Part II  Nationalism and Revolution, 1919-37

1. How did a new kind of politics emerge in the 1920s? What was new about it?
2. What social forces (groups like businessmen, students, peasants, women, and so forth) contributed to the rise of the Nationalist Party?
3. What were the main problems faced by the Nationalist Party as it achieved power? How did it deal with these problems?

Chapter 8  Politics and culture in the May Fourth movement

1. What provoked the May Fourth incident? Why did it turn into a “movement”?
2. What did the May Fourth movement owe to the New Culture movement? How did it move beyond New Culture themes?
3. As the May Fourth movement spread from Beijing to Shanghai and other cities, what did its leaders call for? What techniques did they use to press their demands? Were they successful?
4. To what extent was the May Fourth movement “personal”? In other words, how did a political movement relate to issues like freedom for women (and men) to choose their own marriage partners? Was it a generational struggle? How did gender issues relate to nationalism?
5. If the United State’s Wilson and the Soviet Union’s Lenin are both regarded as critics of imperialism, how did they differ? Which man better understood China’s position in the world at the end of World War I?
6. What was fueling anti-imperialist sentiment in China at the end of the war? How did Chinese nationalism of the 1910s differ from, say, that of the Boxers a generation earlier?
7. How did the position of Japan in China grow in the late 1910s and the 1920s?

Chapter 9  National identity, Marxism, and social justice

1. Should Marxism in some sense be regarded as the “heir” to Confucianism?
2. What was the critique made of Marxism by liberal critics such as Hu Shi? What did they propose as solutions to China’s problems?
3. What reform projects were undertaken in the 1920s? Why did their radical critics think them doomed to failure?
4. What first intrigued radical intellectuals like Li Dazhao and Chen Duxiu about Marxism?
5. Why did the 1920s, generally considered a “radical” decade, also see a conservative revival? Why were intellectuals like Zhang Junmai and Liang Qichao critical of “Westernization,” “modernization,” and “science”? What did they want instead?
6. How did anarchists and anarchism contribute to the New Culture and May Fourth ideas and movements? Where did anarchists and Marxists (or future communists) differ?
7. Can we speak of a “common discourse” uniting the May Fourth actors, at least to a degree? If so, where did this discourse come from? How was it new? To what degree did it mark a break with the past—and to what degree were its themes prefigured in the Confucian radicalism of the late Qing?

Chapter 10  The rise of national political parties

1. To what degree can China be considered colonized by the Western powers by the early twentieth century? What were the extent and limits of imperialism in China? How had imperialism changed by the 1920s?
2. What distinguished the Nationalist Party (Guomindang, GMD) and the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) from other political forces in China?
3. How was Sun Yat-sen finally able to create a functional political force based in Guangzhou? Had Sun’s political savvy improved by the mid-1920s or had China finally caught up with Sun?
4. What role did the Soviet Union and Communist International (Comintern) play in the formation of the Nationalist Party? What role did international and domestic events outside the party’s direct control play in its early development?
5. Who organized the CCP and how? Who became China’s first Communists?
6. What was the appeal of both the Nationalists and the Communists to particular social groups in China? To students, women, intellectuals, workers, merchants, soldiers, and so forth?
7. Why was Shanghai so important in early twentieth-century China? How did the May Thirtieth movement reshape the political scene, domestically and internationally?

Chapter 11  Ideology and power in the National Revolution

1. What were the main factors in the rise of the Nationalist Party (Guomindang, GMD) to national prominence over the late 1920s?
2. For the GMD, how central were the organizing principles of Leninism and the help of the Communist International (Comintern)? For both the GMD and the Chinese Communist Party (CCP), how important was the United Front?

3. What were the main elements of “Sunism” and the “Three People’s Principles”? Could these provide an effective ideology for a revolutionary political movement? Did they?

4. Was Sun Yat-sen a nationalist leader, preparing for the “National Revolution” by appealing to the forces of cosmopolitan anti-imperialism?

5. What were the appeals made by the GMD and the CCP to peasants in the 1920s? What difficulties did they face in the countryside?

6. From the peasants’ point of view, what practical help did outside organizers offer? What were the risks involved?

7. What were the appeals made by the GMD and the CCP to women?

8. Were feminist demands based on the Three People’s Principles, nationalism, and Marxism? Did such doctrines impose limitations on the liberation of women?

Chapter 12  The Northern Expedition and the rise of Chiang Kai-shek

1. What kind of party (-government, -army) did Sun bequeath to his fellow Nationalists on his death in 1925? What were its strengths and weaknesses?

2. How did Chiang Kai-shek manage to rise to power in the Nationalist Party in the 1920s? What kind of leader was he?

3. Was the Northern Expedition a military conquest or a “National Revolution” (as the GMD claimed) or a social revolution? What were the respective roles of armies, workers, peasants, and women during the 1926-28 period?

4. How did the warlords respond to the GMD, Chiang Kai-shek, and the Northern Expedition? How did Chiang Kai-shek treat defeated warlords?

5. Why did Chiang Kai-shek decide to purge the Communists and end the United Front? How did other GMD leaders react to the purges? What responsibility does the CCP bear for the breakdown of the United Front?

6. According to the GMD, what was the proper relationship between the party/government and Chinese society? What was the Chinese Marxist view of Chinese society?

7. What did Chiang Kai-shek/the GMD want power for? If the purpose of the Northern Expedition was to unify China under the GMD, what was the GMD’s purpose and goals?
8. From the viewpoint of the late 1920s, can we speak of Sun Yat-sen’s “legacy”? If so, what did he leave China? How were his ideas (Sunism, the Three People’s Principles) to shape the ideas of Chinese people?

13 The Nanjing Decade, 1928-37: The Guomindang era

1. How did the means by which the Nationalists came to power affect the ways they ruled once they were in power.
2. What were the limits and extent of the power of the “Nanjing regime” once it came to power in 1928? How did the new government evolve over the following decade?
3. How did Chiang Kai-shek maintain his hold over the government? What were the relations between the government bureaucracy, the Party, and the army?
4. What was the relationship between the Nanjing regime and Chinese society? Did the Nanjing regime put the Three People’s Principles or other aspects of Sunism into practice? What were Chiang’s own priorities?
5. How did Chinese society change during the Nanjing decade? Did the government encourage workers, women, or peasants to improve their lots?
6. Did a civil society provide a space for dissent during the Nanjing decade? Why were non-Communist intellectuals still dissatisfied with an anti-Communist government?
7. Is “state-building” a useful approach to understanding the Nanjing decade? “Fascism”? The updated Confucianism of the New Life movement?
8. What were the obstacles faced by state-builders and how were they to be overcome? How did Japanese activities in northern China affect China’s domestic politics?

14. Peasants and Communists

1. What was life like for ordinary peasants in the 1920s and 1930s? What problems did they face and what were the sources of those problems?
2. What was the Communist Party’s first response to the White Terror of 1927 and 1928? Why?
3. How did Mao Zedong build up the Jiangxi Soviet? What political, economic, geographic, and social factors explain the Jiangxi Soviet’s success for several years in the early 1930s? Why did it eventually fail?
4. What land reform policies did the CCP develop? How were they implemented?
5. If “Maoism” began to develop in the Jiangxi Soviet period, what marked the views of the “early Mao” as a distinct form of Marxism?

6. Can peasant revolution be based on guerrilla war?

7. How did Chinese leftist intellectuals react to the pressures of the 1930s—the dictatorial but weak Nanjing government, increasing Japanese incursions, domestic unrest? Where did they find hope? How did they differ from the earlier radical Confucian generation or the New Culture generation?