

## Attachment 1: Subject of the Conference

### “Reform and Revolution: In commemoration of the Xinhai Revolution and 100 years of state building”

Department of East Asian Studies/Sinology, University of Vienna,  
January 8-13, 2012, Vienna, Austria

#### 1. Preface

The revolution of 1911 and the establishment of the Republic of China in 1912 are historical events of major importance for the Chinese people and of enormous interest for academic studies on the history of modern China. During the last 60 years, the research done in mainland China, Taiwan and overseas on this subject has been characterized by different waves of academic trends.

In the first decade of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, the academic research on this subject in mainland China obviously has extricated itself from the dominant political ideologies and, therefore, new historical findings and interpretations have been presented to the academic world. At the same time, the research activities in Taiwan have decreased because of recent political trends and the lack of new primary sources on that period. As a result, articles in academic journals by Taiwanese scholars have been rather rare during the last few years. However, by the time of the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the revolution of 1911 and the establishment of the Republic of China in 1912, not only are state officials as well as researchers both in mainland China and Taiwan preparing commemorative activities; we can also observe a new wave of academic research on this subject. Research focusing on the revolution of 1911 and the establishment of the Republic of China in 1912 is flourishing.

It is against this background that the Department of East Asian Studies/Sinology at the University of Vienna has decided to hold the conference “Reform and Revolution: In commemoration of the Xinhai Revolution and 100 years of state building” between January 8 and 13, 2012. The main goal is to provide an international academic platform, where scholars of Chinese history will review, investigate and

discuss – in an open and constructive atmosphere – the deep-going influence of the revolution of 1911 on China’s historical path through revolution, reform and transition during the last century.

In fact, there are already several examples of very successful international conferences on this subject, such as the conferences in Chicago and Honolulu (USA) on the occasion of the 70<sup>th</sup> and 80<sup>th</sup> anniversary, respectively. We are convinced that the conference in Vienna in 2012 will follow their examples and have a positive and groundbreaking effect on the study of the revolution of 1911 and the subsequent efforts of state building in Greater China.

## **2. Main focus of the conference**

Generally speaking, there are three approaches within the academic research on the revolution of 1911 and the establishment of the Republic of China in 1912. The first approach consists of finding and analyzing historical data in order to add new accurate facts about the actual historical process. The second approach uses new theoretical frameworks and concepts in order to explain the causal factors for the revolution in 1911 and the establishment of the Republic of China. The third approach consists of exploring the effects of those historical events on the history of modern China as well as on the economic, political and social developments in mainland China and Taiwan during the last century.

Currently, academic research in mainland China and Taiwan mainly adopts the first and second approaches to the study of the revolution of 1911 and the establishment of the Republic of China in 1912. However, whereas research in Taiwan focuses more on the establishment of a republican system of government and currently develops a new theoretical perspective on local transformation processes in Republican China, the focus of scholars in mainland China is laid more on the experiences and lessons of the bourgeois revolution, the struggle for national independence and the modernization efforts dominated by the CCP.

The conference in Vienna between January 8 and 13, 2012 will focus on the third approach. It will go beyond the different ideologies, professional interests and political realities which are still influencing current research on the subject, and analyze the historical processes of transition and transformation during the last 100 years initiated by the revolution in 1911 and the establishment of the Republic of China in 1912. Moreover, the reasons for the still unfinished character of these processes of transition and transformation will be explored from an international and macro-historical perspective.

### **3. Topics of the conference**

The conference in Vienna will be focused on four discussion topics: (1) political changes; (2) economic modernization; (3) international influences; (4) culture and intellectuals.

#### **3.1 Political changes**

Since the revolution of 1911, political changes and, in particular, regime changes in China have always been carried out under the slogan of “the Republic”. However, at the conference in Vienna we will pay more attention to the following aspects of political change in China:

a) The concept of “revolution” and mass movements. After the revolution of 1911, “revolution” and mass movements based on social mobilization became the main instruments of political change in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. From Sun Yat-Sen to Chiang Kai-shek, the KMT always called on the Chinese people to undertake the “National Revolution”. More obviously, the CCP, from proclaiming the “New Democratic Revolution” up to the “Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution”, time and again called on different kinds of mass movements. As they both declared themselves to be the ethical and moral inheritor of the revolution of 1911, comparing their different approaches to “revolution” and mass movements is necessary in order to understand the legacy of the Xinhai Revolution.

b) Ideological changes. The ultimate goal of the revolution of 1911 and the establishment of the Republic of China was “democracy”. No matter if we look at the old and new “Three Doctrines”, the “New Democracy” or “Communism”, the idea of “democracy” in China is still on the political agenda. However, the ideological concept of “democracy” was given completely different meanings and it played very different roles in the history of modern China during the last 100 years. The important role of ideologies in the development of political thought in China is, therefore, also one of the subjects of the conference in Vienna.

c) The transformation of the state, the system of government and the constitution. A democratic state can only be established within a republican form of government, and therefore a constitution is a necessary framework for a democratic system and the related political institutions. However, while the Chinese state never lacked different versions of written “constitutions” during the last 100 years since 1911, under political leaders such as Yuan Shikai, Chiang Kai-shek and Mao Zedong, these “constitutions” never played the same fundamental role and were never carried out in the same way as

in modern political systems in other parts of the world. This is one of the main reasons for the continuous legitimacy crisis of political power in China. Therefore, the questions of how to overcome the traditional political culture and how to establish a modern political system are fundamental political challenges which Greater China has been facing during the last 100 years.

d) The re-evaluation of important historical figures. In mainland China, the re-evaluation of important political figures in Chinese history (Sun Zhongshan, Yuan Shikai, Chiang Kai-shek, Mao Zedong, and others) has been characterized by the revision of older verdicts and the revelation of new historical facts due to weakened ideological control in the last few years. However, as far as the Revolution of 1911 is concerned, scholars in mainland China have still not started to question the dominant historical interpretation. Scholars of Chinese history in Taiwan and around the world pay particular attention to this seemingly paradox situation. Therefore, the conference in Vienna will provide an opportunity to openly discuss the question of the re-evaluation of important historical figures in Chinese history since 1911.

### **3.2 Economic modernization**

“Modernization” has been the most important issue in China during the last 100 years. However, different social groups, parties and political organizations had and still have different opinions on the accurate economic institutions and practices leading to “modernization” in China. At the conference in Vienna, we will analyze and discuss the following topics:

a) Comparison of economic modernization models in mainland China and Taiwan. The market system, the system of property rights and the enterprise system will be discussed in order to analyze and compare different economic modernization models from different perspectives. Moreover, this subject also includes a comparison between the “East Asian Model” and the so called “China Model” – a model that is currently being discussed in mainland China as well as in the western media.

b) The role of state capitalism. What kind of role did state capitalism play after the revolution of 1911? In the traditional understanding, the nationalization of the railway system triggered the Sichuan Railway Protection Movement and led to a wave of anti-Manchu protests. From the viewpoint of economic modernization, the political leadership in the late Qing Dynasty, the Nanjing Government and the PRC under the leadership of Mao Zedong all tried to modernize China by strengthening the state-owned economy. According to recent research on this subject, exploring the transformation of the state-owned

economy can provide important insights on the revolution of 1911 and the process of economic modernization in China during the last 100 years.

c) Common problems in the process of modernization. Modernization is a wide-ranging historical process in which a lot of common problems may arise. Currently mainland China is facing a series of such related problems, which were solved, at least in part, by Taiwan years ago. The discussion about this subject also seems to be a very good way to commemorate the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Revolution of 1911 and the establishment of the Republic of China.

### **3.3 International influences**

During the last 100 years since 1911, the structure of international relations went through a lot of changes, and China had to adjust its relations with the most powerful nations and to find itself a place and identity in the global arena. Therefore, it is almost impossible to explain the processes of revolution, reform and transition in China without assessing the global background. During the conference in Vienna international influences on China during the last 100 years will be discussed along the following three aspects:

a) International incidents that had a decisive impact on China. These include: World War I; the rise to power of the Bolshevik in 1917; the Great Depression (1929-1933); World War II and the War of Resistance against Japan; the Korean War and the Cold War; the disintegration of the Soviet Union; globalization, the global war on terror. To take out a few examples for the interconnectedness between international incidents and transformation processes in China: The Great Depression accelerated the process of establishing a state capitalist system by the Nanjing Government as well as the monetary reform in 1935; the War of Resistance against Japan provided the opportunity for the Chinese Communist Party to increase their political influence, to strengthen their military force and to seize national power in 1949; against the background of the Cold War China became a member of the socialist camp, got involved in the Korean War, completed the first “Five-Year Plan” and laid the foundations for further industrialization.

b) Chinese reactions to changing international relations. Generally speaking, China had been in a “passive” position under the existing world order during the last 100 years, especially in relation to the United States, the former USSR and Japan. It was only within this position of “passivity” that China could change its own relations to the outside world. However, the reactions to changing international

relations had decisive impacts on internal transformation processes. For instance, China had to choose the right side in World War I and World War II; China decided to separate from the Soviet Union and to improve its relations with the western world (including the United States) during the period of the Cold War – and without that decisions it would have been very difficult for China to initiate economic reforms and the Open Door policy in the late 1970s.

c) Both Taiwan and mainland China have seized historical opportunities for economic modernization. Taiwan has seized the opportunities for establishing a liberal, export-oriented market economy against the background of the new political order in Asia after World War II. By maintaining good relations with the United States, Japan and countries in Southeast Asia it laid the foundations for its modernization path by which it became one of Asia's "four small dragons" in the 1970s. Because mainland China recognized that the Open Door policy was a crucial opportunity in the late 1970s, it laid the foundations for becoming a powerful nation in the process of globalization.

### **3.4 Culture and intellectuals**

During the past 100 years, Chinese culture has been in a process of constant transformation, and simultaneously also the composition and function of Chinese intellectuals has changed. Moreover, the transformation of Chinese culture and the transformation of the composition and function of intellectuals are strongly interrelated. Therefore, the conference in Vienna will also focus on the following topics:

a) The evolution of Chinese culture. As a consequence of the revolution in 1911 the foundations of Chinese traditional culture had been wavered. The May 4<sup>th</sup> Movement, by advocating vernacular writing and adopting many elements of Western culture, gave rise to the "New Culture". After 1949, Chinese culture got divided in the culture of mainland China and Taiwanese culture. In Taiwan, US and Japanese cultures exerted a strong influence. In mainland China, the progress of Chinese culture was shaped by Marxism-Leninism and Mao Zedong Thought, especially during the "Cultural Revolution". Since the 1980s however, culture in mainland China has become relatively independent, diversified and popularized. Nowadays, the culture of mainland China and Taiwanese culture tend to merge together.

b) The division and polarization of Chinese intellectuals. In Chinese traditional society, intellectuals were forming a stable and privileged social class (士, the "Shi class"). This changed fundamentally during the

last 100 years. After the 1920s, mainly because of the growing influence of communism and nationalism, opinions regarding the right path to modernization, the adequate political system were discussed with great controversy, Chinese culture became more and more diversified and different fractions of intellectuals evolved. Between 1945 and 1949, the shift of Chinese intellectuals to the political left was one of the key reasons for the collapse of the Nationalist Party's rule in mainland China. However, between the 1950s and the 1970s, many of these intellectuals were suppressed and the object of political mass campaigns. In the 1980s, intellectual circles were flourishing again and contributed to the historical progress in China. However, the June 4<sup>th</sup> Incident in 1989 led to a new polarization among Chinese intellectuals.

In Taiwan, those intellectuals who had come together with the KMT from mainland China were usually well integrated into the political system, while those of Taiwanese background were often excluded and suppressed. Today, the polarization of intellectuals is closely related to the division between supporters of the "Pan-Blue" and the "Pan-Green" camp. By analyzing and discussing the transformation and polarization of Chinese intellectuals at the conference in Vienna, a very important dimension of research on Chinese history during the last 100 years will be addressed.

c) The Chinese intellectual and the state. Although China has been going through a process of modernization during the past 100 years the so called "independent intellectual" has never developed into an important driving force in society. This is to a certain degree also true for the situation in Taiwan. A comparison between the situation of intellectuals in Taiwan and the PRC as well as a comparison between the role of intellectuals and their relationship to the state in different historical periods of the last 100 years should generate interesting insights.