Western writers about the influence of Henry George.<sup>15</sup> In George’s “single tax” policy the influence on Sun’s thought is very clear, but we must caution that in other areas the influence is less precise.

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- 11 Comparing the ideas of Henry George and Sun Yat-sen, Y. K. Mao believes they were quite similar; see Y. K. Mao, “Sun Yat-sen and Henry George: Their Thoughts and Policies on Land Problems”, in *Henry George and Sun Yat-sen: Application and Evolution of Their Land-Use Doctrine (Centenary of Progress and Poverty)*, edited by Richard W. Lindholm and Sein Lin, Lincoln Institute Monograph, no. 77–12 (Dec. 1977), (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Lincoln Institute of Land Policy, 1977), pp. 8–21. Sun also acquired some of his ideas from John Stuart Mill and early Chinese land policies.
- 12 Sun Yat-sen, *The International Development of China* (New York: G. P. Putnam’s Sons, 1922; Taipei reprint edition, 1953), pp. 294–295.
- 13 Edward Bellamy, *Looking Backward: 2000–1887* (New York: n.p., 1888), p. 61; Edward Bellamy, *Equality* (first published 1897; Upper Saddle River, N.J.: n.p., 1968), pp. 406–409; Taipei, GFQJ, vol. 2, pp. 219–220; Chang Chung-tung, “Dr. Sun Yat-sen’s Principle of Livelihood and American Progressivism”, pp. 11–12.
- 14 Sun Yat-sen, *San Min Chu I* (Price translation), p. 161.
- 15 For a review of the writers, see Herbert H. Rosenthal, “Sun Yat-sen and Henry George: A Reassessment”, *Meiguo yanjiu* (American Studies), vol. 13, no. 3 (1983), pp. 10–13. Three scholars selected by Rosenthal as having worked extensively on Chinese socialism are Harold Z. Schiffrin, Robert A. Scalapino, and Martin Bernal. Despite some differences of opinion between them, Rosenthal concludes there is “striking” similarity between Sun and George in their social ideas (p. 23).

The most important doctrines to which Sun Yat-sen gave his attention in his review of the *minsheng* Principle are the “equalization of land ownership” and the “regulation of capital”. The former, Sun’s land policy, was his most contentious programme which led to a disruptive controversy among some of Sun’s supporters, particularly students from rural families and rich land-owning merchants.<sup>16</sup> Sun had no difficulty in accepting the socialist policies inherent in Henry George’s “single tax” concept, as Sun was already very acquainted with socialism and had begun to consider similar ideas as early as 1898.<sup>17</sup> In general, the doctrine of socialism was known to Chinese intellectuals since around 1890, and Sun was clearly fascinated by the moderate ideas of American and European social reformers who sought to regulate capitalism and establish an egalitarian society.<sup>18</sup> Despite the varied foreign influences on Sun’s socialist consciousness, traditional Chinese practices also influenced Sun’s thinking. Certain *minsheng* ideas, particularly the equalization of land ownership, can be detected in the well-field system (*jingtian*) of China’s Zhou dynasty and the reform programme of Wang Mang (Han dynasty) and Wang Anshi (Song dynasty), as well as the Taiping land system of the mid-nineteenth century.<sup>19</sup> In addition, Sun’s “single tax system” was similar to the “single whip system” (*yi tiao bian*) of the Ming dynasty.

Although Sun Yat-sen took considerable interest in Henry George’s tax theory, Sun innovatively modified it to fit China’s needs. While George developed a “land nationalization”, or a land redistribution programme, Sun was primarily interested in distributing future increased land values to the public.<sup>20</sup> His motive was to prevent a small privileged class from accumulating excessive wealth. Under Sun’s programme, individual owners would determine their land values which would be taxed at a universal tax rate of about one per cent, and later increases in land value would be determined by the government. The government also retained the right to purchase any piece of land. To further limit the private sector’s control

16 Martin Bernal, *Chinese Socialism to 1907*, pp. 63–64.

17 Socialism and land policy frequently appear in publications concerning Sun Yat-sen: “Oath of the Tokyo military school, 1903”, Beijing, SZSQJ, vol. 1, p. 224 (reprinted in Feng Ziyou, *Geming yishi* [Lost History of the Revolution], 5 vols., 2nd ed. [Shanghai: The Commercial Press, 1946], vol. 3); article by Liang Qichao, *Xinmin zongbao*, 1907, nos. 14, 15; Feng Ziyou, ten articles in the *Zhongguo ribao*, Hong Kong, Jan.–Feb. 1906 (reprinted in *Minbao*, Tokyo, no. 4); Hu Hanmin, *Minbao*, no. 3 (April 5, 1906), no. 12 (May 6, 1907); Sun’s speech in Tokyo, Dec. 2, 1906, Beijing, SZSQJ, vol. 1, pp. 323–331, *Minbao*, no. 10 (Dec. 20, 1906); Zhu Zhixin, *Minbao*, nos. 15, 16 (July 5, 1907, Sept. 25, 1907); Sun’s speeches at Shanghai, see Harold Z. Schiffrin, “Sun Yat-sen’s Early Land Policy, the Origin and Meaning of Equalization of Land Rights”, *Journal of Asian Studies*, vol. 16, no. 4 (Aug. 1957), pp. 549–564.

18 Arif Dirlik, *The Origins of Chinese Communism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989), p. 20.

19 Sun referred to these early economic schemes and was a known admirer of the Taipings. See Taipei, GFQJ, vol. 3, p. 196.

20 Chong, “The Sources and Development of Sun Yat-sen’s Nationalistic Ideology as Expressed in his *San Min Chu I*”, pp. 52–53; Schiffrin, “Sun Yat-sen’s Early Land Policy, the Origin and Meaning of Equalization of Land Rights”, pp. 550–551; Feng Ziyou, *Minsheng zhuyi yu Zhongguo zhengzhi geming zhi qiantu* (Principle of People’s Livelihood and the Prospect for China’s Political Revolution), (first published in *Zhongguo ribao* [China Daily], Hong Kong, 1905; reprinted in *Datong ribao* [Great Commonwealth Daily], San Francisco, and May 1905 issue of the *Minbao*, Tokyo).

of China's economy, large monopolistic type industries, such as banking, railways, and navigation, would be state operated.<sup>21</sup> Sun's single tax method was a compromise in which he modified George's tax programme, a plan that would lead to the complete socialization of land values. Sun's plan to postpone the determination of future land values and new taxes was pragmatic and realistic. His proposal limited state control and brought the landowner into the decision-making process, thereby curtailing potential opposition. Moreover, by re-evaluating land values after future growth and development, China could avoid being entrapped in land values and a tax system that was unworkable.

Sun believed that the underlying thrust for a successful implementation of the *minsheng* principle was a massive programme of modernization and reconstruction in China. Only in this way, Sun thought, could the economic well-being of the Chinese people be assured. As Sun began to revise his Three People's Principles in 1918 and the years following, he conceptualized his economic plan and wrote in greater detail about the objectives and procedures to implement a modernization programme for China. Through his new writings, Sun set forth then current "theories of reconstruction".<sup>22</sup> Despite his emphasis on economic planning, Sun realized that modernization could not be attained unless accompanied by an appropriate political structure, particularly on the local level. As an experiment, he suggested that a county (*xian*) be selected for the establishment of self-government. The plan for a model county, according to Sun, should have six essential elements. These would include taking a census, establishing agencies for self-government staffed by elected officials, regulating land prices, constructing roads, opening undeveloped barren land, and establishing schools.<sup>23</sup> Aware of problems in funding large social projects, Sun was convinced that a model county would be necessary before attempting to apply his ideas to all of China. The inspiration for such a model may have come from his earlier knowledge of the German experiment in Jiaozhou where Sun could recognize a similarity with his own land programme. Sun learned about the successful land policies of the German administration in this leased territory in 1905 on a visit to Berlin. The land law governing Jiaozhou was developed by the German "Land Commissioner and Councillor of the Admiralty", Wilhelm Schrameier. Still enamored with the German land programme in 1922, Sun requested a

21 The Manifesto of the Kuomintang, January 1, 1923, includes these principles; see Shieh, *The Kuomintang: Selected Historical Documents, 1894-1969*, p. 69; see also the Manifesto of the First Congress of the Kuomintang, Jan. 30, 1924, pp. 81, 84; Schiffrin, "Sun Yat-sen's Early Land Policy, the Origin and Meaning of Equalization of Land Rights", p. 556.

22 Primary sources for Sun's writings at this time include: (1) Sun Yat-sen, *Jianguo fanglue* (Plans for National Reconstruction), trans. by Frank W. Price under the title *Memoirs of a Chinese Revolutionary: A Programme of National Reconstruction for China*, first printing, 1918, Great Britain; second printing, 1953, Taiwan, (Taipei: China Cultural Service, 1953); the work includes *Sun Wen Xueshuo* ("Sun Wen's Doctrine"), and *The Autobiography of Sun Yat-sen* (ch. 8); (2) Sun Yat-sen, *Shilie jihua* (Plans for Industries), originally written in English, completed by Sun on April 25, 1921, and published under the title *The International Development of China* (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1922); the work is also titled *Wu-chih chien-she* (Material Reconstruction); (3) *Jianshe zazhi* (Construction Magazine), Aug. 1, 1919, carries an essay by Sun Yat-sen, see Beijing, SCSQJ, vol. 5, pp. 89-90.

23 "The Method of Implementing [Self-Government]", March 1, 1920, by Sun Yat-sen, Taipei, GFQJ, vol. 2, pp. 169-174; Beijing, SCSQJ, vol. 5, pp. 220-225; from *Jianshe zazhi*, Vol. 2. no. 2, March 1, 1920.

Chinese translation of Schrameier's 1914 book, *Aus Kiautschous Verwaltung* (On the administration of Jiaozhou). It was completed the following year by Zhu Hezhong, and in 1924 Sun invited Schrameier to Canton to serve as an adviser.<sup>24</sup> Most significant in Sun's final plan was its totality, because it included both economic *and* political programmes working in unison to modernize China and raise the standard of living of the Chinese people.

### *Minsheng* and China

The historical record clearly illustrates that Sun Yat-sen attempted to synthesize several political philosophies in his Three People's Principles, adopting what he thought appropriate and useful from Chinese and foreign thought. Consequently, it is not possible to characterize *minsheng* under an established label, for it is neither socialist, nor capitalist, nor communist. It is a synthesis of economic concepts prevalent in the era in which Sun Yat-sen lived. The various adaptations Sun Yat-sen sought to apply to China were selected for their pragmatic advantage toward improving China's livelihood.

One of the most common attributions to *minsheng* has been that its socialist quality resembles communist ideology. *Minsheng*, however, was not a Marxist-Leninist doctrine. Sun, in fact, even avoided the term "socialism" when identifying his "Principle of People's Livelihood". Although Sun consciously separated himself from Marxism in his famous joint communiqué with Adolf Joffe in January 1923, the communists looked upon Sun with favour and sympathized with the socialist concepts in *minsheng*. When Sun Yat-sen worked closely with his Comintern adviser, Mikhail Borodin, the communists became increasingly more confident in their growing influence upon Sun's thought. In a report on the Sun-Borodin negotiations, published in 1924, the communists claimed that "an important change has taken place in the 'Kuomintang' Party, the Radical National-Revolutionary Party, under the leadership of Sun Yat-sen", giving credit for the "ideological and organizational transformation of the Kuomintang" to "our comrades of the Communist Party of China, who formed the Kuomintang" and "played an extremely important part". The report confidently stated that "differences of opinion on the tactics of the liberation movement no longer exist".<sup>25</sup> While Sun sought the organizational skills of the communists, the communists saw themselves as influencing Sun both in organizational and ideological matters.

Some confusion exists in understanding the precise nature of Sun's views on the relationship between *minsheng* and communism. Sun himself talked both of similarities and differences between these two doctrines. In his lectures on *minsheng*, Sun equated it with

24 Gottfried-Karl Kindermann, "Sun Yat-sen and Germany", *Proceedings of [a] Conference on Dr. Sun Yat-sen and Modern China*, Vol. III: "National Revolution and Foreign Relations," (Taipei, Taiwan), pp. 17-18. Kindermann notes that the development and practice of Germany's land legislation in Jiaozhou were discussed in two books by Wilhelm Schrameier: *Aus Kiautschous Verwaltung* (On the administration of Jiaozhou) (Jena, 1914), see ch. 1, "Land-politik," pp. 1-72, and *Kiautschou: Seine Entwicklung und Bedeutung* (Jiaozhou: Its Development and Significance) (Berlin, 1915).

25 Communist International, Executive Committee, *From the Fourth to the Fifth World Congress* (published by the Communist Party of Great Britain, London, 1924), pp. 74-75.



communism suggesting that there was no conflict between them and declared “we should even claim communism as a good friend”. In the belief that communism meant the sharing of property, Sun said, “when the people share everything in the state, then will we truly reach the goal of the *minsheng* Principle”. To the communists, Sun’s synonymous view of “Livelihood” and “socialism” confirmed his acceptance of communist doctrine. Despite Sun’s understanding of the limits of socialism and the communist realization that Sun’s vision of the Chinese economy was insufficient under the communist definition,<sup>26</sup> the communists found it expedient to regard Sun as having accepted their economic doctrine.

Nevertheless, the differences between Sun’s thought and fundamental communist doctrine were self-evident to Sun Yat-sen, especially in their respective goals, methods, and attitudes toward private business. Sun’s view of land reform, for example, centred on the equalization of land ownership and a system of fixed taxation and land value rather than full communalization. In addition, Sun’s industrialization programme required foreign capital, and he considered class struggle a contradiction to a classless society. In noting the differences between his principle of *minsheng* and communism, Sun cited the techniques and methods employed as primary. He declared that Marxism could not be applied to China and remarked that “we can take Marx’s ideas as a guide, but we cannot make use of his methods”. He also claimed that communist theory did not begin with Marx but originated in prehistoric times.<sup>27</sup> Elaborating on his social and economic reform programmes, Sun said they “are quite different from the methods which Marx proposed, and if we follow them as the way to economic reconstruction we will be in opposition to Marx’s revolutionary schemes”.

Sun’s presumed fascination with communism waned considerably in the year before his death, and he became more sceptical about the prospects of the communist movement in general in China. During an interview with a Japanese reporter in Guangzhou in February 1924, Sun remarked that the “communist movement will not penetrate into China and Japan”.<sup>28</sup> Shortly afterwards, Sun gave another interview expressing his belief that the communist system should not be introduced in Guangzhou or anywhere else in China.<sup>29</sup> Emphasizing the differences further, Sun explained in still another interview in Shanghai that

26 Hu Sheng, President of the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, “Socialist Ideas of Sun Yat-sen”, *Far Eastern Affairs*, Institute of the Far East, USSR Academy of Sciences, no. 3 (1987), pp. 101, 104, 106–107, 109 (from the summary of Hu’s paper presented at the conference to mark the 120th anniversary of the birth of Sun Yat-sen).

27 Sun Yat-sen, *San Min Chu I* (Price translation), pp. 410, 416, 429, 441. The “pro-communist” designation of Sun’s views is refuted in an English-language article by Wang Ching-wei published in 1927 after the break between the Kuomintang and the Chinese Communist Party; see Wang Ching-wei, “The Difference Between Communism and Sun Yat-Senism”, *The China Weekly Review*, vol. 43, no. 3 (Dec. 17, 1927), pp. 68–69. His remarks were made in an address to students at Shanghai College, an American missionary institution, and were originally published in the *North China Daily News*. For a useful study comparing Sun Yat-sen’s views with communism, see Shao-chuan Leng and Norman D. Palmer, *Sun Yat-sen and Communism* (New York: Frederick A. Praeger, 1960), especially pp. 164–165.

28 Sun Yat-sen, conversation with a Japanese reporter, Feb. 1924, Taipei, GFQJ, supplementary volume, pp. 234–240, from *Taiwan minbao*, no. 183–188 (Nov. 1927); Beijing, SZSQJ, vol. 9, pp. 531–537.

29 Sun Yat-sen, interview with a Hong Kong news agency, March 30, 1924, Beijing, SZSQJ, vol. 9, pp. 669–670, from *Shuntian shibao*, March 31, 1924.

his party may be similar “in spirit” with the Soviet Union in that they were “working together for the oppressed people” of the world but he did not see a similarity in ideology between them. Moreover, Sun would not even give credit to the Soviet system as being true communism.<sup>30</sup>

As political positions changed in China during the late 1920s and the 1930s, the views of the Chinese communists also changed, thereby widening the gap further between Sun Yat-sen and the communists. In 1940, fifteen years after Sun's death, the Chinese communists assumed a critical view of the *minsheng* principle. They clearly stated that *minsheng* and communism represented two different social categories,<sup>31</sup> contending that the primary difference between *minsheng* and communism was their methods. The communists asserted that the Three People's Principles “belong to the definite category of the Chinese bourgeois-democratic revolution”, thereby separating themselves from the nationalists. The communists also claimed that “the realization of *San Min Zhuyi* objectively creates conditions favorable to the development of Chinese capitalism; but it does not create socialism, much less communism”. Chen Boda, the communist theoretician at the time, wrote “it is not true that the Principle of Livelihood is communist, and differs from the latter only in method”.<sup>32</sup> The communists were also critical about *minsheng* because it did not identify with the Chinese working class movement, thereby lacking a proletarian role, and Chen contended that under the *minsheng* doctrine this class was not used to “convert the private means of production into public ones”. Chen also considered *minsheng* as “the principle of equal distribution of land and other programmes for industrialization”. If these are realized, he wrote, “they are simply democratic economic improvements, limited within the category of capitalism”.<sup>33</sup> The Chinese Communists further claimed that they were better fitted to develop the real, revolutionary significance of Sun's *minsheng* principle.<sup>34</sup> The communists made a convincing case in showing the differences between their ideology and that of Sun Yat-sen.

In the context of Sun Yat-sen's revolutionary career in which he frequently modified his views and policies to gain favour and support for his movement, it is not strange that Sun would at times speak favourably about the similarities between *minsheng* and communism. In reality, we can see that the views of both Sun Yat-sen and the Chinese communists fluctuated with the political climate and requirements of the time. When examining the meaning of *minsheng*, however, and comparing it with the communist economic programme, it becomes more apparent that *minsheng* was not communism, but rather a synthesis of various economic concepts while retaining a strong socialist content.

30 Sun Yat-sen's interview with a correspondent of the *Minguo ribao* (Shanghai), Feb. 27, 1924, Beijing, *SZSQJ*, vol. 9, p. 518, from *Minguo ribao*, Feb. 29, 1924.

31 See Chen Boda's essay in Wang Jiexiang, Chen Boda, Lo Fu, *Communists and the Three People's Principles* (Chongqing: New China Information Committee, Chongqing, China, August 1940), p. 34.

32 *Ibid.*, p. 35.

33 *Ibid.*, p. 37.

34 *Ibid.*, p. 40.

## *Minsheng* and Taiwan

Before Sun Yat-sen died in 1925, he was consciously aware that the revolution he began remained unfinished, and he exhorted his followers to pursue their revolutionary efforts unabated regardless of the sacrifice they would have to endure. Despite the disruptive years caused by warlordism, communist insurgency, and Japanese encroachment after Sun's death, Nationalist leaders continued to seek ways to implement the Three People's Principles. The first genuine opportunity for the Nationalist government to develop a full programme of reconstruction did not arise until after 1949 in Taiwan. The calm and order on this relatively isolated Chinese island provided the atmosphere in which both economic and political developments could slowly evolve in accordance with Sun's guidelines. The application of Sun's Principles in Taiwan eventually had an extensive impact on the island's economic development.<sup>35</sup> Sun's ideas pertaining to land distribution, the combination of socialist and capitalist principles in commercial and industrial development, acceptance of international investment and cooperation, and educational reform have all been implemented as part of Taiwan's developmental programmes.<sup>36</sup> Although Sun's concept of *minsheng* was sometimes imprecise and contradictory, its importance, as the political scientist George T. Yu has written, "lies in its vision and spirit" while the Three People's Principles generally "provided a guide for the creation of a modern industrial society".<sup>37</sup> An American economist, Chu-yuan Cheng, has similarly written that "the implementation of Sun's doctrine in Taiwan since 1950 has transformed the island from a backward agrarian economy into a dynamic and modern society".<sup>38</sup> Cheng attributed Taiwan's economic success to the land reform programme, development of labour-intensive products, creation of a middle-class through private enterprise, and education and training for workers, giving credit to the decision of Taiwan's leaders to "embark upon a programme based on Sun's doctrine".<sup>39</sup>

The leader who most vigorously advocated implementing Sun's programme was the late Chen Cheng, former Vice President who frequently emphasized Taiwan's land reform programme in the 1950s and early 1960s. To Chen Cheng, the ideal format for a land reform programme was the one designed by Sun Yat-sen. Sun's advocacy of the "rent reduction" and

35 For cogent arguments explaining these developments, see A. James Gregor, with Maria Hsia Chang and Andrew B. Zimmerman, *Ideology and Development: Sun Yat-sen and the Economic History of Taiwan* (Berkeley: University of California, Institute of East Asian Studies, 1981); James C. Hsiung, et al., *Contemporary Republic of China: The Taiwan Experience, 1950-1980* (New York: The American Association for Chinese Studies, 1981).

36 Chu-yuan Cheng, "The Doctrine of People's Welfare: The Taiwan Experiment and Its Implications for the Third World", in *Sun Yat-sen's Doctrine in the Modern World*, edited by Chu-yuan Cheng (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1989), p. 255; George T. Yu, "The 1911 Revolution: Past, Present, and Future", *Asian Survey*, vol. 31, no. 10 (October 1991), p. 904.

37 George T. Yu, "The 1911 Revolution: Past, Present, and Future", p. 904.

38 Chu-yuan Cheng, "The Doctrine of People's Welfare: The Taiwan Experiment and Its Implications for the Third World", p. 255.

39 *Ibid.*, p. 249. For an analysis of Taiwan's economic success, see Cheng's complete article, pp. 244-275; and for a similar evaluation, supported by economic data, see A. James Gregor, *The China Connection: U.S. Policy and the People's Republic of China* (Stanford: Hoover Institution Press, 1986), pp. 136-141.

“land to the tiller” programmes, Chen believed, could “go hand in hand with the ‘equalization of land rights’.” This concept and Sun’s views on the “regulation of Capital”, declared Chen, was necessary in order to achieve *minsheng*.<sup>40</sup> Chen’s proposals on land reform closely followed the concepts advanced by Sun Yat-sen earlier. Like Sun, Chen believed that the “land should be owned by the public in principle, and should not be owned by any private individual”, but he reasoned that Sun favoured “land nationalization only as a matter of principle”.<sup>41</sup> Chen Cheng’s efforts resulted in an extraordinary success in Taiwan’s economic development, particularly in regard to agricultural technology, competitive industrial productivity, and scientific and technical education. Throughout Taiwan’s economic development, government participation and guidance played a prominent role but gradually declined as the capability of the private sector to take the initiative increased.<sup>42</sup> Nevertheless, the direction of private economic activities remained influenced by the government use of credit policies, taxation, and foreign exchange rates. In addition, the government formulated developmental plans every four years, establishing economic objectives, identifying key sectors, and creating policies to implement the plan.<sup>43</sup> It is apparent that Taiwan’s high level of economic achievement was due to the utilization of socialist principles of state planning and policy direction with elements of capitalist theory such as free enterprise and private capital investment.

The Republic of China on Taiwan was not the only area which laid claim to Sun Yat-sen’s Principles. The communist government of the People’s Republic of China on the mainland also declared adherence to the same Principles. The Communists, however, maintained a significantly different interpretation of the ideology promoted by Sun Yat-sen, asserting that the socialist doctrines in the Three People’s Principles were part of the communist didactic. An increasing amount of attention was especially devoted to Sun after the death of Mao Zedong in 1976. In the years that immediately followed Mao’s death, the Chinese Communists considered that only they and a few Guomindang leftists were the rightful interpreters of the revolutionary spirit. One communist biographer, Shang Mingxuan, wrote in 1978 that such renowned leaders of the Chinese Communist Party as Mao Zedong, Zhou Enlai, and Zhu De were very praiseworthy of Sun’s character and achievements.<sup>44</sup> Late in 1981, the Chinese government began a sustained campaign praising the policies advocated by Sun Yat-sen and declared that the programme of the Chinese Communist Party was the logical successor to the 1911 revolution. These claims were prominently expressed on the editorial page of the *Renmin Ribao* (People’s Daily).<sup>45</sup> In 1984, Deng Xiaoping publicly

40 Chen Cheng, *Land Reform in Taiwan* (Taipei: China Publishing Co., 1961), pp. 10–11, 13.

41 *Ibid.*, p. 12.

42 Chu-yuan Cheng, “The Doctrine of People’s Welfare: The Taiwan Experiment and Its Implications for the Third World”, p. 252; since the 1960s, government involvement declined from about 48 per cent of the industrial output to 14.8 per cent by 1986.

43 *Ibid.*

44 Shang Mingxuan, *Sun Zhongshan chuan*, (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1978), p. 317.

45 Editorial, *Renmin ribao* (People’s Daily [Beijing]), October 9, 1981.

claimed it was the socialist policies of the Chinese Communist Party that were responsible for China's development rather than the Guomindang.<sup>46</sup>

Throughout the 1980s increasingly greater attention was given by the Chinese Communists to Sun Yat-sen and his developmental policies. The emphasis on Sun, however, was at least as much political as ideological when Sun's prescription for modernization became an instrument for reunification with Taiwan. To facilitate the unification process, China presented a "nine-point" plan to the Nationalist government which would have given Taiwan virtual autonomy. The Nationalists, however, were derisive in their response and expressed concern over China's comparatively poor economy and harsh policies toward the autonomous regions. President Jiang Jinguo, in March 1986, scornfully spoke of the "poverty, backwardness, and endless persecutions and purges" having taken place in China. Despite the communist claims to following the doctrines of Sun Yat-sen, Jiang regarded the communist system to be considerably different from that on Taiwan, and he could not envision any compromise between them.<sup>47</sup> Jiang spoke harshly of communist regimes, considering them "more tyrannical than the Nazis". He believed unification with the China mainland could only be based on the Nationalist's interpretation of the Three People's Principles.<sup>48</sup> The hostile response from Taiwan's leadership, despite conciliatory attitudes developing among some Nationalist officials, prevented serious measures from being taken toward unification and re-emphasized the conflicting interpretations of Sun's Principles. The communist interpretation of Sun Yat-sen's Three People's Principles, based on communist programmes for implementation, requires a serious and objective study; but in viewing the application of Sun's concept of *minsheng* in particular, the above account suggests a conscious effort to implement at least the fundamental elements of his programme in Taiwan.

46 Deng Xiaoping, "Zai zhongyang guwen weiyuan hui di san ci quanti huiyi shang de jianghua" (Speech at the Third Plenary Session of the Central Advisory Committee), *Renmin Ribao*, October 12, 1984.

47 Jiang Jinguo at the opening of the Third Plenary Session of the Twelfth Central Committee of the Guomindang, Taipei, March 29, 1986, "China's Reunification and World Peace", pamphlet [English], (Taipei: China Publishing Co., 1987, 6th ed.), pp. 3, 6.

48 *Ibid.*, pp. 10–13.

# 孫中山的民生主義

(中文摘要)

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民生主義是孫中山先生倡導的三民主義的一部分。這篇文章探討民生主義的起源和意義，並分析民生主義在中國實施的方法。此外，文章也論述了社會主義如何影響孫中山的思想，以及當時中國的社會和經濟環境對孫中山的影響。文章的重要論點是西方的社會主義、資本主義和中國傳統觀念對孫中山提出的民生主義有很大的影響。

文章主要探討孫中山的社會主義思想和共產主義者的社會主義思想的異同。作者認為，孫中山和共產主義者在詮釋民生主義時都改變了它的原意。作者指出他們二者對社會主義的理解常隨着中國政治形勢的變動而更改。此外，作者認為孫中山並沒有接受馬克思主義的所有概念，例如孫中山否定了歷史唯物主義和階級鬥爭的教條。美國進步主義 (American Progressive Movement) 所提出的社會概念及德國、英國和俄國的革命經驗對孫中山的思想有一定的影響。作者認為，孫中山倡導的民生主義中最重要的社會主義概念是節制私人資本、建設國家資本和平均地權。

作為結論，作者指出：孫中山從來沒有機會實行他提出的民生主義。真正開始實行民生主義的是在臺灣的中華民國政權，只有中華民國的現代化政策才和孫中山的民生主義一致，中華人民共和國的共產政權雖也宣稱實行孫中山的民生主義，但他們的詮釋和孫中山所倡導的並不相同。