

Chinese Revolution [http://alphahistory.com/chineserevolution/three-principles-](http://alphahistory.com/chineserevolution/three-principles-sun-yat-sen-1923/)

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Writing in his 1923 book *Fundamentals of National Reconstruction*, Sun Yixian (Sun Yat-sen) offers a brief account of his Three Principles:

“The principles which I have held in promoting the Chinese revolution were in some cases copied from our traditional ideals, in other cases modelled on European theory and experience and in still others formulated according to original and self-developed theories. They are described as follows:

1. The Principle of Nationalism

Revelations of Chinese history prove that the Chinese as a people are independent in spirit and in conduct. Upon this legacy is based my principle of nationalism, and where necessary, I have developed it and amplified and improved upon it. This is our nationalistic policy toward races within our national boundaries. Externally, we should strive to maintain independence in the family of nations, and to spread our indigenous civilization as well as to enrich it by absorbing what is best in world civilization, with the hope that we may forge ahead with other nations towards the goal of ideal brotherhood.

2. The Principle of Democracy

Since we have had only ideas about popular rights, and no democratic system has been evolved, we have to go to Europe and America for a republican form of government. There some countries have become republics and others have adopted constitutional monarchism, under which royal power has shrunk in the face of the rising demand for popular rights.

All through my revolutionary career I have held the view that China must be made a republic. While a constitutional monarchy may not arouse deep resentment in other countries and can maintain itself for the time being, it will be an impossibility in China. This is from a historical point of view. If a republican government is adopted, there will be no contention. A constitution must be adopted to ensure good government. The true meaning of constitutionalism was discovered by Montesquieu. The threefold separation of the legislative, judicial, and executive powers as advocated by him was accepted in every constitutional country in Europe.

3. The Principle of Livelihood.

With the invention of modern machines, the phenomenon of uneven distribution of wealth in the West has become all the more marked. On my tour of Europe and America, I saw with my own eyes the instability of their economic structure and the deep concern of their leaders in

groping for a solution. I felt that, although the disparity of wealth under our economic organization is not as great as in the West, the difference is only in degree, not in character.

The situation will become more acute when the West extends its economic influence to China. We must form plans beforehand, in order to cope with the situation. After comparing various schools of economic thought, I have come to the realization that the principle of state ownership is most profound, reliable and practical. I have therefore decided to enforce the principle of the people's livelihood simultaneously with the principles of nationalism and democracy, with the hope to achieve our political objective and nip economic unrest in the bud."