
1. Welfare provision in China from late empire to the People's Republic

Thomas David DuBois

We will revive our country with a history of four thousand years, and ensure the welfare of its 400 million people – Sun Yat-sen, Declaration of the Tongmenghui 孙中山《同盟会宣言》復四千年之祖国·谋四万万人之福祉

Welfare is both a native Chinese concept and a foreign import. Although the ideals of charity and protection of the public good have deep political and cultural roots in China, the arrival of Western ideas and institutions radically influenced how these Chinese concepts have been understood and put into practice. This chapter examines how the provision of welfare in China evolved over the span of one crucial century: from the last decades of the Qing dynasty (清 1644–1911), through the turbulent years of the Republic of China and Japanese occupation, to the declaration of the People's Republic of China (PRC) in 1949. It shows how and why each of these very different regimes framed their commitment to welfare within political and social ideals, even as actual practice was often constrained by limited reach and resources.

This chapter is a historical study, meaning that it will not restrict itself to tracing the roots of contemporary institutions. To understand the historical transformation of welfare in China, we must recreate the full spectrum of ideas and voices, not just the ones that tangibly survived to the present day. Rather than seeking a straight path from traditional institutions to something that might be identified as a distinct Chinese model, this chapter will take a broad view, showing how a wide and changing variety of social forces pushed local and international actors to pursue diverse ideas of what welfare was meant to accomplish, and how and by whom it should be provided.

Politically, the slow disintegration of the imperial system allowed the rise of new actors and left a vacuum that was not properly filled until the mid-century seizure of power by the Communist Party. During the decades in between, a variety of local and regional power holders, including Chinese militarists and Japanese-backed regimes in Manchuria and northern China, arose and competed for resources and legitimacy. Each of these regimes took a distinct approach to how and why it would invest in the public good. In many cases, the depth of political dysfunction left welfare entirely unaddressed, often at precisely the moment that the need created by natural and human disasters was at its greatest. At such moments, private actors such as foreign missionaries and philanthropic institutions came to the fore, forging their own links and institutions that would both inspire and compete with political control of welfare.

The unique challenges and promises of this 100-year period fed ambitious plans for social transformation. The series of political revolutions put these competing ideologies to the test, and pitted them against each other. Ideas behind the provision of welfare could not avoid being caught in the crossfire. The fundamental questions of welfare provision – how society should take care of its weakest members; what sort of legal and legislative

frameworks should be put in place; what rights and responsibilities do welfare providers assume; and where the balance should be struck between disaster relief and longer term programs of economic development – were unavoidably political, and particular visions of welfare became tied to the legitimacy of competing regimes. Some of these ideas survived the test of time, and others did not. To understand the development of welfare and State regulation today we must understand not only the paths that were taken, but also those that were left behind.

PHILANTHROPY IN LATE IMPERIAL CHINA

Tracing back into history contemporary concepts such as welfare requires both creativity and caution. It is important to be critical of surface similarities such as shared terminology, especially since the meaning of the Chinese terms currently used for “welfare” (*fuli* 福利, *fuzhi* 福祉) have changed over time, and could be interpreted in different ways. Just as in English, Chinese terms for welfare might refer to specific government initiatives of wealth distribution or social support, or to a more general sense of the common good. As in the opening quote by Sun Yat-sen, they could simultaneously suggest both meanings.

Rather than focusing on the origin of specific terms, we can begin by looking for indigenous concepts that most closely resemble the spirit and practices of welfare as it is understood today. Over the course of what historians refer to as China’s Late imperial period (roughly the fourteenth to the nineteenth centuries), two of these ideas became very prominent. The first is the idea of public good (*gongyi* 公益) as a responsibility of government. By the Ming (明 1368–1644) and Qing dynasties, the imperial government had developed into an elaborate bureaucracy that was highly overburdened at the local level. Officials on the lowest rung of this bureaucracy, particularly the county magistrate (*zhi xian* 知县), were tasked with ensuring all aspects of the health and safety of the population under their charge. In specific terms, local officials were tasked with an impossible array of duties, including the maintenance of public order, collection of taxes and dispensation of justice. They were also entrusted with the material wellbeing of the people, ensuring that waterways were properly dredged to avert drought or flooding, and maintaining emergency infrastructure such as granaries and relief supplies (Ch’ü 1988).

Although the official bureaucracy was in practice far too small to carry out these functions in a consistent manner, it took very seriously both the task of material development and the moral responsibility of the State to insulate the people from human and natural catastrophe. The imperial State routinely took measures such as transferring funds from core provinces to those who were undergoing hardship or development. There were of course many practical reasons for the imperial State to intervene in local finance, agriculture or trade (Kaske 2011), but in any case such actions were invariably put in moral terms, the responsibility that those who held power had to care for the needs of the people. This responsibility was encapsulated in the Confucian ideal of benevolence (*ren* 仁), and was not limited to the official bureaucracy. Particularly at the level of local society, it was common for the imperial State to call upon elites such as retired officials and degree holders to financially support and take partial leadership of a variety of projects for the common good. Grain storage was one of these hybrid enterprises, combining the official system of provincial-level granaries with a network of communally managed local grana-

ries. During times of famine, the State would freely call on local elites not only to make donations but also to lend operational assistance to relief efforts by transporting and distributing supplies, and by intervening in local markets to stabilise prices (Cai and Li 2002; Myers and Wang 2002; Rankin 1994).

The second concept was the ideal of *cishan* (慈善). Although *cishan* is often rendered as “charity” or “philanthropy” it more precisely translates to the two component ideas of mercy (*ci*) and kindness (*shan*). While ideals such as *ren* appeal to a Confucian tradition, each of these two virtues has a strong Buddhist flavour; and, indeed, *cishan* as an ideal rose alongside the steady growth of lay Buddhism, particularly during the latter half of the Ming dynasty. During this time, the ideal of *cishan* found institutional expression in a native form of charities known as *shantang* (善堂), literally “halls of benevolence”. Organisationally, *shantang* tended to be small-scale responses by local scholarly and commercial elites to moments of particular need. *Shantang* in the Jiangsu district of Hui’an (惠安) were fairly typical of this tradition. During the mid-Qing (late eighteenth century), this six-county area supported a handful of small, independent charitable institutions, including a lodge for labourers, a medicine dispensary and a home for indigent women and children (Hu 2013). The *shantang* tradition was generally associated with Buddhist piety, and although halls could be found across the country, they were most common in the wealthy Jiangnan region (southern Jiangsu and northern Zhejiang), where lay Buddhism was intellectually and socially vibrant. Despite their Buddhist connection, *shantang* complimented rather than competed with the efforts of the Confucian State. The development of private charitable initiatives did not imply any opposition between State and society: sitting officials would often participate in the charitable work of *shantang*, and lavished praise and awards on the individuals who ran and funded them (Fuma 1997; Smith 1987).

INFLUX OF FOREIGN CHARITIES

Towards the end of the nineteenth century, two new forces began to change these existing practices. The first was rapid political decline of the Qing. Compared to the size of the country, the Chinese imperial bureaucracy was very small: fewer than 2000 county-level officials for a population that in 1800 numbered about 300 million. Even at its height, the official bureaucracy had a very light presence on the ground. By the middle of the 1800s, a combination of demographic pressures, massive internal rebellions and systemic fiscal and administrative mismanagement began stretching this thin line even further, leaving large areas of the country without effective government. On the one hand, this political decline exacerbated existing problems, but on the other it created a space for development of private initiative in all areas of governance, including the provision of welfare.

The second force was the arrival of Christian missionaries and mission institutions. The reopening of China to missionary activity after the Opium Wars (1839–1842, 1856–1860) introduced a wave of new charitable institutions, moving gradually from the Treaty Ports to the interior. While the missionaries themselves often came into conflict with local society – frequently for reasons that were external to religion (see Esherick 1987; Young 2013) – even their harshest critics recognised the innovations in how the missions conducted their charitable work. While *shantang* had tended to operate as small, individual

and often temporary responses to crisis, missionary institutions were permanent, professionally staffed and able to draw on a wide network of overseas donors. The institutional challenge of mission orphanages, hospitals and disaster relief propelled the *shantang* model to evolve into something resembling modern Western charities. Many of the new *shantang* founded near the turn of the century freely combined Chinese and foreign operational models (Shue 2006.)

Moments of crisis were key in expanding the influence of foreign charities and accelerating the transformation of this new generation of Chinese charities. One of the most crucial was the famine that devastated a wide swathe of north China in 1876–1879, resulting in anywhere from 9 million to 13 million deaths. This famine revealed the complete breakdown of the formerly effective system of official relief granaries, and brought the image of the suffering Chinese to churches and homes across Europe and North America. The scope and effectiveness of the foreign philanthropic response both inspired and embarrassed Chinese elites, who increasingly began looking at the foreign charities as an operational model for their own ventures (Edgerton-Tarpley 2008; Xiao et al. 2012; Zhu 2008). In the same way, the civilian impact of war, first with Japan (1894–1895) and later in the continental theatre of the Russo-Japanese War (1904–1905), prompted the further expansion and deepening institutionalisation of both foreign and Chinese relief efforts.

Chinese responses to these tragedies show how national consciousness had begun to coalesce around charitable relief: when the sudden outbreak of fighting between Russia and Japan threatened to leave thousands of civilians (primarily foreign) stranded in the northern port city of Niuzhuang, a group of wealthy Chinese in Shanghai, 1000 kilometres to the south, organised a response, funding a small fleet of commercial ships to evacuate the port. To announce their neutrality, the ships sailed under the flag of the Red Cross, the first act of what eventually became the Red Cross of China¹ (Chi 2004; Zhou 2000).

CHALLENGES OF THE TWENTIETH CENTURY

During the first decades of the twentieth century, both political power and the provision of social services continued to devolve into local hands. A series of military disasters and political crises between 1895 and 1905 revealed to all the decline of the Qing, which managed to limp along until it was overthrown in the 1911 Revolution. In the meantime, the weakening of central authority meant that the dynasty was barely able to respond to even the most pressing humanitarian crises. The Qing response to an outbreak of pneumonic plague (with an estimated mortality of 60,000) that struck the northeast in 1910 was so slow and disorganised that some feared that the dynasty was effectively abdicating Chinese sovereignty over the region (Hu 2010). Even after central authorities appointed a Malayan Chinese doctor named Wu Liande (伍连得) to take charge of epidemic suppression, his real authority remained largely local. Wu had dreamt of creating a modern public health service for China, but lack of political coordination ensured that most of his efforts would remain restricted to the region. Even his funding came from local sources, mostly the foreign-run Customs Office in Harbin (DuBois 2014; Gamsa 2006).

Along with the collapse of central State authority, the demise of the Qing also opened a wave of new political actors and ideas. The fall of the Qing itself did not stem the decentralisation of power. After a brief presidency under Yuan Shikai (袁世凯), the country

quickly devolved into the hands a handful of warring militarists, many of whom proved surprisingly supportive of relief and social services. Regional power holders such as Duan Qirui (段祺瑞), Wu Peifu (吴佩孚), Chen Jitang (陈济棠) and Zhang Zuolin (张作霖) each built their own public service infrastructure, such as hospitals and care homes – in some cases directing these efforts personally, in others by supporting the efforts of civilian governments under their control. Why would these regional militarists, who themselves often had a precarious hold on power, invest in this sort of social commitment? One reason is the appeal to hearts and minds. By providing assistance to their vulnerable populations, these new elites could build their public image on two fronts, simultaneously presenting the traditional face of the caring Confucian ruler and the modern image of efficient, well-functioning government (Poon 2011; Sun 2012). Sometimes the reasons were more clearly mercenary. While Wu Liande had been unable to secure funding to realise his dream of a hospital infrastructure for the northeast, the militarist Zhang Zuolin spent 600,000 yuan to build a 400-bed military hospital in the city of Shenyang – by far the largest medical facility in the region. Even if the hospital was built to serve Zhang's own troops, it was still able to devote its overflow capacity to the paying public (DuBois 2014). In these dark times, the response to crisis sometimes revealed the ability of the fragmented government to work through political and personal networks, particularly those at the local and provincial level. When famine struck again across north China in 1920–1921, regional power holders, official State organs and civilian actors worked together to move grain into blighted areas, care for refugees and stabilise prices of grain and other necessities (Fuller 2013).

Rise of Private Charities

Alongside these limited government efforts, a combination of social idealism and unaddressed crisis gave rise to a new wave of private charities. Like much of the world, China entered the twentieth century looking for solutions to the problems of the age, most notably the increasing scope and brutality of war. Political decline and internal changes also fed a wave of religious enthusiasm, in the form of native teachings that preached global unity and Chinese cultural revival. Just as lay Buddhist groups had served as a foundation for civic charity through *shantang*, these new religions captured public imagination and enthusiasm, and became a proving ground for organised social welfare. In the absence of a unified and fully functioning government, these religious groups often acted as a seed for civil society to organise itself to provide vital social services.

The most notable expression of private charitable initiative began in 1921, when a flood of the Yellow River created a torrent of refugees across the northern plains of Shandong Province. As these refugees began streaming towards the city of Ji'nan, a coalition of local elites who were united by their connection to a spirit writing group called Daoyuan (道远) gathered donations in excess of 120,000 yuan, sufficient to buy food, clothing and basic necessities for over 40,000. Soon thereafter, this group organised itself into a permanent charity, which it named the Red Swastika Society (RSS, *hong wanzi hui* 红卍字会) in emulation of the Red Cross, the right-handed swastika having been a Buddhist symbol long before it was reversed and adopted in fascist Germany. The need for social services was such that, within a few years, this group had established branches across the country. It and similar organisations were soon managing relief operations on a massive scale:

coordinated relief efforts of the 1930s would reach well over a million people. Professing neutrality in military conflicts, groups like the RSS were particularly active in bringing aid to the millions of citizens displaced by China's decade of internal conflicts (DuBois 2011; Guo 2005; Li 2007).

By the end of the decade, a new government under the Guomindang (National People's Party) had largely reunified the country, and began taking steps to bring the rapidly developing private charitable sector under political control. During the mid-1920s, the Guomindang resolved its own internal conflicts and progressively defeated or extracted allegiance from a series of rivals, and in 1927 it declared a new national capital in Nanjing. Although this new government retained a tenuous hold over much of the country, it did institute sweeping social and legal changes within its power centre, especially the wealthy core region around the cities of Nanjing and Shanghai. Having established itself militarily, the new government sought to deepen its power by reasserting the moral and operational authority of the central State. It brought new levels of scrutiny to civic organisations such as trade unions and religious groups, and imposed new legal restrictions with the 1930 promulgation of a new Civil Code. In doing so, the Guomindang government was hardly alone: even before this time, other local governments had already been taking steps to regularise and regulate private charities. Part of the process was simply taking stock of who was there: in 1928, the city of Shanghai ordered charities to register with the municipal government. Further south, the civilian government under Guangdong regional commander Chen Jitang (陈济棠) instituted almost identical regulations in that same year (Tang 2011: 284–307). Although the charities themselves enjoyed high levels of political patronage, their room to manoeuvre around these new regulations was limited. Groups such as the RSS, which had established itself as the core providers of disaster relief and of regular care for the urban poor in major cities across China, were ordered to register with the government or cease operations. By the early 1930s, the private charitable sector in much of China had been firmly brought to heel (Lin 2004: 151–156; Zeng 2011).

It is important to understand why both central and local governments would place such importance on exerting control over the charitable sector. Although some historians claim that the increasingly authoritarian Guomindang government viewed any expression of civil society – that is, an organisation that was outside their direct control – as a political threat, it is clear that the Party's motivation was more complex. Many of the largest charities were in fact directed by political and commercial elites that were themselves close to or part of the Guomindang government. Moreover, political and civic elites elsewhere continued their long tradition of cooperating in the realm of welfare provision, often under the umbrella of a politically led aid organisation: in 1934, Chen Jitang established the Ren'ai (仁爱 Benevolence and Love) *shantang*, which both performed its own social services and served as a clearing house for charities in the city. A close examination of Guomindang policy shows that their insistence on registration was aimed at curbing the influence of religious groups (particularly foreign missions) and checking the potential for financial mismanagement by individual groups. In order to operate legally, charities had to strictly divest themselves of religious propagation and the receipt of foreign funds, and had to submit to a strict forensic and ongoing annual accounting of their internal finances. While some groups (both Christian and Buddhist) balked at their anti-religious overtones, most were willing to submit to the new regulations.

At the same time that it sought to regulate the existing sector, the Guomindang was

also making ambitious plans to take direct control over many manifestations of welfare provision, particularly disaster relief. Even before the Guomintang government had fully formed, some local governments had already tried to become more directly involved with welfare provision: in June 1928, Ningfu (宁府) Prefecture in Anhui promulgated an ambitious proposal to fund and operate its own system of charitable institutions, including orphanages and workhouses as well as hospitals and clinics for the poor.² Chen Jitang's generosity to charities was well known, but double edged. For many years, both Chen and the Guangzhou municipal government had made donations to local charities, but in doing so they both supported and dominated the charitable realm, characterised by Alfred Lin as the "paradoxical desire to both serve and gag the public" (Lin 2004: 185; DuBois 2011). In the same way, although the Guomintang did financially support many private charitable initiatives, either directly or through the visible patronage of high-ranking figures, such support came at a price. Private charities under the Guomintang were increasingly constrained in their operational freedom, and pressured to work with or through official State bodies. From the 1930s, it was clear that the government intended to be in charge of welfare provision as a whole, with private efforts to be directed and to some degree subsumed by those of the State.

POLITICAL APPROACHES TO WELFARE UNDER COMPETING REGIMES

Guomintang political control was both tenuous and short-lived. Even as it tried to deepen its influence within its core regions, the Guomintang government faced two new rivals. The first was a Communist movement that had begun as an ally of the Guomintang, but transformed after a violent split in 1927 into a full-blown insurgency. Repeated attempts to root out this insurgency only succeeded in moving its base of operations from an inaccessible mountainous region of Jiangxi province to an equally remote region of the northwest. The second was Japan. Not content with the extensive sphere of economic and military influence around its railway holdings, Japanese forces in 1931 moved to capture the entire northeast. The subsequent year, the region was christened a separate State under the name of Manchukuo. From this base, the Japanese military launched a full assault on the Chinese heartland in 1937, quickly taking much of the country and forcing the Guomintang government to flee to the far southwestern city of Chongqing.

Like the militarists years before, the Communist and Japanese regimes each represented rival models of governance, and distinct approaches to welfare provision. The Communists not only governed a large population (the enclave in Jiangxi had covered a population of roughly 1 million), but also were unique in the way they based their social movement on class, and for focusing their energies on the countryside rather than the cities (Mao 1927). Their subsequent approach to welfare would be shaped both by their sincere devotion to Marxist ideology and by their experience of building up rural support in their 20-year insurgency. Similarly, although the State of Manchukuo is easily dismissed as a puppet of Japan, the reality was much more complicated (DuBois 2010). Manchukuo was arguably the first planned State in Asia. Its architects drew on decades of Japanese political development at home, and in Taiwan and Korea, as well as on models from the British Empire and the Soviet Union. In many ways the experience of

State planning in Manchukuo proved to be a model for postwar reconstruction in Japan, Korea and Taiwan (Johnson 1982). The difference in ideals and operation of welfare as provided by Guomindang, Communist and Manchukuo regimes reveals the range of possible directions that China could have travelled at this key juncture.

Guomindang

The Guomindang government of the 1930s derived its legitimacy in no small part from the political mantle it inherited from the 1911 revolutionary Sun Yat-sen. They also inherited Sun's "three principles of the people" (*san min zhuyi* 三民主义) political programme, which included as the third of these principles a prominent statement of support for popular welfare (*minsheng* 民生).³ Although Sun's death had left the precise interpretation of this support to later actors, the underlying idea that the economic wellbeing of the masses was the foundation of national strength was gradually accepted across the political spectrum. It without question energised the Rural Reconstruction Movement (*xiangcun jianshe yundong* 乡村建设运动), which aimed to improve the lot of the countryside by building local economies. Although the Guomindang government in Nanjing did enact half-hearted legislation to protect the wellbeing of the rural population (such as laws rarely enforced to cap rural rent), most of the real energy behind rural reform remained local. Many of the most radical and successful reforms occurred on the small scale, often carried out by local elites in areas that were only nominally under Guomindang rule (Alitto 1979; Chi 2007).⁴

At the same time, the regime never had a solid political footing. Even after establishing itself in Nanjing, the Guomindang regime faced a constant stream of political and military threats, meaning that welfare provision would always take a back seat to urgent issues of security and political reform. During the early 1930s, the Guomindang military became increasingly focused on dislodging the Communist insurgency in the south, while power within the regime became increasingly factionalised. The 1937 outbreak of war with Japan further accelerated these trends, consolidating all human and material resources under Guomindang leader Chiang Kai-shek. Under the conditions of total war, welfare provision consisted primarily of scattered programmes of charitable relief. These programmes moreover were highly politicised, and tied both to the ideological goals of national rebirth and national salvation. Many of the government's relief programmes were formed under the control of a handful of very well-connected individuals, such as Song Meiling (宋美龄), Chiang Kai-shek's outspoken and talented wife. Song was personally in charge of highly visible initiatives to care for orphaned children and wounded troops, among much else (Zurndorfer 2013). Some private charities did continue to operate during these dark years. The RSS famously took the lead in caring for burying the dead of the Nanjing Massacre (Shijie hongwanzi hui 1997).⁵ A handful of remaining foreign missions remained operational by avoiding politics as best they could.

In real terms, the small and largely cosmetic provision of charitable relief under the Guomindang was nowhere up to the enormity of the task. Over the 1930s, the pressures of war and intense mismanagement of the economy combined in spiralling immiseration of both cities and countryside. Pressures on ordinary people intensified as the Guomindang pursued a scorched earth policy against the Japanese. In one particularly tragic example, the Guomindang military attempted to halt the Japanese march through north China by

destroying the levees protecting the Yellow River. The ensuing flood did indeed delay the enemy advance, but also decimated a wide swath of densely populated countryside, letting loose millions of refugees (the precise number is a highly politicised debate) that the government had no ability to care for (Lary 2001). The cities fared no better. Even without the pressures of war, major cities such as Shanghai combined extreme wealth with vast oceans of poverty and lawlessness (Lu 2005). The arrival of never before seen numbers of refugees made a bad situation intolerable. Even the best relief operation would have been far beneath the task.

Japanese Manchuria

Although often viewed solely as a military aggressor, Japan brought to its continental holdings a distinct and farsighted approach to State building, one that included significant investment in social services. Having acquired Taiwan and significant holdings in Manchuria as a result of its wars with China (1894–1895) and Russia (1904–1905), Japan immediately began making plans for long-term development. It encouraged investment and migration, and spent heavily on physical and human infrastructure. Japanese planners built the city of Dalian, little more than a Russian colonial outpost in 1905, into a modern metropolis with wide streets, gaslights and sewers. Having learned the price of epidemic disease in Yokohama and Osaka, Japanese planners in Taiwan and Manchuria paid particular attention to public health. When plague paralysed northern Manchuria in 1910, Japanese authorities effected quick and effective quarantine, sparing their own holdings the worst of the outbreak (DuBois 2014; Liu 2008). Yet, just as with the welfare schemes of the Chinese militarists, we must be wary of romanticising the benefits or motivation of Japanese attention to social service provision in Taiwan and Manchuria: these were practical decisions that were made with an eye to strategic, commercial and propagandistic benefits. Conversely, we should also not allow the brutality of the wartime occupation to blind us to the fact that Japanese investment in places like Dalian and Taiwan did, for a time at least, create real opportunities and material benefits for the Chinese population.

After the 1932 founding of Manchukuo, the new Japanese-controlled government slowly began moving towards consolidating service provision under a hybrid system in which private initiative and funding was channelled into State-led and sponsored structures. Here the Japanese record presents striking similarities to the Guomindang ideal of State control, in some ways going beyond what the Chinese regime had attempted. As the Japanese-run government sought to take control of the provision of social services, charities run by Anglo-American missions were mercilessly harassed, and eventually forced out of operation.⁶ Other pre-existing private charities (particularly those that specialised in relief) continued to operate, but were gradually pulled into the orbit of an increasingly totalitarian government. The Chinese Red Swastika Society had been active in Manchuria since the late 1920s, but under the new State these branches formed a breakaway organisation that was financially and politically supported by high-ranking members of the Manchukuo government. At the same time, the Manchukuo State was forming its own mass organisations (such as the Concordia Society, *xiehe hui* 协和会), and organising State-led efforts such as teams that toured the countryside providing medical relief and humanitarian aid. Although these initiatives were all put on permanent hiatus

by the acceleration of the war effort, the clear intent was for the State not merely to control private charities but to replace them with official organizations that would channel charitable impulses to patriotic ends (DuBois 2014; Manshū 1935; Manshūkoku 1936).

Chinese Communists

The Communist movement presents a third and equally distinct approach to welfare. Like the regimes discussed above, the Chinese Communists approached the provision of welfare with a combination of humanitarian and utilitarian aims. Although the Communist Party's image of the public good did involve material benefit on a small scale (particularly the redistribution of productive resources such as land), it was more fundamentally concerned with creating an ideological transformation, as a precursor to genuine socialist revolution. Like the Guomindang and the Japanese, the Communists saw welfare provision in terms of long-term political goals.

The Communists approached social revolution with a very distinct conception of public good. Specifically, while the Guomindang spoke of national salvation, the Communists appealed to a definition of the public (i.e. the "People") that was based on class. As a matter of policy, the Communists based their political movement on the support of the oppressed classes, which they initially conceived as the urban proletariat and, after their flight to Jiangxi in 1927, the rural peasantry. Depending on their circumstances, the Communists at times formed alliances with other segments of society, and at others were violently antagonistic towards them. To build their class-based movement, the Communists sought not to relieve social tensions but rather to exacerbate them (a strategy that is explained in Mao 1927). Part of the Marxist ideology that the Chinese Communists inherited and developed was a belief that real social change is not slow and gradual, but quick and violent. It occurs in explosive moments like the French Revolution, as years of pent-up anger and frustration reach a boiling point. Communist policy was to harness this frustration, using education and propaganda to teach the lower classes to distinguish their friends and enemies, to guide their anger to revolutionary ends.

In this mix, welfare, in the form of government assistance or of private charity, was distinctly unwelcome, at least in theory. At best, charity was seen as misguided kindness; at worst, it was a way for the oppressive classes to buy the loyalty and acquiescence of the masses. Lenin captured the particular antipathy for religious charity in a 1905 essay, writing that: "those who live by the labour of others are taught by religion to practice charity while on earth, thus offering them a very cheap way of justifying their entire existence as exploiters and selling them at a moderate price tickets to well-being in heaven". Welfare of any sort was thus seen to be a distraction from the real problems of class oppression; it clouded the minds of workers and peasants, preventing them from seeing the injustices as they really were. In practice, the Chinese Communists were not quite so hidebound by ideology. Their rural strategies were often dictated less by pure principle than by circumstance and opportunity. Often violently opposed to Christian institutions, they at times allowed and even encouraged the missions to continue their own charitable operations, so long as these groups remained politically quiescent (Tucker 1976).

Unable to effect policy in the cities, the Communists' insurgency nevertheless enjoyed a close and generally cooperative relationship with rural communities, where they took an approach to welfare that was based on the redistribution of productive resources. This

approach was conditioned both by experience and by ideology. Both in their original stronghold in Jiangxi and later in their northwestern base of Yan'an, the Communist movement had expanded by engineering miniature revolutions in the countryside. This policy redistributed resources and politically mobilised entire villages, producing deep (if not uniform) loyalties and giving the Communists confidence that they could then rely on these communities for human and material aid. Besides this confidence, the Marxist definition of class was itself based on access to productive resources (aka ownership of the "means of production"), notably but not exclusively land. Programmes like the formation of mutual aid teams and the redistribution of productive resources through campaigns such as Land Reform aimed to provide for the needs of the countryside by raising the level and efficiency of production while at the same time securing the loyalty of entire communities to the Communist movement.⁷ While the Communists were known to bring aid to impoverished communities, these campaigns to redistribute productive resources formed the backbone not only of their approach to welfare but also of their revolutionary programme. Even more strongly than that of the Guomindang or Japanese regimes, the provision of welfare by the Communists was deeply political.

Despite their obvious differences, these three regimes did share certain commonalities in their ideals and practices of welfare provision. For each one, welfare was both a practical and an ideological issue, generally one for the future. From the 1930s to the mid-1940s, no one of these three coexisting regimes was in a position to think about systematically addressing issues such as human rights, individual suffering or inequality of opportunity. At best, they might have been able to mount triage efforts sufficient to prevent starvation or the outbreak of epidemic disease among refugees; but, with the acceleration of military conflict, they all had to accept massive human suffering as a simple fact of life, at least for the moment. At the same time, each of the three regimes did invest in programmes that in some way aimed to advance the public good. As a government, the Guomindang subsumed any talk of private benefit to the greater cause of victory in the war against Japan. In line with their rhetoric of self-sacrifice, the regime's most visible luminaries lavished personal support on charitable programmes to aid women, orphans and soldiers. The Japanese administration in Manchuria created an infrastructure of mass organisations, doctors and hospitals, and politically achieved what the Guomindang had aimed to do by taking direct control over the private charitable sector. Like the Guomindang, the Communists saw military victory as the prerequisite to permanent realisation of public good, and subsumed short-term comforts to that end. The Communists courted the allegiance of the lower classes, both by providing welfare as aid and, more fundamentally, by redistributing productive resources along the lines of class-based political loyalty. Even if no one of these three regimes was in any position to provide social services on a contemporary scale, each promoted welfare in accordance with a vision of public good that was closely tied to its own State goals and State ideology and legitimacy.

WELFARE IN THE EARLY PEOPLE'S REPUBLIC

Immediately following the Japanese surrender in 1945, Guomindang and Communist forces each engaged in a rush for territory and allegiance. In the conflict that followed, both employed the resources and lessons they had developed over the years of war with

Japan, including the strategic provision of welfare as a political tool. Aided by American transport and food shipments, the Guomintang military was able to rush aid to their most vulnerable cities along the coast. Public and private actors in newly liberated cities such as Tianjin, Shanghai and Qingdao moved quickly to establish relief efforts, including food distribution, hospitals and care centres for the large numbers of poor and orphaned. Local governments lost no time in establishing an extensive legal framework for the regulation of private charities. Yet the rush in which the Guomintang regime returned to power meant that in practice, the results of its ambitious programmes were highly uneven. While some areas provided care efficiently, other efforts were hampered by mistrust and lack of coordination between levels of government, as well as by corruption and incompetence among coordinating officials (Gao 2008; Hou 2004). In contrast, the Communists were not only highly coordinated but, having expanded their military strength during the war with Japan, they were also more free to take a more aggressive tone in the execution of their signature social programmes. More so than the Guomintang, the Communists remained on a wartime footing as they entered the period of civil war, and remained true to their earlier technique of winning loyalty through the politicised redistribution of resources.

After the victorious Communist forces established the People's Republic in 1949, they turned their decades of experience with productive redistribution to new and very different problems. More than anything else, the new regime required economic stability and a return to agricultural productivity. Two decades of war had bankrupted the country, which the Communists now hoped to build into an industrial power. Recovery and growth would require the vast expansion of agriculture, which in turn relied on the social transformation of production in the countryside: the redistribution of productive resources such as draft animals and, ultimately, a move towards the collectivisation of land. The provision of welfare, again defined in terms of providing the means and leadership for increasing production, worked closely in support of these goals. Especially in areas where its influence was relatively weak, the new government continued its well-established practice of transforming local society through resource redistribution. However, rather than to individuals, relief supplies and resources were increasingly apportioned directly to productive units – through closely coordinated chains of command from county and village cadres to rural agricultural teams. The organisation of the provision of this sort of welfare around productive units supported the early stages of a process that would come to structure society around production, and matched the ideal that all individual material problems would be solved by the superior productive capabilities of a socialist society.

Either quickly or gradually, private charities ceased operation. Those such as the Catholic Church, or missions associated with the United States or the Guomintang that had a past history of conflict with the government, were removed quickly and sometimes violently, most notably during the 1951 Crush the Counterrevolutionaries Movement (*Zhenya fangeming yundong* 镇压反革命运动) (Dillon 2007). Even those that had won the trust of the new State, such as the YMCA and the RSS, were gradually phased out, ostensibly because their social services would no longer be needed in the new egalitarian society. The RSS voluntarily disbanded in 1954, under the premise that there was simply no reason for a private relief charity to exist in New China. By the middle of the decade, the Red Cross of China was the only welfare society legally operating in the country (Li 2007).

LEGACIES OF THE PAST

Four very tumultuous decades separate the demise of the local and private charities of the Guomindang era and the resurgence of private philanthropy in the mid-1990s. In between, the socialist State took complete ownership of welfare in the broadest sense that it tied its own legitimacy firmly to the task of material development and to the promise of the material wellbeing of the masses. Absent throughout the early decades of Communist rule, private charities began their return to prominence during the mid-1990s, and quickly surpassed the wealth and political significance of the entire pre-Communist sector (DuBois 2015). Although a full examination of these recent developments is well beyond the scope of this chapter, it is clear that the reacceptance of private initiative represents a moment of profound change in State thinking about its own role in the provision of welfare, and the direction of the economy overall.

At the same time, there are also clear continuities with practices and attitudes of the past. The new welfare regimes of the Jiang Zemin era (1989–2003) and beyond have packaged themselves in the language of transparency and regulation: terms that will appear familiar to outside observers. But, much like China's partial embrace of the market economy, anyone led by surface similarities to expect that China has adopted a fully Western model of welfare provision will be disappointed. An understanding of historical continuities highlights some of the reasons behind the enduring differences in the Chinese approach to welfare. Despite having welcomed, at least partially, the influx of domestic and foreign charitable initiative, the Chinese State has shown no sign of giving up its central role in the provision of welfare, including its strong desire to maintain control over private philanthropy. Rhetorically, the current expectation that the State should provide not only regulation but also guidance over private philanthropic endeavour is not dissimilar from the approach to charities during the imperial era. The operational ideal of a hybrid State–private sector in many ways resembles the aspiration of the Guomindang and Japanese regimes. Similarly, the PRC government's high sensitivity to foreign and religious influence over philanthropic enterprises is neither new nor characteristically Communist; nor is it without historical basis.

China's historical experience has created deeply held beliefs about the purpose of welfare, and the question of who should provide it and why. Looking forward from this crucial period, it becomes clear that historically conditioned perceptions and practices within the sector remain important for understanding the perspective of the Chinese State to the recent resurgence of private philanthropy. The lessons of history teach that the provision of welfare in China has long been, and remains, inseparable from State legitimacy; and this tendency has shown remarkable continuity across regimes, be they Confucian or Communist. Regardless of how it is being defined, welfare is understood to be primarily the responsibility of the government either to provide or at least to direct. International actors, particularly those for whom the provision of welfare sets them on a path of confrontation with the State (for example by portraying their own efforts as a corrective to political missteps or inaction), would be well advised to understand the depth of these beliefs.

NOTES

1. This refers to the Red Cross of China, as opposed to the International Red Cross, which was ejected with the other foreign institutions.
2. 'Ningfu gongbu jiuji yuan tiaoli' 宁府公布救济院条例 [Ning Prefecture promulgates relief institution laws], *Shengjing shibao*, 11 June 1928.
3. The other two parts of Sun's programme were national populism (*minzu* 民族) and popular sovereignty (*minquan* 民权).
4. In addition to scholarly studies of the Rural Reconstruction Movement, the work of Chinese reformers such as Fei Xiaotong (1946) and James Yen (in Gamble 1968) is available in English.
5. 'Shijie hongwanzi hui Nanjing da tusha hou yanmai jiuji gongzuo baogao' 世界紅卍字會南京大屠殺後掩埋救急工作報告 [Report on burial and relief efforts of the Red Swastika Society following the Nanjing Massacre] (1997). *Dang'an yu shixue* 檔案與史學 4: 11–18.
6. Bruce Finley Hunt, interview recorded by Robert Shuster, 1980 and 1982, Billy Graham Center Archives, Collection 104. Available at <www2.wheaton.edu/bgc/archives/GUIDES/104.htm#1>, accessed 14 August, 2014.
7. Descriptions of Land Reform as a revolutionary act may be found in any of the classic accounts of the wartime and postwar Communist movement (such as Snow 1968 and especially Hinton 1966). On the belief that these reforms would raise agrarian production, see Zhu (1987).

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