

Warlords 還是 Militarists?

這次展覽我們以「軍閥 (warlords)」這個大眾普遍認識及接受的名詞，來形容民國時期掌有強大軍事勢力、盤據地方甚至左右中央政治的北洋軍人。其實「軍閥」一詞源於 1920 年代初的日本，當時社會主義者以此略帶貶義的詞語代表活躍政壇的日本軍事領袖，其後此詞在中國流行，指那些政治上有野心的軍人。當中國國民黨於 1926 年進行北伐時，領導人便高呼打倒「軍閥」。然而，近代研究民初歷史的學者對「軍閥」的本質採取較正面的態度，學術界普遍傾向以比較中性的「軍事家 (militarists)」來形容這些北洋軍人。

Warlords or Militarists?

This exhibition uses the term “warlords” to describe the Beiyang leaders who have strong military power that enable them to exercise absolute control over a territory and sometimes even influence the politics of the central government in the Republican period as it is a commonly known and understood term among the general public. The term “warlord” is first used by Japanese socialists during the early 1920s as a derogatory label for the leaders of the Japanese military who were also active in politics. Later it became a popular term to describe the Chinese military officers who were increasingly active in the political arena. When the Chinese Nationalists Party launched the Northern Expedition in 1926, its leaders vowed to fight against “the warlords”. However, recent studies in the history of the period shed a more positive light to the “warlords” and a more neutral term “militarists” was often adopted by academics in describing these Beiyang leaders.