

**A HUNDRED YEAR'S CELEBRATION OF THE  
CONSTITUTIONAL PRACTICE IN THE LATE QING  
DYNASTY (a discussion on the political compromise of  
the Constitutional Practice in the Late Qing Dynasty)**

Jiang-Guohua

**INDEX:** I. INTRODUCTION.- II. THE COMPROMISE BETWEEN THE INSTITUTIONAL REFORMERS AND THE CONSTITUTIONALISTS.- 1. The Original Opinion of the Institutional Reformers.- 2. The advocacy of constitutionalists.- 3. The decision to investigate constitutional politics abroad.- III. THE COMPROMISE BETWEEN PRO-CONSTITUTIONALIST AND ANTI-CONSTITUTIONALIST.- 1. The Pro-constitutionalist promoted the Constitutional Practice positively.- 2. The Engagement between Pro-constitutionalists and Anti-constitutionalist.- 3. The Issue of *the Imperial Edict to Imitative Constitutionalism*.- IV. THE COMPROMISE BETWEEN THE AUTHORITY AND THE CONSTITUTIONALISTS.- 1. The Constitutional Preparation made by the Qing Court.- 2. The Instigations of the Constitutionalists among the People.- 3. The Birth of the Outline of Imperial Constitution.- V. THE COMPROMISE BETWEEN THE CONSTITUTIONAL CONSERVATISM AND THE CONSTITUTIONAL RADICALISM.- 1. The Viewpoint and Activities of the Constitutional Conservatism.- 2. Three Petitions Organized by the Constitutional Radicalism Group.- 3. The Issue of Imperial Edict to Convening Parliament ahead of Time.- VI. THE COMPROMISE BETWEEN THE CONSTITUTIONALISM GROUP AND THE REVOLUTIONARY GROUP.- 1. Another Differentiation of the Constitutionalism Group.- 2. The Left of Radical Constitutionalists threw all themselves into the Revolutionary Group.- 3. The Debut of *the Constitutional Nineteen Precepts*.- VII. EPILOGUE.- Bibliography.

**Abstract and Key Words in Chinese:**

内容摘要：晚清预备立宪的过程，乃中国政治史上鲜有的政治妥协的过程。正是这种有限的政治妥协，促成了出洋考察政治之决定、成就了仿行立宪上谕之颁行、催助了《钦定宪法大纲》之问世、铸成了国会提前召开之共识，并最终演绎了《宪法重大信条十九》之出台。

关键词：预备立宪； 政治妥协； 晚清； 政治改革； 立宪派

**Abstract and Key Words in English:**

**Abstract:** The process of the Constitutional Practice in the Late Qing Dynasty

was the one of the political compromises, which urged the decision on going abroad to investigate the constitutional politics, carried out the Issue of *the Imperial Edict to Imitative Constitutionalism* and *the Outline of the Imperial Constitution*, achieved the consensus to convoke Parliament in advance and the outcome of *the Major Creeds of Constitution*.

**Keywords:** Constitutional Practice; Political compromise; the late Qing Dynasty; Political reform; Constitutionalist

## I. INTRODUCTION

1. At the beginning of 20th Century, The Qing Dynasty had reached initial consensus on the Institutional Reforms after experiencing the external provocation and the internal riot at the turn of Xianfeng<sup>1</sup> and Tongzhi.<sup>2</sup> Even though the empress dowager Cixi,<sup>3</sup> who had bloody suppressed the Hundred Days' Reform of 1898 two years earlier and regarded as that there was no prospect for China without reform, then issued *the Imperial Edict to Institutional Reforms*<sup>4</sup> during she escaped with her life from capital Peking to Xian in 1901, proclaimed that Institutional Reform would be carried out. Then, the Qing Court determined to implement Constitutional Practice in 1905, and dispatched Official missions including Zaize<sup>5</sup> abroad to investigate foreign political systems in 1905.<sup>6</sup> On

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<sup>1</sup> The Xianfeng Emperor (1831–1861) was the eighth Emperor of the Manchu Qing Dynasty, and the seventh Qing emperor to rule over China, from 1850 to 1861. See Zhu Chengru, *General History of the Qing Dynasty*, Beijing, China: Forbidden City Press, 2003, p. 364.

<sup>2</sup> The Tongzhi Emperor (1856–1875) was the ninth emperor of the Manchu Qing Dynasty, and the eighth Qing emperor to rule over China, from 1861 to 1875. See Zhu Chengru, *General History of the Qing Dynasty*, Beijing, China: Forbidden City Press, 2003, p. 369.

<sup>3</sup> Empress Dowager Cixi (1835 –1908), popularly known in China as the West Dowager Empress, was a powerful and charismatic figure who became the de facto ruler of the Manchu Qing Dynasty, ruling over China for 47 years from 1861 to her death in 1908. Largely conservative during her rule, many historians considered her reign despotism, and attribute the fall of the Qing Dynasty, and therefore Imperial China, as a result of Cixi's rule. See Dai Yi and Li Wenhai, *Qing Comparative Mirror*, Xian, China: Shanxi Renmin Republishing House, 2000, pp. 8977-8978.

<sup>4</sup> It included: to reform the old government organization, to better staff and simplify administration, to abolish the ancient Chinese examination system, to build new Western-style schools, to permit people to freely set up newspapers and societies, to establish General Bureaus of Railways, Mines, Agriculture, Industry and Business, etc. But it excluded constitution making. See Zhu Shoupeng, *The Donghua collection of Guangxu Dynasty*, Vol.5, Beijing, China: Zhonghua Books Company, 1958, p. 4798.

<sup>5</sup> Zaize (1876-1928) was a Manchu noble of the bordered white banner from the Aisin Gioro clan. He advocated for constitutional monarchy in China. In 1901, he was made a deputy commander of the Plain Blue Banner. In 1905, he was commissioned by Empress Dowager Cixi to go on a tour of Europe, Japan, and the United States to learn from their respective political systems. When he returned to China in 1906, he sent in a petition to change China into a constitutional monarchy, following the German and Japanese model. See Dai Yi and Li Wenhai, *Qing Comparative Mirror*, Xian, China: Shanxi Renmin Republishing House, 2000, pp. 8976-8977.

<sup>6</sup> The investigation missions were made up of Zaize, Dai Hongci, Duanfang, Shaoying and Xu Shichang. The five investigation officials visited Europe, Japan and the United States. See Zhu

September 1, 1906, the empress dowager Cixi announced *the Imperial Edict to imitative constitutionalism*. From then on, Chinese society finally entered the period of the Constitutional Practice formally, a transitional period from feudal autocratic politics to modern democratic politics marked the Revolution of 1911 broke out.<sup>7</sup>

2. As we all know, the time span presents the Constitutional Practice as a part of the Institutional Reforms of the late Qing Dynasty. However, there was no performance for Constitutional Practice at the beginning of the Institutional Reforms. Actually, The Qing Court set about the Constitutional Practice and made preparation for it as a key element of subsequent Institutional Reforms, which was the result of compromise.

## II. THE COMPROMISE BETWEEN THE INSTITUTIONAL REFORMERS AND THE CONSTITUTIONALISTS

### 1. The Original Opinion of the Institutional Reformers

3. The political opinion of The Qing Court had began to change after the Hundred Days' Reform of 1898, especially after the Allied Expedition attacked Peking in 1901,<sup>8</sup>the Empress Dowager Cixi suffered greatly and felt ashamed of having such a national disaster. And some liberal influential officials also thought about the system source of the weak country and poor people to a greater or lesser degree, and gradually gave up the stubborn stand that the rules of ancestors could not be changed. The stubborn conservatives also withdrew from political arena of the late Qing Dynasty by degrees, and the Westernization School<sup>9</sup>got the upper

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Jinyuan, "A study on the Political Investigation abroad of Five ministers in the late of Qing Dynasty", Guangzhou, China: Academic monthly Journal, no.5, 1987, pp. 33-39.

<sup>7</sup> John King Fairbank, *China: Tradition and Transformation*, Translated by Zhang Pei, Beijing, China: World Knowledge Press, 2002, p. 403.

<sup>8</sup> Shortly after the turn of 20th century, an allied coalition of eight nations, including Austria-Hungary, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, Russia, the United Kingdom, and the United States, strike into the capital of China. British forces formed the strongest part of the alliance with the United States. The military contingent from the United States was called the China Relief Expedition. At the end of the campaign, the imperial government was forced to sign the unequal Boxer Protocol of 1901. See Zhu Shoupeng, *The Donghua collection of Guangxu Dynasty*, Vol.5, Beijing, China: Zhonghua Books Company, 1958, p. 3679.

<sup>9</sup> After the Opium War, many China intellectual recognized that Western civilization had an advantage over Chinese civilization, so they called for learning from the West in order some day to defeat it. Following the model of Lin Zexu who advocated: "Pay the Western foreigner back in his own coin," such intellectuals as Zen Cuofan, Zuo Zongtang and Li Hongzhang, etc., launched the Westernization Movement to introduce techniques of Western capitalist production. Their intent was to modernize in order to pre-serve the rule of the Qing government. They built shipyards, textile mills and so on; especially they developed the Northern Navy, whose total tonnage ranked first in Asia and eighth in the world. On the surface the Qing seemed to be developing rapidly in the area of technology and manufacturing, which is to say that it seemed to have begun its modernization. But in the Sino-Japanese War of 1894-1895, the Northern Navy of

hand once more. They cooperated with the stratum that was in the core of power to form Institutional Reform party which became the key strength to push the Institutional Reforms.<sup>10</sup>

4. From historical origin perspective, although the Westernization School became the important forces of Institutional Reforms group, the latter took a resistant attitude towards constitution in the early stage speaking of its political stand,<sup>11</sup> and this was the reasonable explanation for that the Qing Court did not put Constitutional Practice on the agenda in the *Imperial Edict to Institutional Reforms* and subsequent related measures. The fact of the Hundred Day Reform<sup>12</sup> of 1898 could fully prove the resistant mind of the power group represented by Cixi, and there was little possibility that the mind would change sharply in short two years. Furthermore, the Westernization School usually took conservative attitude towards political reform. At the initial stage, although the Westernization School was the only leading force to push the development of Chinese modernization, it lacked supportive approach to the establishment of Parliament and the practice of constitutional monarchy when modernization went from the instrument level up to political system reform.
5. Thus, the reform program of the Institutional Reforms could hardly harmonize with constitutionalism. Referring to the object, the Institutional Reforms aimed to uphold feudal system and consolidate the dominion of the Qing Court. However, the objective of constitutionalism was to abolish autocratic system and practice democratic reform, then to realize Chinese politics into historical course of modernization and democratization. Therefore, the Institutional Reforms pursued by the power group represented was just one kind of restoration to feudal autocratic system. Just as *the Imperial Edict to Institutional Reform* which was issued by Cixi in 1901 stated that the three cardinal guides and the five constant virtues<sup>13</sup> as specified in the feudal ethical code could not be changed, and

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the Qing dynasty was defeated. The loss of this war was considered to be the failure of the Westernization Movement as a way of modernizing China, for the Northern Navy was the comprehensive embodiment of that Movement. See Wei Qingyuan, *The Constitutional History of Late Qing Dynasty*, Beijing, China: Renmin University of China Press, 1993, p. 278.

<sup>10</sup> Chi Yunfei, *On the Qing Dynasty and its fall*, Changchun, China: The Northern Forum, no.2, 1992, pp. 28-32.

<sup>11</sup> Chen Jinxiao, "On the restrictive Factors and Governmental Function in the Modernization of the late Qing Dynasty", Zhengzhou, China: Academic Journal of Zhongzhou, no.5, 1995, pp. 43-47.

<sup>12</sup> The Hundred Days' Reform was a failed 104-day national cultural, political and education reform movement from 11 June to 21 September 1898, undertaken by the young Guangxu Emperor and his reform-minded supporters led by Kang Youwei. The movement proved to be short-lived, ending in a coup d'état by powerful conservative opponents led by Empress Dowager Cixi. < <http://www.cycnet.com/encyclopedia/history/dynasty/991105030.htm>>

<sup>13</sup> The three cardinal guides: ruler guides subject, father guides son and husband guide's wife; the five constant virtues: benevolence (humanity), righteousness, propriety, wisdom and fidelity.

the constitutional reform advocated by Kang Youwei <sup>14</sup> meant rebellion rather than reform. <sup>15</sup> According to this, *the Regulations for Implementation of the Imperial Edict to Institutional Reform* subsequently formulated by the Central Administrative Bureau stipulated that the first aim of the program of the Institutional Reform was to restore the old rules of the Qing Dynasty, and the second aim was to consult and follow the western rules, and it was further explained that “the excessive reform led to the rebellion of Kang YouWei, and the excessive conservatism brought about the rebellion of Boxer, <sup>16</sup> therefore, both of them should be discarded”. <sup>17</sup> Judging from this, at the beginning of Institutional Reform, The Qing Court did not have any plan for Constitutional Practice, even took it for granted as a taboo subject. They feared to have any connection with constitutionalism and drew a clear line of demarcation between the Institutional Reforms and Constitutionalism.

## 2. The advocacy of constitutionalists

6. After the Hundred Days’ Reform of 1898, on the one hand the conservatives represented by Cixi got a temporary political advantage; On the other hand, though the Constitutional Monarchy Movement led by Kang Youwei and Liang Qichao <sup>18</sup> ended with failure, its idea of constitutional reform was propagated broadly and had absolutely considerably impressed by the Empress Dowager Cixi, the high-ranking officials of Qing Court, and scholar-gentry. And especially, the constitutionalists represented by Liang Qichao had never given up their political ideal and unceasingly disseminated their constitutional reform advocacy and spread constitutionalism, and their movements made the constitutional reform thoughts maintain strong political influence.

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<sup>14</sup> Kang Youwei (1858–1927) was a Chinese scholar, noted calligrapher and political reformist. Kang was a strong believer in constitutional monarchy and wanted to remodel the country after Meiji Japan. He, along with his most famous student Liang Qichao, was important participants of a campaign to modernize China now known as the Hundred Days Reform. The reform introduced radical change into the stale Chinese government, and angered conservatives who feared losing power due to the influence of the reformers. See Zhou Hong and Zhu Hanhua, *China’s 20<sup>th</sup> Century Chronicle, Figures Volume*. Jinan, China: Shandong Renmin Publishing House, 2000, pp. 662-663.

<sup>15</sup> See Zhu Shoupeng, *The Donghua collection of Guangxu Dynasty*, Vol.5, Beijing, China: Zhonghua Books Company, 1958, p. 4771.

<sup>16</sup> The Boxer Movement was a Chinese rebellion from November 1899 to September 7, 1901, against foreign influence in areas such as trade, politics, religion and technology that occurred in China during the final years of the Manchu rule (Qing Dynasty). See Zhu Shoupeng, *The Donghua collection of Guangxu Dynasty*, Vol.5, Beijing, China: Zhonghua Books Company, 1958, p. 461.

<sup>17</sup> Shen Tongsheng, *Political Deals of Guangxu Dynasty*, Vol. 27, Nanyang Press, China, 1909, p. 27.

<sup>18</sup> Liang Qichao (1873–1929) was a Chinese scholar, journalist, philosopher and reformist during the Qing Dynasty (1644–1911), who inspired Chinese scholars with his writings and reform movements. See Zhou Hong and Zhu Hanhua *China’s 20<sup>th</sup> Century Chronicle, Figures Volume*. Jinan, China: Shandong Renmin Publishing House, 2000, pp. 373-374.

7. Liang Qichao, as the chief of the constitutionalists, offered a rather systematic elaboration of what constitutional monarchy, was why to implement constitutional monarchy; and how to realize constitutional monarchy. Liang persisted that the constitution, which should become the sole legitimate source of the laws in all countries, also should be observed by the sovereign, the mandarins and the people. He named the constitutional government as a limited government, which meant that the monarchical powers should be defined, and should be the mandarins and the people. Liang believed that the democratic rights, constitutional monarchy and democratic constitutionalism were determined by the historical situation of a country. Compared with autocratic monarchy and democratic constitutionalism, Liang insisted that constitutional monarchy is the most ideal regime for China. He said that the world at that time was undergoing the defeat of autocracy by constitutionalism. By rights, there inevitably would be a struggle between the new and the old, and the old would lose while the new would win. Therefore, constitutionalism was the common choice of all countries including China, and it would not be stopped. If those in powers were truly patriotic, they should implement democratic rights and practice constitutional monarchy.<sup>19</sup>
8. Through the propagations of constitutionalists, around about 1903, the Chinese constitutional thoughts expanded into the interior of China, the students were studying abroad and overseas Chinese, and then converged into a strong political force which was called Constitutionalism Group.<sup>20</sup> Around about the Russo-Japanese War (1904), the constitutionalists changed theoretical engagement into practical action, and constitutionalism in China developed from mere philosophy to a national constitutional movement rapidly. Thus, a political trend came into existence where almost all the people, no matter a government official with high position or an ordinary student, were talking about constitutionalism.

### **3. The decision to investigate constitutional politics abroad**

9. If the main activities of constitutionalists were theoretical preparation before the Russo-Japanese War (1904), then the heart of their activities were turned to instigate the high-ranking officials when the war ended in 1905. The constitutionalists attached importance to the approval and support of the officials in powers to facilitate constitutionalism. They regarded the influential officials as a master of the situation of

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<sup>19</sup> Liang Qichao, "On Constitutionalism", *Qing Yi Bao*, vol.81, 1901, 6/7.

<sup>20</sup> Hou Yijie, *Chinese Political Reform Trend in the Early 20th Century*, Beijing, China: Renmin Republishing House, 1993, p. 39.

constitutional, and believed that the bigwigs had the convenience and strength, which was not available to constitutionalist that with no position and powers, to persuade and influence the will and decision of the central government. Therefore, they thought it should become the first task for constitutionalists to instigate the bigwigs. Once, an enough large number of influential-officials accepted or even sympathized with constitutional reform, they would become not only an important political force to practice constitutionalism, but also a key passageway for Constitutionalism Group to convey its propositions to the core of authority.

10. Compared with the Hundred Days' Reform of 1898, the constitutionalists avoided opposing with anti-constitutionalists directly and devoted themselves to peaceful instigating the powers to foster a bureaucratic group who supported or sympathize with constitutionalism. Drawing support from the group of influential-officials, constitutionalists realized the communication with the supreme ruler and successfully persuaded the supreme ruler to accept constitutional advocacy.
11. Practice had been proved that the plan of constitutionalist achieved unprecedented success. The governor of YunGui District Ding Zhenduo<sup>21</sup> and the provincial governor of Yunnan Lin Shaonian<sup>22</sup> first telegraphed to request reform on January 19th, 1904. In Jiangzhe District, as a constitutionalist, Zhang Yuanji<sup>23</sup> first raised the advocacy for dispatching diplomat abroad to investigate politics in other countries. At the same time, officials like Cen Chunxuan<sup>24</sup> reported to throne about Constitutional Practice one after another.<sup>25</sup> So far as to the end of June in 1905, five out of the eight local governors in position, including Yunnan,

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<sup>21</sup> Ding Zhenduo (1824 - 1914) successively assumed office as the governor of Yunnan province, the governor-general of Yunnan and Guizhou province, the assistant manager of the Parliament and so on. In 1904, as the governor of YunGui, Ding Zhenduo and Lin Shaonian, who was assumed office as Yunnan governor, jointly published an open telegram to Qing Court, appealing practice constitutionalism. <<http://zh.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia>>

<sup>22</sup> Lin Shaonian (1845– 1916) assumed office as the Imperial censor in Guangxu 14 (in 1888), was appointed as the governor of Yunnan province in 1900, and concurrently assumed office as the governor-general of YunGui. He united Ding Zhenduo published an open telegram to Qing Court in 1904, appealing practice constitutionalism. In Guangxu 32 years (in 1906), he assumed office as minister of the Military Ministry and supported constitutional reform. See Dai Yi and Li Wenhai, *Qing Comparative Mirror*, Xian, China: Shanxi Renmin Republishing House, 2000, p. 7960.

<sup>23</sup> Zhang Yuanji (1867– 1959) once was asked an interview by Guangxu Emperor as an exception during the time of The Hundred Days' Reform of 1898. After the Wuxu Coup D'etat in 1898, he was removed from office. From then on, Zhang Yuanji devoted his rest life in publication. See Zhou Hong and Zhu Hanhua *China's 20<sup>th</sup> Century Chronicle, Figures Volume*, Jinan, China: Shandong Renmin Publishing House, 2000, pp. 368-369.

<sup>24</sup> Cen Chunxuan (1861–1933) successively assumed office as governor-general of Sichuan, Liangguang, and Yungui and chairman of the Governing Committee of the Military Government of China. See Dai Yi and Li Wenhai, *Qing Comparative Mirror*, Xian, China: Shanxi Renmin Republishing House, 2000, pp. 8923-8924.

<sup>25</sup> Hou Yijie, *Chinese Political Reform Trend in the Early 20th Century*, Beijing, China: Renmin Republishing House, 1993, p. 52.

Guangdong, Jiangzhe, Hubei, and Zhili, had reported to throne to request Constitutional Practice, and the governor of Sichuan requested to dispatch officials to travel abroad; Qu Hongji<sup>26</sup> and Yikuang<sup>27</sup> as the ministers of the Ministry definitely expressed to support Constitutional Reform; and included provincial governors like Lin Shaonian and ministers abroad like Sun Baoqi<sup>28</sup> all expressed their opinions to support the Constitutional Reform. Up to this point, the Constitutionalism Group had stirred up a strong support and sympathy force for Constitutional Practice, and made Constitutional Practice become an inevitable trend.<sup>29</sup>

12. Being faced with so strong voice and force on Constitutional Practice, Cixi and The Qing Court had to make concessions and convoked official meetings for days on ending the affairs of Constitutional Practice which from the early July in 1905. Then the official meeting deliberated over subject about dispatching officials abroad to investigate world politics on 4 July, and made a formal decision on 9 July. On the basis of the suggestion of the official meetings, Cixi issued *the Imperial Edict to Investigate Constitutional Politics* on 16 July and decided to dispatch five officials including Zaize abroad to investigate constitutional systems and expected to use the achievements for reference.<sup>30</sup> From then on, the preparatory procedure for the Constitutional Practice started formally.

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<sup>26</sup> Qu Hongji (1850–1918) successively assumed office as Cabinet Bachelors, Shangshu of the Board of Works, minister of the Ministry of Military, minister of the Department of the Government Affairs and Shangshu of the Department of Foreign Affairs and so on. He participated in making the plan for the Constitutional Practice in 1906. See Dai Yi and Li Wenhai, *Qing Comparative Mirror*, Xian, China: Shanxi Renmin Republishing House, 2000, pp. 8923-8924.

<sup>27</sup> Yikuang (1836–1918), the Prince Qing, was sent to succeed the Prince Chun in the construction of the Imperial Summer Palace in the late 1890s, and then was sent by the Empress Dowager Cixi, along with veteran diplomat Li Hongzhang to reach an agreement with several Western powers and the Empire of Japan after their invasion of China in 1901. In August, Yikuang and Li Hongzhang signed the Boxer Protocol of 1901. Yikuang was despised by not only reformers, but also by moderate court officials. After the death of the Empress Dowager in 1908, Yikuang led the Monarchal Cabinet as Prime Minister under the regency of Zaifeng, Prince Chun. See Dai Yi and Li Wenhai, *Qing Comparative Mirror*, Xian, China: Shanxi Renmin Republishing House, 2000, p. 6616.

<sup>28</sup> Sun Baoqi (1867 -1931) was transferred to be minister of the Military Ministry in 1906 and was soon appointed as minister to German ministers. After the Wuchang Uprising, he once announced declaration of Shandong province and held the provincial military governor. He was appointed as minister of foreign affairs (1913), acted for premier of the State Council (1914), assumed office as Auditor General, Minister of the Finance Ministry, Premier of State Council and concurrently chairmen of Foreign Affairs Committee (1924) and so on. See Zhou Hong and Zhu Hanhua *China's 20<sup>th</sup> Century Chronicle, Figures Volume*, Jinan, China: Shandong Renmin Publishing House, 2000, p. 230.

<sup>29</sup> Wang Kaixi, *Constitutional Monarchy Theory of the Dominative Group and Political Situation in the late Qing Dynasty*, Beijing, China: The Journal of Beijing Normal University, No. 5, 1990, pp. 52-53.

<sup>30</sup> The Department of the Ming and Qing Dynasty Archives of National Palace Museum, *The Archives Materials of the Preparation for Constitution-making in the late Qing Dynasty*, Beijing, China: Zhonghua Books Company, 1979, pp. 1-3.

### III. THE COMPROMISE BETWEEN PRO-CONSTITUTIONALIST AND ANTI-CONSTITUTIONALIST

#### 1. The Pro-constitutionalist promoted the Constitutional Practice positively

13. The pro-constitutional force further developed inside the Qing government officials after 1905. As the core of the pro-constitutional force in government, the Investigation Officials really played a key role to promote the Constitutional Practice.

14. At the end of 1905, the five Investigation Officials first arrived in Japan and submitted documents to the Qing Court; they highly praised constitutional politics in Japan. They commended that the Japanese constitution, which the achievement of consulting constitutional politics from Europe, was rather perfect.<sup>31</sup>

15. In July 1906, Zaize, as one of the Investigation Officials, presented a document to Guangxu Emperor and firmly requested the court to make constitution. He said that all prosperous and strong countries took the constitution as the outline of development without exception, and the reason why Chinese Institutional Reform could not produce a good effect was that there was no constitution in China. Thus, the court should issue an Imperial Edict and announce to practice constitutionalism, and command the bureau of Investigation Politics to formulate a draft on the base of adopting the constitutions from other countries, aiming to initiate the education and improve the law, arrange the finance and practice local autonomy.<sup>32</sup>

16. The Investigation Officials including Dai Hongci<sup>33</sup> submitted a document to the Qing Court, requesting to reform national bureaucratic system to prepare for Constitutional Practice. They cited examples in Japan that before putting the constitution into effect in Mei Ji 23 years, Japan had preceded twice reforms of bureaucratic system in Mei Ji 7 years and Mei Ji

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<sup>31</sup> The Department of the Ming and Qing Dynasty Archives of National Palace Museum, *The Archives Materials of the Preparation for Constitution-making in the late Qing Dynasty*, Beijing, China: Zhonghua Books Company, 1979, pp. 6-7.

<sup>32</sup> Hou Yijie, *Chinese Political Reform Trend in the Early 20th Century*, Beijing, China: Renmin Republishing House, 1993, p. 68.

<sup>33</sup> Dai Hongci (1853—1910) successively assumed office as Vice-President of the Board of Rites and Revenue, *Shangshu* (Chinese) of Law Board, minister of Military Ministry and so on. In 1905, as one of the five Investigation officials, Dai Hongci was dispatched to America, England, France, Germany, Denmark, Switzerland, Holland, Belgium, Italy and so on countries to investigate western constitutional systems. After returning from Europe and America, he persisted that China would not get anywhere without Constitutional Reform and vigorously stood for that China should adopt constitutionalism to replace the absolutism. See Zhu Chengru, *General History of the Qing Dynasty*, Beijing, China: Forbidden City Press, 2003, p. 511.

18 years.<sup>34</sup> Meanwhile, the Investigation Officials believed that the implementation of Japanese constitution could achieve success because of the successful reforms of bureaucratic system. And the situation in China was similar to Japan, thus, Chinese bureaucratic system needed a reform urgently. Then, they offered eight pieces of advice on specific reform, including imitating the Cabinet System to unify central administration, dividing the authority between central and local governments, setting up assistant officials in important local government office, unifying the authority of central officials, arranging central organizations, changing local administrative system, making adjudication and tax officials independent, and formulating a new law of the appointment, the promotion and transfer, the punishment, the salary and the award of officials as well.<sup>35</sup>

## **2. The Engagement between Pro-constitutionalists and Anti-constitutionalist**

17. The attitude of the Investigation Officials towards Constitutionalism was the key factor to impel The Qing Court to make the final decision to implement Constitutional Practice, which meant a series of transformation in governmental system and would bring about changes in the structure of national power, thus, the interests of some former Imperial Kinsmen, would be inevitably involved, and this was bound to encounter great opposition from some conservative forces.

18. In fact, some conservatives had opposed Constitutional Reform in different ways early before Investigation Officials returned and some of them even memorialized the Emperor in defense of autocratic system openly. They insisted on that the poverty and weakness of China be not consisting in autocracy, but in the inadequacy of monarchical power and believed that Constitutional Reform was absolutely detrimental to China.<sup>36</sup> After the five Investigation Officials returned homeland, some anti-constitutionalists brazenly continued to resist Constitutional Practice.

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<sup>34</sup> The Meiji Restoration, also known as the Meiji Ishin, Revolution, or Renewal, was a chain of events that led to enormous changes in Japan's political and social structure. It occurred in the later half of the 19th century, a period that traverses both the late Edo period (often called Late Tokugawa shogunate) and the beginning of the Meiji Era. Probably the most important foreign account of the events between 1862 and 1869 is contained in *A Diplomat in Japan* by Sir Ernest Satow. The restoration was a direct response to the opening of Japan by the arrival of the Black Ships of Commodore Matthew Perry. This restoration made Imperial Japan a great power. See Lv Lizhou, *The Meiji Revolution of Japan (1868)*, Haikou, China: Hainan publishing house, 2007, pp. 5-6.

<sup>35</sup> The Department of the Ming and Qing Dynasty Archives of National Palace Museum, *The Archives Materials of the Preparation for Constitution-making in the late Qing Dynasty*, Beijing, China: Zhonghua Books Company, 1979, pp. 367-368.

<sup>36</sup> The Department of the Ming and Qing Dynasty Archives of National Palace Museum, *The Archives Materials of the Preparation for Constitution-making in the late Qing Dynasty*, Beijing, China: Zhonghua Books Company, 1979, pp. 107-108.

They professed that constitutionalism was defective politics and the words of those who advocated equality was wild, thus practice constitutionalism would be disadvantageous for the emperor, the country and the officials. The Cabinet scholar Wenhai claimed that there were six sins of Constitutional Practice and warned that the current situation of the Qing Dynasty was so confused with the covetous eyes of great powers and the aggressive popular sentiments, that making constitution and reforming bureaucratic system would weaken sovereign rights increasingly and national affairs would fall into chaos gradually, then, it would be hard to guard against great powers' invasion.<sup>37</sup>

19. To counter the censures of anti-constitutionalists, the Investigation Officials including Zaize rebutted that constitution could help China to defend external invasion, stabilize national foundation and protect the people. Furthermore, although the Constitutional Reform would be most unfavorable to officials, it would surely be favorable to the country and all the people. And taking stock of the world situations and experiences, could only constitution rescue China from the domestic trouble and foreign invasion.<sup>38</sup> Therefore, the most pressing matter of the moment for the Qing government that was to promulgate a constitutional outline, make the national known the attitude of government towards Constitutionalism, and formulate new laws to guarantee local autonomy and the rights of assembly, expression and publication. These three things were the pith of the Constitutional Practice and the key factors for Qing government to make China become prosperous and strong.<sup>39</sup>

20. On August 28 1906, the officials, who were commanded to look up the documents submitted by Investigation Officials, convened a conference to discuss whether to implement Constitutional Practice. In the conference, Yikuang, who assumed office as Minister of the Military Ministry at that time, pointed out that Constitutional Practice had every advantage and not a single disadvantage and accorded with popular will; therefore, it was necessary for The Qing Court to announce to implement the Constitutional Practice as soon as possible. But the dissenters persisted that the situation in China was different from foreign countries, and Constitutional Practice would inevitably result in power's loss of the government ruler, thus, the evil forces would perpetrate outrages.

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<sup>37</sup> The Department of the Ming and Qing Dynasty Archives of National Palace Museum, *The Archives Materials of the Preparation for Constitution-making in the late Qing Dynasty*, Beijing, China: Zhonghua Books Company, 1979, p. 140.

<sup>38</sup> The Department of the Ming and Qing Dynasty Archives of National Palace Museum, *The Archives Materials of the Preparation for Constitution-making in the late Qing Dynasty*, Beijing, China: Zhonghua Books Company, 1979, p. 111.

<sup>39</sup> The Department of the Ming and Qing Dynasty Archives of National Palace Museum, *The Archives Materials of the Preparation for Constitution-making in the late Qing Dynasty*, Beijing, China: Zhonghua Books Company, 1979, p. 112.

Furthermore, the people were so ignorant of constitutionalism that they would not take pride in the awarded rights; on the contrary, they would feel bitter about those duties they had to undertake. Meanwhile, the evil forces would grasp local power once the autonomy was put into practice, and this was rather dangerous for the country. However, pro-constitutionalists officials believed that the level of national consciousness was determined by the persuasion of government, constitutionalism would never realize if positive measures had not been taken. Thus, China had to implement Constitutional Practice enhance national consciousness,<sup>40</sup> and just considering the situation be different from foreign countries in China, we regarded it is necessary for China to spend some years doing Constitutional Practice before implementing constitutionalism. Yuan Shikai,<sup>41</sup> who had betrayed the Reform Movement of 1898,<sup>42</sup> also advocated Constitutional Practice firmly. He said that those who dared to obstruct Constitutional Practice were rebels in fact, he even expressed that he would resign the official position rather than given up Constitutional Practice and would fight for constitutionalism to death.<sup>43</sup>

### **3. The Issue of *the Imperial Edict to Imitative Constitutionalism***

21. After a fierce dispute, the pro-constitutionalists and anti-constitutionalists finally reached a compromise about Constitutional Practice. On

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<sup>40</sup> The Department of the Ming and Qing Dynasty Archives of National Palace Museum, *The Archives Materials of the Preparation for Constitution-making in the late Qing Dynasty*, Beijing, China: Zhonghua Books Company, 1979, p. 116.

<sup>41</sup> Yuan Shikai (1859 –1916) was a Chinese military official and politician during the late Qing Dynasty and the early Republic of China. See Zhou Hong and Zhu Hanhua *China's 20<sup>th</sup> Century Chronicle, Figures Volume*, Jinan, China: Shandong Renmin Publishing House, 2000, pp. 570-571.

<sup>42</sup> Before Hundred Days' Reform 1898, the Qing Court was divided between progressives under the leadership of the Guangxu Emperor, and conservatives under the Empress Dowager Cixi, who decided that the reforms were too drastic, and wanted to restore her own regency. And the Emperor pay important to the plans of the coup spread early, and was very aware of the plot. During this time of Hundred Days' Reform, Guangxu asked reform advocates Kang Youwei, Tan Sitong and others to develop a plan to save him. Yuan's involvement in the coup continues to be a large topic of historical debate. Tan Sitong reportedly had a talk with Yuan several days before the coup, asking Yuan to assist the Emperor and rid Cixi. Yuan refused a direct answer, but insisted he was loyal to the Emperor. Meanwhile Manchu General Ronglu was planning maneuvers for his army to stage the coup. According to many sources, including the diary of Liang Qichao and a Wen Bao article, Yuan Shikai arrived in Tianjin on September 20, 1898, by train. It was certain that by the evening, Yuan had talked to Ronglu, but what was revealed to him remains ambiguous. Most historians suggest that Yuan had told Ronglu of all details of the Reformers' plans, and asked him to take immediate action. The plot being exposed, Ronglu's troops entered the Forbidden City at dawn on September 21, forcing the Emperor into seclusion in a lake palace. Yuan made a political alliance with the Empress Dowager, and became a lasting enemy of the Guangxu Emperor, then left the capital in 1899 for his new appointment as Governor of Shandong. See Jiang Guohua, "Review of Constitution-making in the Late of Qing Dynasty", *Xiangtan, China: The Journal of Hunan Science and Technology University*, no.1, 2007, pp. 23-24.

<sup>43</sup> Chen Xulu, *Around the Revolution of 1901*, Shanghai, China: Shanghai Renmin Publishing House, 1979, pp. 28-29.

September 1, 1906, The Qing Court issued *the Imperial Edict to imitative Constitutionalism* and showed its positive attitude towards constitutionalism to the whole national, recognized the constitutionalism was the key factors for the western countries to become so strong and the Constitutional Practice was the sole choice if government wanted to build a strong and perpetual base for the country. On September 2, 1906, the Qing Court announced to reform bureaucratic system and instructed 14 officials including Zaize to compose a program of reforming that would be ratified by the chief commanders Yikuang, Qu Hongji and Sun Jianai.<sup>44</sup> The Bureau of Investigation Constitutional Politics was changed to the Bureau of Constitutional Arrangement five days later. Up to this point, the Constitutional Practice had been started from the reform of governmental instrumentality.

22. In this significance, the issue of *the Imperial Edict to Imitative Constitutionalism* signaled that Chinese politics had entered the road of the transitional phase from feudal autocracy to modern democracy. The powers represented by Cixi, who had cruelly repressed the Hundred Days' Reform of 1898, openly recognized in the Imperial Edict that western constitutional system was superior to Chinese autocratic system, and it was necessary for China to implement constitutional practice. Although this was just a compromise, it showed that those officials who held powers had realized that we should abandon the corrupt autocracy and learn the advanced constitutional system from the western countries, unless we did not want to get rid of national crisis and seek national development.<sup>45</sup>

#### **IV. THE COMPROMISE BETWEEN THE AUTHORITY AND THE CONSTITUTIONALISTS**

##### **1. The Constitutional Preparation made by the Qing Court**

23. After *the Imperial Edict to Imitative Constitutionalism* was put out in 1906, though there is no clear timetable for the constitution to make the Qing Court accepted the suggestion of the Investigation Officials and decided to start the preparation for constitutionalism with the bureaucracy reform.

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<sup>44</sup> Sun Jianai (1827–1909) was appointed as Xuezheng of Hubei province in 1868 and then became one of the two teachers of the young emperor Guangxu in 1887. In the meantime, he assumed office as the vice minister of the Board of Works, the Board of Revenue, the Board of War and the Board of Civil Office. He successively was appointed as an Imperial Censor of Supervision, Shangshu of the Board of Works and concurrently the governor of Shuntianfu in 1890. See Zhu Chengru, *General History of the Qing Dynasty*, Beijing, China: Forbidden City Press, 2003, pp. 510-511.

<sup>45</sup> Hou Yijie, *Chinese Political Reform Trend in the Early 20th Century*, Beijing, China: Renmin Republishing House, 1993, p. 74.

24. Firstly, The Qing Court appointed Zaize as the Minister of the Compilation of Civil Service System and planned to follow the example of the civil service system of the constitutional monarchy states to collate and stipulate the programmer of bureaucracy reform, and schemed to establish the government form of the separation of the three powers. Considering the difficulties for China to set up a modern Parliament system in so a short time, the Qing Court decided to carry out the reform of administration and justice firstly. Tow months passed, the reform of central bureaucracy system was almost completed. As the Minister of the Compilation of Civil Service System, Zaize published an open telegram for the whole provincial governors on November 15, 1906, which emphasized that the bureaucracy reform is the first step of the Constitutional Practice which appealed to all provinces to consult and follow the achievement of the reform then to prompt the reform of local bureaucracy system. Later the Qing Dynasty promulgated *the Edict to the Detailed Rules for the Constitutional Practice* in July 1907, which firstly made the Constitutional Practice have regulations to go by.<sup>46</sup>

25. Because the bureaucracy reform was not much intensity and other reforms made little progress, it was not only the constitutionalist but also made the Guangxu emperor disappointed. Guangxu even castigated incompetence of the officials at all levels. After that, the Qing Dynasty quickened the progress of the Constitutional Practice and the Bureau of Constitutional Arrangement replaced the Bureau of Investigation Constitutional Politics in August 1907, which is allying to the preparation of the constitutionalism. Meanwhile, the Qing Court sent ministers once more to the three countries: Great Britain, Germany and Japan again. Only wanted to “conduct a thorough investigation on the constitution only” and made preparations to found Parliament system on the base of Central Advisory Council on September 9, 1907.<sup>47</sup> However, though these measures had been achieved some fruits, the government had not given the national the timetable of constitutional-making, many people deemed the Chinese constitutionalism was still nowhere in sight at that time.

## **2. The Instigations of the Constitutionalists among the People**

26. After the Russo-Japanese War (1904), the constitutionalists gradually recognized it was not mature for the Chinese to place all constitutional

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<sup>46</sup> The Department of the Ming and Qing Dynasty Archives of National Palace Museum, *The Archives Materials of the Preparation for Constitution-making in the late Qing Dynasty*, Beijing, China: Zhonghua Books Company, 1979, p. 44.

<sup>47</sup> Wei Qingyuan, *The Constitutional History of Late Qing Dynasty*, Beijing, China: Renmin University of China Press, 1993, p. 244.

hopes on the instigation of the high-ranking officials and government. Because the potentate would not hand out their regime to the people easily, the realization of the constitutionalism must rely on the people's striving. In the view of the above, the constitutionalists expanded and deepened instigations in the Grass-roots after the issue of *the Imperial Edict to Imitative Constitutionalism*. Specific performance for the following two aspects:

27. Firstly, the constitutionalists established civilian groups in the whole country, advocating the constitutional thinking and mobilizing popular support. For example, December 1906, Hubei Preparation of Constitutionalism Association, Hunan Constitutional Governance Association, Guangdong Autonomy Conference, Guizhou Preparation of Constitutionalism Association and Autonomy Study Groups were established one after another. Kang Youwei returned to engage in the activities of political parties and reorganized the royalists as the National Constitutional Council in 1907. In the same year, Liang Qichao and Jiang Zhiyou<sup>48</sup> established Zhengwen Consortium in Japan in order to study constitutional model for the future in preparation. Yangdu<sup>49</sup> organized the Constitution Instruction Conference, whose main members were court supporters.
28. Secondly, conduct massive constitutional petition campaign, core of which is convening Parliament. In the early period, Yangdu played the role of a soldier as well as a leader. Yang believed that making constitution, establishing a Responsibility Cabinet and convening Parliament are the key to constitutional monarchy. And convening Parliament is the most important one in the three.<sup>50</sup> Since July 1, 1907, Yang had taken the *China Xin Bao* as the base to organize strength and elucidate the constitutional theory, key of which was to advocate convening Parliament and competition with the government.<sup>51</sup> He regarded convening Parliament as the only way to save the country<sup>52</sup> Subsequently, *Xin Bao of China* and *Datong Bao* published a series of

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<sup>48</sup> Jiang Zhiyou (1866–1929) was a modern poet and insisted on political reform after the Sino-Japanese War of 1894-1895. He established the Zhengwen Consortium with Liang Qichao in 1907, promoting constitutional monarchy and opposing revolutionary position. <http://zh.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia>>

<sup>49</sup> Yangdu (1874—1931) was an important thinker and political activist of China in the beginning of the 20 century. He was the leader of the petitions for convening of parliament in 1909-1910 and the one of the most important advocate of restoration activities of Yuan Shikai in 1915-1916. See Dai Yi and Li Wenhai, *Qing Comparative Mirror*, Xian, China: Shanxi Renmin Republishing House, 2000, p. 8918.

<sup>50</sup> Hou Yijie, *Chinese Political Reform Trend in the Early 20th Century*, Beijing, China: Renmin Republishing House, 1993, p. 178.

<sup>51</sup> Yangdu, "A Preface of *Xin Bao of China*", *Xin Bao of China*, Vol.1, 1907.

<sup>52</sup> Yangdu, *A Doctrine of Golden and Iron Country*, Changsha, China: Hunan Renmin Republishing House, 1986, p. 218.

articles of Xiong Fanyu and other members. These articles in different way discussed the necessity and benefit of convening Parliament, refuted the various opposition and obstruction to the convening Parliament, and encouraged people to bravely devote themselves in petitions for Parliament.

29. Mobilized by the constitutionalists, the campaigns of Petition for Convening Parliament were launched in the whole country. Before the promulgation of *the Outline of Imperial Constitution* in August 1908, a total of people in 18 provinces, 8 constitutional bodies and a large number of overseas Chinese and students attended the campaigns of petitions. National verifiable signatures of the people involved in up to 15 millions.
30. The activities of constitutionalists, including the people who established the constitutional organizations, publicized constitutional thinking, and petitioned to the government to convene Parliament, woke the intellectuals and business people up, and to a certain extent, inspired people's zest to strive for the making constitution and convening Parliament, made the concept of constitution, and Parliament rooted among the national and wide-spread the country. The campaigns of petition for the Parliament greatly broadened people's horizons, enlightened the people's political thinking, opened up the new era of people directly asked the rulers for regime and freedom in a peaceful manner. Therefore it may be rated as an unprecedented and great pioneering work in the political history of China.<sup>53</sup>

### **3. The Birth of the Outline of Imperial Constitution**

31. Facing the massive campaigns of petition, most provincial governors approved that the government should declare the time of convening Parliament explicitly, when the ministers who were sent abroad as diplomats advocated that the government should convene Parliament immediately. Although someone in the government claimed that they were not willing to see the Parliament convening in their lifetime, but the majority of officials viewed that not only the topical celebrities advocated the petition event, but also the conservative doctrines involved the campaigns, therefore they recognized the campaigns of petition for convening Parliament were different from the former actions in which the pure patriots and juveniles took part, and were conscious of the urgency to convene the Parliament, expected the government to set a date for convening Parliament before losing all popular sympathy. For example, Yikuang personally presented a memorial to Cixi and Emperor Guangxu,

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<sup>53</sup> Hou Yijie, *Chinese Political Reform Trend in the Early 20th Century*, Beijing, China: Renmin Republishing House, 1993, p. 184.

in which told that the public would not be quiet, the foreign aggressions would not be stopped, the Qing Dynasty would not shake off their destructive destiny, and the Emperor and his relatives would not be prevented themselves from losing dignity and safe, unless we decided to convene Parliament and set a date for constitution making. Touched by Yikuang's memorial, Cixi immediately promised to set the date for constitution making. To urge Cixi and Guangxu to make the final determination, Yikuang presented another memorial said:

*“Constitution-making is related with national survival, now that the Qing Dynasty has issued the Imperial Edict to Imitative Constitutionalism, the government should bring into enforce at once. It's obviously that Constitutional Monarchy is beneficial to the people and Emperor instead of officials and it's inevitably that some unethical officials will become the obstructionists of constitutionalism in the future. But once Majesty determines to promulgate constitution, the government will gain national support again and no force can stop the progress of constitutionalism. On the contrary, if Majesty slightly wavers to constitutionalism, the government will lose people's trust and undermine the overall interests of the country in the hands of obstructionists.”<sup>54</sup>*

32. Cixi and Guangxu absolutely agreed with Yikuang.

33. On August 27, 1908, the Bureau of Constitutional Arrangement and Central Advisory Council presented *the Outline of Imperial Constitution, the Essentials of Parliamentary Law, the Essentials of Electoral Law, and the Detailed List about the Preparations for Constitution-Making* (In following passage, it is called “*the Detailed List*” for short) to Guangxu and the Emperor fully approved and promulgated the above-mentioned documents at the same day and gave explicit instructions to officials and people that the existing system should be respected before the constitution was promulgated, and people should wait the government to take order with the preparations for constitution-making. Meanwhile, Guangxu issued Imperial Decree which emphasized that the matters concerned by “*the Detailed List*” were the key affairs of one constitutional country and should be implemented by the government seriously and impartially, instructed that the government to make the Imperial Decrees and “*the Detailed List*” published, handed out to the central and local bureaucracies, hung on the halls of all levels governments, and complied with “*the Detailed List*” within the fixed time. According to the Imperial Decree, all levels governments must present a memorial to the Emperor to report the results of implement of “*the Detailed List*” every six months; if

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<sup>54</sup> Yikuang, “*Memorial about Constitutional Monarchy*”, Times of China, September 6, 1908.

the governors of provinces had changed, the successor, along with his predecessor, must present a memorial to the Emperor to report the state of the implement of “*the Detailed List*” by the predecessor to avoid buck-passing; to counter the affairs which should be shared to undertake by the province and the central department, the central department was obliged to supervise the work of the province. In addition, the Emperor decreed the Bureau of Constitutional Arrangement to set up a special effective branch which was in charge of the regular checks on the work of preparations for constitution-making, indicated the Ducha Ministry to investigate and deal with the officials who held off or overtly agreed but covertly opposed, and announced the preparations for constitution-making should be completed in nine years (from 1908 to 1917) and constitution, along with the Imperial Decree about convening Parliament, would be sure to promulgate into force in 1917.<sup>55</sup> At this point, the preparations for constitution-making with nowhere in sight finally had been fixed nine years as a target time.

## V. THE COMPROMISE BETWEEN THE CONSTITUTIONAL CONSERVATISM AND THE CONSTITUTIONAL RADICALISM

### 1. The Viewpoint and Activities of the Constitutional Conservatism

34. It should be said that after *the Outline of Imperial Constitution* was carried out, different political parties in the Qing Court had achieved a limited consensus on the constitution-making. The bureaucracies that support preparations for constitutionalism had become the main stream of the Qing Court. Meanwhile, the Constitutionalism Group was divided into different camps. Some believed the Imperial Decrees about preparations for constitutionalism and jointly formed the “preparatory constitutionalism” camp with bureaucracies that supported constitutional preparation. I named those who held “preparatory constitutionalism” as the Constitutional Conservatism Group.<sup>56</sup>

35. In fact, the senior constitutionalists, with the representative of Liang Qichao, always advocated the necessity for Chinese to make constitutional preparation. As early as June 7, 1901, he had delivered the paper *On Constitutionalism*, which was issued in No. 81 of *Qingyi Bao* and made clear that it was impossible for China to realize the

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<sup>55</sup> Hou Yijie, *Chinese Political Reform Trend in the Early 20th Century*, Beijing, China: Renmin Republishing House, 1993, p. 74.

<sup>56</sup> The constitutional conservatism believed that it is necessary for China to do some preparations before constitution making. Liang Qichao was representative figure. See Jiang Guohua, “*Review of Constitution-making in the Late of Qing Dynast*”, Xiangtan, China: The Journal of Hunan Science and Technology University, no.1, 2007, pp. 23-29.

constitutional government immediately. Liang believed that the national wisdom was a key element of constitutional government, illustrated with that Japan's constitutional reform was set in the early Meiji Restoration, but its constitution was promulgated next 20 years after that, and foretold that China had to at least spend 10 or 15 years to prepare for constitutionalism before constitution-making. But in the meantime, Liang emphasized the time for China to implement constitutionalism might be in 10 years later, but the constitutional preparations should be done and the constitutional government system should be set up at once.<sup>57</sup>

36. After the enactment of the Imperial Decrees about preparations for constitutionalism, The Qing Court supervised and urged province to prepare for constitution-making. On October 23, 1908, Guangxu Decreed that every ministry and department of centre should lay off its respective plan of preparations for constitutionalism, which must present to the Emperor in half a year. Before long, under the leadership and promotion of the Qing Court, the rudiment of Local Advisory Bureau was established in every province. This was the initial attempt to realize the local representative system in Chinese history. In order to regulate the systems of local self-government, the Qing Court promulgated the "*Charter of Towns and Local Self-Government*" (a total of 9 Chapters and 112 Articles) and "*Charter of Towns and Local Elections*" (a total of 6 Chapters and 81 Articles) on January 18, 1909. From then on, the reform of local self-government had entered a substantive stage.

## **2. Three Petitions Organized by the Constitutional Radicalism Group**

37. However, the Constitutional Radicalism<sup>58</sup> Group still harbored resentment to the behaviors of the government after the Outline of Imperial Constitution was promulgation. They even doubted about the government's sincerity and capacity in implementing the constitutionalism. Worrying about the future of Chinese constitutionalism, they paid importance to the convening Parliament. They thought that only the modern Parliament systems had be established and the people's rights such as political participation had been guaranteed in China, could the Chinese government and officials be supervised and the steps of Chinese constitutional reform be quickened. Therefore the Constitutional Radicalism Group organized three nationwide campaigns of petition for convening Parliament in 1909, which promoted the constitutional

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<sup>57</sup> Liang Qichao, "*On Constitutionalism*", Qing Yi Bao, vol.81, June 7, 1901.

<sup>58</sup> The constitutional radicalism urged that Qing Dynasty should practice constitutionalism immediately. They don't think it was necessary for China to spend nine years to prepare for constitution making. Yangdu was the representative figure. See Jiang Guohua, "*Review of Constitution-making in the Late of Qing Dynasty*", Xiangtan, China: The Journal of Hunan Science and Technology University, no.1, 2007, pp. 18-29.

movement to a new climax.

38. In October 1909, the first petition which was launched by Zhangjian<sup>59</sup>, who assumed office as the Speaker of Local Advisory Bureau of Jiangsu province at that time. Influenced by the movements of Hunan's petitioning for convening Parliament, which were led by Yangdu in 1907-1908, the Provincial Advisory Bureau Consultative Conference was held in Shanghai in the middle ten days of October 1909, in which the conferees discussed the necessity whether can arouse the whole national to present a petition for convening Parliament, resolved the draft of the petition after deliberation, selected the representatives to petition to Beijing Government, decided to established the United Comrade of Petition for Losing No Time in Convening Parliament, and other correlated affairs with petition. In the leadership of the United Comrade of Petition for Losing No Time in Convening Parliament, the representatives of different province got together in Beijing, lined up to the Ducha Ministry and filed the petition in the next January. The petition enumerated the reason why the Parliament should be convened immediately from three aspects of domestic, foreign affairs and the wisdom of people. They asked to convene Parliament within one year.

39. After receiving the petition, the Qing Court instructed and promised that constitution surely be made and Parliament be sure to convene; and said: "what the government must be taken into consideration is that work should be done in order importance and urgency. As the old saying goes, those who make long march must pay important to the steady of every step, just like those who want to achieve a great event should not eager for instant success and quick profits. We have set up the systems of Local Advisory Bureau according to 'the Detail list', and we will be sure to hold Central Advisory Council next year. These are the bases of the Parliament. Therefore only when we have finished the nine-year-preparation for constitution-making, and all the basic work has been made, such as a national education is popularized, can we convene Parliament". Thus, the first petition was rejected euphemistically.<sup>60</sup>

40. Although the first petition was rejected, the petition activities of Constitutional Radicalism Group did not stop. From February 1-6, 1910, all circles of Beijing held meeting, in which the participants decided to change the name of the United Comrade of Petition for Losing No Time in

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<sup>59</sup> Zhangjian (1853–1926) was a famous constitutionalist, industrialist, educationalist, and philanthropist in end of Qing Dynasty and the beginning of Republic of China. See Zhou Hong and Zhu Hanhua *China's 20<sup>th</sup> Century Chronicle, Figures Volume*, Jinan, China: Shandong Renmin Publishing House, 2000, pp. 363-365.

<sup>60</sup> The Department of the Ming and Qing Dynasty Archives of National Palace Museum, *The Archives Materials of the Preparation for Constitution-making in the late Qing Dynasty*, Beijing, China: Zhonghua Books Company, 1979, pp. 641-642.

Convening Parliament to the United Comrade of Petition for Convening Parliament Immediately, passed a resolution to found “National Communiqué” and help to bring about the construction of the union conference system of the Local Advisory Bureau of every province, and discussed the affairs correlated with the organization about the second petition. Then the meeting published an open telegram to the constitutional groups of every province, which said that the Beijing delegation would be made to be the temporary headquarter of the United Comrade of Petition for Convening Parliament Immediately on February 7, the branches should be established in every province and the representatives would be sent to each province to organize and mobilize petitions. On April 4, 1910, the United Comrade of Petition for Convening Parliament Immediately changed its name as United Comrade of Petition for Parliament, which decided *the Regulations of United Comrade of Petition* through consultation, published *the Submission of United Comrade of Petition*, stated the necessity of convening Parliament immediately and pointed out the aim of the United Comrade of Petition is to become a political party, which was regarded as an indispensable part of preparation for convening Parliament.

41. The propositions and actions of United Comrade of Petition were accepted and sustained in all circles. Then the United Comrade of Petition launched the second petition for Parliament and 10 political groups, about 300,000 representatives were involved in. On June 18, 1910, the representatives of delegation of petition for Parliament presented petition to the government and gathered at the Ducha Ministry. At the mean time, a number of representatives was elected to see the minister of the Military Ministry and petitioned to the Prince Regent on 19, but the Prince Regent Zaifeng<sup>61</sup> declined to see the representatives or accept the petition, the representatives had to deliver the petition to the Prince Regent through post office on 23. Soon afterwards, Sun Hongyi<sup>62</sup> along with other representatives wrote a letter to the Ministers of Conference District Office and asked them to uphold the discussion about convening Parliament immediately on 26 June, 1910. Sun Hongyi wrote that “Parliament is the sole fountainhead of the legitimacy of laws;

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<sup>61</sup>Zaifeng (1883–1951) was the leader of China between 1908 and 1911, serving as the regent for his young son Puyi, the Xuantong Emperor. See Dai Yi and Li Wenhui, *Qing Comparative Mirror*, Xian, China: Shanxi Renmin Republishing House, 2000, p. 9089.

<sup>62</sup> Sun Hongyi (1873–1936) was recommended an assembly of the Local Advisory Bureau of Chihli province in Guangxu 32 years (1906), and took part in organizing United Comrade of Petition in Guangxu 34 years (1908). He had starred submit a written statement to appeal the authority to convene Parliament immediately and implement Constitutional Monarchy for several times in the latter three years. After the Revolution of 1911, Sun Hongyi was elected a member of the House of Representatives in 1912 and successively assumed office as the minister of the Educational Department and the International Affairs Ministry in 1915-1916. See Zhou Hong and Zhu Hanhua, *China's 20<sup>th</sup> Century Chronicle, Figures Volume*, Jinan, China: Shandong Renmin Publishing House, 2000, pp. 230-231.

therefore, the laws of our country are invalid until we institute the system of Parliament.”<sup>63</sup> As the chief of the Department of Government Affairs Conference, Zaifeng was forced to convoke a Government Affairs Meeting to discuss the affairs about convening Parliament and made a resolution against convening Parliament immediately and promulgated an Edict on June 27, which said that:

*“Once we have finished the nine-year-preparation for constitutionalism and popularly increased the constitutional accomplishment of our nationals, the government will sure to promulgate Edict to convene Parliament. So we government hopes that our subjects do not scramble for the false reputations and destroyed the substantial results; and do not petition abundantly.”*<sup>64</sup>

42. Although the second petition was much better organized than the first one, it was denied again. Alongside worsening of situation, the Constitutional Radicalism Group decided to start up the third petition for convening Parliament. The United Comrade of Petition convoked a representative conference, in which the representatives agreed on the related matters of preparations for the third petition, and published an open telegram to all political groups of every province on June 29-30, 1910. Then they formed a new delegation and convoked a formal convention, resolving the chapter, time and correlative detailed rules after deliberation on July 18. The delegation announced the whole country to stage the third petition on October 3, 1910. Sun Hongyi, along with other representatives, arrived at the palace of Prince Regent to hand over the petition on October 7; then they went to the Central Advisory Council to present the petition signed by 187 persons on October 9. At the mean time the League of Local Advisory Bureau of every Province also submitted a petition for convening Parliament immediately to the Central Advisory Council. The Central Advisory Council passed *the Proposal of Immediate Convening Parliament* on 22, 1910. At the same day, the delegation of petitioners telephoned every provincial Local Advisory Bureau to request the provincial governors to present the petition for Parliament, and passed the Memorial of Petition for Convening Parliament Immediately on October 26. The delegation of petitioners successively lettered the Prince Regent and the Department of Government Affairs Conference twice to request for convening Parliament immediately on October 26 and October 28, and notified by telegraph to every province that “it is heard

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<sup>63</sup> The Department of the Ming and Qing Dynasty Archives of National Palace Museum, *The Archives Materials of the Preparation for Constitution-making in the late Qing Dynasty*, Beijing, China: Zhonghua Books Company, 1979, p. 642.

<sup>64</sup> The Department of the Ming and Qing Dynasty Archives of National Palace Museum, *The Archives Materials of the Preparation for Constitution-making in the late Qing Dynasty*, Beijing, China: Zhonghua Books Company, 1979, pp. 644-645.

that the government agreed on convening Parliament in Xuantong<sup>65</sup> 5 years (1913). We decide to strive for convening Parliament next year. That is a life and death; do not delay".<sup>66</sup> Every province responded ardently. Zhili, Henan, Shanxi, Hubei and other provinces have launched mass demonstration activities.

43. When domestic activities of constitutional petitions were conducting, Liang Qichao also launched constitutional activities in overseas. He published *GuoFeng Bao* in Tokyo, which was propaganda for the domestic campaigns of petition. In addition, for sake of getting in touch with internal activities of petition, Liang dispatched his close friend Xu Fosu<sup>67</sup> to participate in the activities in Beijing at the end of 1909. Xu participated in the petitions in Beijing. Liang had exchanged of letters with the leader the Constitutional Radicalism Group, such as Sun Hongyi, Tang Hualong,<sup>68</sup> and Lin Changmin through the relationship of Xu in 1910. In this way, Liang started political cooperation with the important domestic constitutionalists.

### 3. The Issue of Imperial Edict to Convening Parliament ahead of Time

44. The Central Advisory Council presented the Department of Government Affairs Conference with the petitions from the representatives of the third petition for Parliament on October 28, 1910. Then Zaifeng presided over the Government Affairs Meeting on November 3 and agreed on convening Parliament in 1913. The second day, the Qing Court issued *the Imperial Edict to Convening Parliament ahead of time*, which said:

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<sup>65</sup> Puyi (1906–1967) was born of the Manchu Aisin-Gioro ruling family was the last Emperor of China between 1908 and 1924 (ruling as the Xuantong Emperor between 1908 and 1911, and non-ruling emperor between 1911 and 1924), the twelfth emperor of the Qing Dynasty to rule over China. See Zhou Hong and Zhu Hanhua, *China's 20<sup>th</sup> Century Chronicle, Figures Volume*, Jinan, China: Shandong Renmin Publishing House, 2000, pp. 730-731.

<sup>66</sup> The Department of the Ming and Qing Dynasty Archives of National Palace Museum, *The Archives Materials of the Preparation for Constitution-making in the late Qing Dynasty*, Beijing, China: Zhonghua Books Company, 1979, p. 646.

<sup>67</sup> Xu Fosu (1879–1919) joined Huaxing Hui in 1904. Soon afterwards he studied abroad Japan and joined Kang Youwei's Monarchial Party. He entrusted by Liang Qichao to attempt to mediate the relations between royalists and revolutionists and met with refusal of revolutionists in January, 1907. See Dai Yi and Li Wenhai, *Qing Comparative Mirror*, Xian, China: Shanxi Renmin Republishing House, 2000, p. 9035.

<sup>68</sup> Tang Hualong (1874–1918) was appointed the Speaker of the Local Advisory Bureau of Hubei in 1909 and positively participated in petition for Parliament. He attended the first conference of the League of Local Advisory Bureau of every Province in Beijing and was chosen as chairman of the conference in 1910. Soon afterwards, he, along with Tan Yankai, Pu Dianjun and so on, schemed to make the fourth petition movement and was not accomplished. After the Wuchang Uprising of 1911, he participated in organizations of the Hubei Military Government and published open telegrams to urge the Local Advisory Bureau of every Province to respond revolution. See Zhou Hong and Zhu Hanhua, *China's 20<sup>th</sup> Century Chronicle, Figures Volume*, Jinan, China: Shandong Renmin Publishing House, 2000, pp. 294-295.

*“People's Appeals proceed from sincerity. And more than half of ministers required rabidity... We government understands the request of subjects...But before convening Parliament, the major preparations should be done, which is so important and complex that it can not get prepared in one or two years. We government decide to move up the deadline of convening Parliament to in Xuantong 5 years (1913), but the Bureaucracy Reform should be tried out ahead of schedule, the Cabinet System should be made and the constitutional Articles should be worked out according to the Outline of Imperial Constitution, along with Parliament Law, Electoral Law and other things within the scope of the Parliament should be prepared ahead of convening Parliament...therefore, Once announced, the explicit time can not be changed.”<sup>69</sup>*

45. The issue of *the Imperial Edict to Convening Parliament ahead of time* had shortened the preparatory term for Parliament and the deadline about convening Parliament was moved up 3 years and only 2 years later than the time 1911 requested by the Constitutional Radicalism Group. That was a fruit of the three petitions; and that was the government's compromise to the people, too.

## **VI. THE COMPROMISE BETWEEN THE CONSTITUTIONALISM GROUP AND THE REVOLUTIONARY GROUP**

### **1. Another Differentiation of the Constitutionalism Group**

46. After the promulgation of the instruction for shortening the term of Parliament's preparation, the Imperial government specially appointed Pulun<sup>70</sup> and Zaize as the Compilations-Minister of Constitution and commanded them to organize group in charge of the Constitution-drafting on November 5, 1910. After this, the Constitutional Radicalism Group was divided into the Left and Right deviation. The Right deviation of the Constitutional Radicalism Group who satisfied with the commitment to shorten three-year of the preparatory term for Parliament, believed that the cause of constitutionalism would be carried forward steadily, devoted themselves peacefully in waiting for the arrival of constitutional success, and therefore changed their constitutional stand from the Constitutional

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<sup>69</sup> Zhonghua Books Company, *Political Deals of Xuantong, V.28: Imperial Decree on Nov. 1910*, Zhonghua Books Company, 1987, pp. 1-2.

<sup>70</sup> Pulun (1874 - 1925) participated in the arrangement of the Central Advisory Council and held the post of President along with Sun Jianai in 1907. He was appointed as minister of the Monarchal Cabinet in Xuantong three years (1911). After Republic of China, he once supported Yuan Shikai to restore Monarchal systems and was appointed as chief of Canzheng. <<http://zh.wikipedia.org/wiki>>

Radicalism Group to the Constitutional Conservatism Group.<sup>71</sup> As while as the Left deviation, included the commissary of Sichuan, Hunan, Hubei and the three provinces of northeast, considered the preparatory term for constitutionalism was too long. As a result, they decided to live apart from the Preparatory Council of Constitutionalism, and arranged to continue petition in Beijing.<sup>72</sup>

47. At meantime, the Delegation to Petition for Parliament held a meeting in Beijing, in which the delegates discussed the arrangement about future, commissioned temporarily Xu Fosu and someone else as drafts-man of the programmer of Party building, and published *the Letter about Inquiring Comrades by Telephone*. Soon after that, the Local Advisory Bureau of Zhili and other 10 provinces<sup>73</sup> recalled in succession and stood for petition continuously. The Comrade Association of Petition organized a March of 10,000 people in Jiangxi, Hubei, requiring that the Parliament should be convened quickly.

48. Soon afterwards, the deputies to petition for Parliament submitted interrogatory to the minister of the Department of Government Affairs Conference in Beijing on November 15, 1910 and interrogated:

*“Now that the government knows that the situation of domestic trouble and foreign invasion has become more and more critical, why do not assist the Emperor to set up Parliament systems next year? Now that the government knows that the rule of nine years preparatory term for constitution-making can be amended? Why delay to convene Parliament with excuse which has nothing to do with the constitutionalism? Now that the government knows that the decision about shortening the constitutional preparatory term should be made in the light of the memorial of governors of every province, why do not convene Parliament in next year according to the will of most governors? Now that the government knows that the most work of constitutional preparations is in name but not in reality, why do not resort to superintendence and compulsion?”<sup>74</sup>*

49. After dismissing the petition delegation, the United Comrades of Petition decided to make preparations for building political party in December 1910 and published announcement to claim that the main tasks at that

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<sup>71</sup> Jiang Guohua, “Review of Constitution-making in the Late of Qing Dynasty”, Xiangtan, China: The Journal of Hunan Science and Technology University, No.1, 2007, p. 32.

<sup>72</sup> Hu Shenwu, *The Constitutional Movements in Late Qing Dynasty*, Shanghai, China: Shanghai Renmin Publishing House, 1959, p. 42.

<sup>74</sup> Hu Shenwu, *The Constitutional Movements in Late Qing Dynasty*, Shanghai, China: Shanghai Renmin Publishing House, 1959, p. 43.

time were the four aspects: to supervise and urge government to set up a new Cabinet immediately; to strive for participation in the constitutionalism; to appeal for the abrogation of the prohibition about political Party; and to indoctrinate national with constitutional knowledge, Which were regarded as the basis of the establishment of political Party. Then delegates began to draft the rule for Party building, and planed to hold an inaugural meeting between spring and summer in 1911 and announce the birth of the political Party formally.

## **2. The Left of Radical Constitutionalists threw all themselves into the Revolutionary Group**

50. In December 1910, parts of Constitutionalists sponsored their fourth petition for convening quickly Parliament in some provinces such as Fengtian and Zhili. In this movement, young students first become the main participants. This time government of The Qing Dynasty lost its patience and decided to execute one as a warning to others. According to the government orders, the delegates of Northeast provinces were sent to their hometown, and Wen Shilin,<sup>75</sup> who organized the fourth petition, was banished to Xinjiang.<sup>76</sup> From then on, the petition for convening Parliament was terminated. But the government actions about repression and violence to the petition aroused a general malice in people. This made the Left of constitutionalists accelerated their step to the Revolutionary Group.

51. Soon afterwards, the amended plan of Constitutional Practice was approved by the Xuantong Emperor January 7, 1911, which included the content about setting up Cabinet, issuing administrative and judicial law and so on. Then memorial about the Official System and its Interim Regulations of Cabinet was approved to carry out on May 8 and the Monarchal Cabinet was set up. This made educated people utterly disappointed with the government. Because the constitutionalists consistently advocated constructing a Cabinet system that held itself responsible to the Parliament, as a result, the Parliament systems should be set up before the Cabinet. But at that time, the government preferred firstly to construct the Cabinet systems to convene Parliament and the Cabinet would be just held responsible to the Emperor. So far as to that 8 of the 13 Ministers of the Monarchial Cabinet came from Manchu, just 4 of

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<sup>75</sup> Wen Shilin (1870–1934) was one of constitutionalists and educationalist in the end of Qing Dynasty. He was chosen the president of the United Comrade of Petition of Tianjin students and organized the fourth petition for Parliament in December, 1910. After the failure of petition, he was banished to Xinjiang. After the Revolution erupts of 1911, he once held the post of Provincial Military governor of Xinjiang and a member of the House of the Representatives. <<http://wikimediafoundation.org/wiki/>>

<sup>76</sup> Hu Shenwu, *The Constitutional Movements in Late Qing Dynasty*, Shanghai, China: Shanghai Renmin Publishing House, 1959, p. 47.

Cabinet ministers came from the Han nationality, and most of the Manchu Ministers were controlled by 5 incompetent monarchal members. <sup>77</sup>How disappointed the constitutionalists were!

52. Before long, the Monarchial Cabinet issued the policy about the nationalization of railroads on May 9, 1911;<sup>78</sup> then refused the request of Central Advisory Council for holding a provisional conference on May 17 and signed the loan contracts about Huguang Railway with the Quadruple Bank Consortium of England, France, Germany, and America on 20 May. These series of above-mentioned actions of the Monarchial Cabinet stimulated the tide of revolt to the government. That the Movement of Safeguarding Railway was set in Hunan, Hubei, and Sichuan provinces directly led up to the Revolution of 1911. The Movement of Safeguarding Railway, which was launched by the constitutionalists and was directed against the Monarchial Cabinet, was not only an economic movement for protecting the private property, but also a democratic movement for anti-imperialist and anti-feudal. And what suppression the government made forced the constitutionalists to cast away the illusion to the Qing Dynasty and drove them into revolutionary camp.

### **3. The Debut of *the Constitutional Nineteen Precepts***

53. Taking advantage of the crisis that resulted from Movement to Safeguard Railway, the revolutionary group launched the Wuchang uprising on October 10, 1911 and occupied the three towns of Wuhan on October 12.<sup>79</sup> At the same time, Tang Hualong, as a veteran constitutionalist, published an open telegram to the Local Advisory Bureau of every province to call for joined efforts with revolution. Then, under the influence of constitutionalists, provinces in China declare independence one after another.

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<sup>77</sup> John King Fairbank, *China: Tradition and Transformation*, Translated by Zhangpei, Beijing, China: World Knowledge Press, 2002, p. 576.

<sup>78</sup> As early as in 1903, Qing government permitted the national to gather capital to build railroads. Some provinces such as Sichuan, Hunan, and Hubei successively had established the government-private railway company around 1904, and these railway companies mostly had been changed to be private limited company through pooling resources by local farmer and other people; around 1907. When Qing government promulgated the policy about nationalization of railway in 1911, the government not only refused to pay the investor capital, but also took the building railroads as a name to lend massive foreign debt. As a result, on the one hand, the original capital of the investors of those private railway companies would be irrevocably lost and all their previous efforts would be wasted; on the other hand, the country would be menaced by losing the railway sovereignty and would created a sets of conveniences for the foreign countries to plunder Chinese resources by controlling the railway lines. Moreover, a large amount of foreign debt would directly increase the financial burden of national. Therefore, the policy about the nationalization of railway simulated the Movement to Safeguard Railway in Hunan, Hubei, and Sichuan provinces so on. See Wei Yingtao, *the Movement to Safeguard Railway in Sichuan*, Chengdu, China: Sichuan Renmin Publishing House, 1981, pp. 2-3.

<sup>79</sup> Wuhan is mad up of Wuchang, Hankou, and Hanyang three towns.

54. Under the pressure of revolution, Qing government was driven to compromise on ending the Constitutional Practice and declared that the government had decided to carry out constitution-making immediately. Soon afterwards, Zaize promulgated four Decrees on October 30, 1911: the firstly was to issue a Penitential Decree and carry out constitutional government; the second is to abrogate the prohibition about political Party and absolve political prisoner since 1898; the third is to arrange the specialized personnel to draft constitution and the fourth is to promise to organize a real Cabinet systems. After three days, the Qing Court issued *the Constitutional Nineteen Precepts* and declared to put it into effect immediately.

55. Although, the issue of “ *the Constitutional Nineteen Precepts*” the same as the promulgation of *the Imperial Edict to Imitative Constitutionalism* and *the Outline of Imperial Constitution*, were all the productions of compromise, but it was made by government unilaterally because of the force of revolution. Just like the revolutionaries, the constitutionalists who cast away illusion to the Qing Dynasty refused this compromise. As a result, *the Constitutional Nineteen Precepts* declared not only the termination of Constitutional Practice but the destruction of the Qing Dynasty also.

## VII. EPILOGUE

56. It had 100 years since the Constitutional Practice had been proclaimed. Today, when we review the history, perhaps we could find some political heritage and inspiration that were once ignored or scorned by us from the destruction of the Qing Dynasty.

57. Objectively Speaking, driving by the pressure of constitutionalists and revolutionaries, and the general trend of the world, the Qing Dynasty had no alternative but to do the Constitutional Practice, however, the government's attitude toward the Constitutional Practice was discreet, from the decision about political investigation abroad, to the issue of *the Decree about Constitutional Imitation*, and to the promulgation of *the Outline of Imperial Constitution*, every step above mentioned reflected the result of discretion and deep consideration. Moreover, the measures that had been taken by the government within the process of the Constitutional Practice were corresponded with the situations of the country. The arrangements about the reform official system and regional autonomy, which were cheese as the basic of Constitutional Practice, were proper; and the implements of *the Detailed List about the*

*Preparations for Constitution-Making* had achieved remarkable success. But the constitutionalism did not finally go further according to the preparatory prospect. The Qing Dynasty was destroyed along with the terminating of the Constitutional Practice, which was supposed as the general plan to rescue the nation from extinction.<sup>80</sup> Facing the scene, what we should remember is that of three points:

58. Firstly, it is undoubtedly necessary for a government to make political reform with caution, however, once the government identified only the constitutional reform could rescue the country from the domestic trouble and foreign invasion, it should carry out the constitutionalism firmly and properly, instead of being swayed by considerations of gains and losses, and peering ahead and looking behind or playing politics to deceive public opinion. To evaluate objectively, the reforms bureaucracy systems, the reforms of regional autonomy and the reforms of education and legal aspects are quite effective, but the construction of the Monarchial Cabinet makes the people have to doubt the government's sincerity to implement constitutionalism. The government with incompetence but sincerity will perhaps achieve the support of the people; nevertheless, the government without ability and sincerity will sure be utterly isolated.
59. Secondly, it is indispensable for the people of a nation to participate into politics, yet it is inappropriate for them to require, even compel the government promote the political and constitutional reform according to their own wishful thinking. After all, it is not easy for a feudalism dynasty to accept constitutionalism, not even to mention the implement of constitutionalism. From *the "Great Charter of Liberties" of 1215* to *the "Act of Settlement" of 1701*, England spends 500 years establishing its constitutional monarchy system finally. To the Qing Dynasty, the constitutional reform is a completely new business; it could not be achieved by one action; it needed not only a careful and whole plan and be carried out step by step, but also time and patience. But it was obviously that the people of the Qing Dynasty were short of this necessary patience and were not ready to give the government enough time to make necessary preparations for constitutionalism.
60. Thirdly, it is not altogether unjustifiable for the officials to give a thought to personal gain or loss in the process of social transformation and political reform. However, it really goes against the basic political integrity if one official is always to measure the national reform effect only by personal interest, even to strive to safeguard personal benefits with regardless of

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<sup>80</sup> Just as American Scholar Gilbert pointed that, a weak government is, even in advancing its own security that is closely related to the crime of modernization, unable to provide effective leadership. See Gilbert Luociman, *China's Modernization*, Nanjing, China: Jiangsu Renmin publishing House, 1998, p. 134.

national fate and future. As the Chinese saying said, if someone is assigned to a commensurate post by a government, he should devote himself to the cause of the government. But instead of considering and working for the government, a large number of Qing bureaucrats who were charged with heavy responsibility devoted themselves to hankering after personal advantage and lining their pocks with public interest;<sup>81</sup> not only they did not relieve the government of worries and help to solve its problems when the government was in dire peril, on the contrary, they made their government incurred censure from various quarters because of their corruption and incompetent—The history indicates that in case the attitude that the people resent individual bureaucrat has been turned into dissatisfaction toward the government as a whole, the state of war between government and the people will be unavoidable. In this meaning, it is rather saying that the Qing Dynasty is destroyed in the corruption and incompetent of the government bureaucrats, than saying it is done by the combination of the revolutionaries and the constitutionalists. Anyhow, the self-willed officials and the corrupted officialdom not only doomed the Constitutional Practice from the start, but also hastened the course of the late Qing Dynasty's own doom.

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<sup>81</sup> Chinese idiom, it means that one try to gain advantages for oneself from a disturbed state of affairs.

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