The T'ung-meng-hui (United League) was founded on 20th August 1905. The birth of T'ung-meng-hui marked the entry of the anti-Manchu movement into a new epoch. As the first Western-style political party in China it showed a sharp contrast with traditional rebellion organizations such as Hui Tang (secret society) and Chiao (religious sect). The organization of T'ung-meng-hui did reflect the characteristics of Late Ching period which was a time of transition - transition from old to new. Its internal structure was founded on the principle of 'Check and balance'. Its ideology was explicitly spelled out and it also had a stratagem of action, though it still retained several secret rituals found in traditional rebellion organizations.

In fact, T'ung-meng-hui was a united front against Manchu rule. Its membership was open to all Chinese with anti-Manchu thought, irrespective of their social status. Because of this 'open door' policy its social configuration was unavoidably complicated. It mainly consisted of intellectuals, entrepreneurs, the New Army and Hui Tang. Its leadership was provided by the intellectuals, while members of the New Army and Hui Tang made up its mass followers. Only a handful of entrepreneurs joined the T'ung-meng-hui.
As the entrepreneurs wielded vast economic power, they exercised great influence on the destiny of the Manchu Dynasty. They were the 'Third Force' between the T'ung-meng-hui and Manchus. The Manchu Dynasty collapsed only after the entrepreneurs had switched their allegiance for the Manchu to the cause of revolution. Of course, they had ulterior motives in doing so. They hoped that by supporting the revolution their political power would be enhanced.

The leaders of T'ung-meng-hui wanted the revolution to be carried out orderly. Therefore they preferred to use the New Army as a tool to overthrow the Ching Dynasty. In comparison with Hui Tang, the New Army was well-trained and more disciplined. But the members of both organizations were mainly from the lower stratum of society. Views on the strategy for mobilizing Hui Tang as a revolutionary force were divided among the intellectuals at T'ung-meng-hui.

The neglect of the importance of discipline, conflict of personnel interest, different political thoughts and provincialism all led to divide the T'ung-meng-hui. Throughout its history internal squabbles occurred again and again thus rendering the T'ung-meng-hui to be bogged by inertia and to be loosely organized.
After the 'Canton Revolution' of April 27, the T'ung-meng-hui leaders lost touch with actual revolutionary activities and felt frustrated. They failed to provide a programme of action for their followers. The revolutionary works in Hupei and Hunan were undertaken by Kung-chin-hui and the Literary Society, both loosely affiliated to T'ung-meng-hui. The relationship between these two societies was not cordial. On the eve of the Wuchang Revolt these two societies reached agreement on a plot for overthrowing Manchu rule. But the problem of appointing a Governor still remained unsolved. The solution to the dilemma was to appoint a non-partisan as Governor. This indicated the serious weakness of the organization of T'ung-meng-hui.

After the Wuchang Revolt the T'ung-meng-hui became further divided on numerous pressing issues. The dissidents broke away from T'ung-meng-hui as their common foe had collapsed and formed rival parties. The Conservative Clique comprising Pei-yang Army Constitutionists and former bureaucrats of Ching Dynasty adopted 'using T'ung-meng-hui against T'ung-meng-hui' tactics to weaken the T'ung-meng-hui. Dr. Sun Yat-sen was only a nominal head of T'ung-meng-hui and he had no complete control over his party. Furthermore, under the pressure of his own party, Dr. Sun Yat-sen was forced to resign as a Provisional President. Finally, Yuan Shih-k'ai was elected as President. The fruit of revolution was grasped by the Conservative Clique.