1 Introduction

Chinese citizens who persevered into the tail end of the war of resistance against Japan were given, albeit not for the first time, an intimate glimpse of their leader. Chiang Kai-shek (1887–1975) set for his compatriots an example of efficiency in organizing one's everyday life in a time of crisis. According to a slim volume published by the main organ of the Nationalist Party, the leader maintained strict discipline and regularity, getting up at five in the morning and retiring to bed at eleven in the evening.[1] Chiang's incredible industriousness allowed the chairman of the Nationalist government to preside over a vast bureaucratic machine, all the while taking meals and exercises at regular hours through the day. After completing official business at six and before dinner at half past seven, the head of China's state, party and military establishments even found the time to take his Methodist wife, Song Meiling (1898–2003), to Chongqing's suburbs for walks. On his drive to the wartime capital's outskirts, Chiang would take mental notes of military or police officers who did not wear proper uniforms or of other inadequacies in the city's appearance. The leader billed to deliver his country from Japanese enslavement had superhuman stamina, but was also perfectly ordinary, piously keeping to a work–leisure routine and enjoying quality time with his family. This blend of the grandiose and the everyday is well encapsulated in the title of the volume, which promised insights into the elevated figure's private life and his teachings on everyday life.

What messages can readers take away from this carefully curated publication? More charitable observers would see Chiang's fastidious obsession with order and punctuality as testament to his military background and Neo-Confucian upbringing.

They might take comfort in the Japanese-educated officer's regular evocations, as indeed seen in his calligraphy in the book, of propriety (*li*), righteousness (*yi*), rectitude (*lian*) and a sense of shame (*chi*).

[1] Tao Baichuan, ed., *Jiang zhuxi de shenghuo he shenghuo guan* [*Chairman Chiang's Daily Life and His Outlook on Daily Life*] (Chongqing: Zhongzhou chubanshe, 1944).

Detractors might associate the authoritarian leader's puritanism with a witty Shanghailander slight: "There's a Methodism in his madness," an allusion to his sudden but zealous conversion to the Protestant faith.[2] Like many a colorful twentieth-century leader, Chiang's mediated persona drew admiration and contempt, awe and ridicule.

But no personality cult worthy of its name is just about the politician. The political leader's putative qualities also revealed much about the state over which he presided and its enemies. In the case of the Guomindang (GMD, the Chinese Nationalist Party or Kuomintang), stage-managed adoration for Chiang, who was far from the undisputed leader throughout its history as China's ruling party, betrayed the state's aspiration to build a modern, salubrious and orderly society. Chiang's attachment to his spouse could be intended to compensate for his notoriety as a womanizer, but it was equally plausible that the family man persona served as a counterpoint to the lax personal life many of the GMD's detractors led. Chiang's Spartan daily routine contrasted sharply with the Communist leaders' peripatetic and supposedly loose lifestyle. His clockwork discipline sent a message to workers and students who slacked off their duties, indulged in consumerist pleasures or, worse, disrupted production and social order by joining strikes and boycotts. Bureaucrats were warned not to get too comfortable in their positions as their superiors were keeping a constant eye on them. The Nationalist chief personified the vision of a hierarchical, efficient community where members knew their places, toiled meekly and conscientiously, maintained good health and went about their daily life with military-like precision. The aspiration to turn China into a well-oiled social machine free of class conflicts, held even more dearly in such times of vast displacement and precariousness as the Second Sino–Japanese War, was the hallmark of Nationalist rule. Chiang's daily routine was, in this sense, a shorthand for the GMD's *raison d'être*.

The Nationalist government was the product of a revolution. The GMD party-state claimed custody of the incomplete national revolution (*guomin geming*) Sun Yat-sen launched in 1924. Founded in Guangzhou, and settling into Nanjing in April 1927 after deposing the warlord-led Beiyang regime, the Chinese Nationalist Party presided over the first government that had brought unity, albeit tentative, to China since the end of dynastic rule. At the same time, the Nationalists governed in contention with elements of the very revolution they claimed to inherit. Sun Yat-sen never envisaged a communist China, but he countenanced Soviet assistance and participation of Chinese

[2] James Burke, *My Father in China* (New York: Farrar and Rinehart, 1942), 347.

Communists in his enterprise.[3] As such, the Communist movement gathered strength and prestige among workers and peasants with whom it engaged as the national revolution gathered steam. Despite substantial differences among themselves, Chiang and his colleagues devoted their careers to neutralizing whatever gains the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) achieved in the three years during which it acted as the GMD's revolutionary partner. Their political careers were inseparable from the bloody crackdown against Communists and labor unionists on April 12, 1927.

For the next decades, the one leitmotif that underpinned the Nationalist administration that lasted for almost half a century was responding to the threat of revolutionary socialism. This response took on board the rhetoric and methods of the radical left but committed itself to consolidating, rather than eradicating, unequal social relations. Hailing the nation-state as the only legitimate organizing principle of social life, it promised social development by managing capitalism and neutering modernity's disorienting effects on social norms and culture. Confrontations between classes and radical anti-imperialism, Nationalists charged, would derail China's political and economic revival. If the coupling of the nationalist and social revolutions defined Chinese Communism, the GMD led a nationalist revolution that had decidedly conservative socioeconomic goals. It demanded, just as radical right activists elsewhere did or still do, capitalism without capitalism.[4]

China's conservative revolution, like any revolution, entailed both destruction and consolidation. The April 12 purge, multiple encirclement campaigns in the 1930s and the doomed "bandit suppression" (*jiaofei*) campaign from 1946 until the early 1950s were the GMD's most obvious responses to the Communist threat. Censorship of the media and limitations on political freedom also attested to the party-state's unease with its left-wing opposition. Yet Chiang's national revolution was also a proactive program; it set out to form a social bloc, focusing on intellectuals and the urban middle class, in contention with proletarian politics. It worked assiduously to channel popular and elite sympathy away from left-wing or class politics and to cultivate social movements

[3] In this book, "Communist" refers to the Chinese political movement that was founded in 1921, while "communist" denotes political ideologies that aspired to a classless social order, which also inspired, but not always defined, the Chinese Communist Party's agendas throughout its existence. The same distinction applies to "Fascist" the Italian party and "fascist" the ideology.

[4] Slavoj Žižek, *Welcome to the Desert of the Real! Five Essays on September 11 and Related Dates* (London: Verso, 2002), 131. "Capitalism without capitalism" is, of course, Žižek's definition of fascism.

and an everyday culture that engaged the masses in renovation of the spirit, rather than realignment of property relations. Suppression of political activism accompanied carefully choreographed expressions of civic enthusiasm. Deploying the political machinery of a radical revolutionary party, the GMD embraced industrial capitalism, but rejected Western materialism and imperialism. It sought an ethno-communal solution to China's semi-colonial status. Instead of confronting the capitalist system, it appealed to the nation and, by extension, Eastern civilization as aestheticized communions in which acute class tensions were imagined away, citizens worked harmoniously under an apparently apolitical state's tutelage and China's independence was achieved through alliances that, in rhetoric but not in substance, transcended the international liberal order.

Placing China's Conservative Revolution in Global History

By characterizing the national revolution since 1927 as a conservative one, this book situates a core period in China's modern experience within the context of global history. At stake is how to understand the Chinese revolution's nature. Rather than seeing China's revolutionary process as one of continuous state-building presided over by successive regimes, I highlight dimensions of the Nationalist experiment that set it apart from the Communist movement it fought against. The Nationalists as described in the following pages shared resemblances not primarily with their domestic nemesis but with international counterparts that valorized the nation – defined as a hierarchal, spiritual and productive community – as the primary subject of history. The GMD differed from the Chinese Communists not because it proved much less successful in maintaining an effective, centralized state but because Nationalists saw confrontational class politics as the ultimate threat to national rejuvenation and social health.

Of course, placing the Nationalist government under a comparative light is no new strategy, even though past scholarship has tended to see China as epiphenomenal to the radical right-wing ascendency in the interwar world. An earlier generation of historians debated on the GMD's fascist nature, considering the regime's connections with its right-wing counterparts in Germany and Italy. They homed in on Nationalist leaders' fascination with fascist experiments in Europe, particularly the efforts of such party groupings as the Blue Shirts or Lixingshe to emulate the organization, trappings and ideological

dispositions of the Nazi Party in the 1930s.[5] Despite similarities between the ruling parties of China, Germany and Italy, historians tended to see the GMD's right-wing politics as superficial. Lloyd Eastman, credited for revealing the GMD's fascist tendencies, believes the party that governed China from 1927 to 1937 lacked ideological identity and those who looked to Continental Europe for inspiration on how to mobilize the disaffected populace were at the margins of an ossified bureaucratic behemoth.[6] The GMD could lay claim not to a conservative revolution, but to an *aborted* one. William Kirby, a specialist in twentieth-century Sino–German relations, argues that "there was no 'fascist movement' in China but rather a vogue that coincided with the emergence of a close Sino–German friendship." Nationalists were attracted to national socialism for diverse reasons, and such interest did not translate into concrete action. The same allegedly applies in the case of Italian Fascism insofar as China's relationships with Italy and the Vatican became increasingly cordial, with anticommunism as the common denominator.[7] Chinese admiration of fascist movements was thus ephemeral, superficial and lacking in historical significance. It follows from this line of argument that the global ascendance of the radical right had cosmetic effects on China's development, just as the GMD's prolonged campaign against its erstwhile revolutionary partners was a domestic matter that had little relevance to political developments beyond Chinese borders.

In returning Nationalist China's crusade against Chinese Communists to the interwar moment, I stress the ideological import of a revolution that not just imitated but shared qualities manifest in fascist movements that raged from Tokyo to Buenos Aires.[8] These affinities were not confined to the paraphernalia – adoption of Nazi military drills, interfusion between

[5] Lloyd E. Eastman, *Abortive Revolution: China under Nationalist Rule, 1927–1937* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1974), chap. 2; Frederic Wakeman argues that contemporary and historiographical accounts often confused the Lixingshe with the Blue Shirts, which were in fact two distinct organizations (*Spymaster: Dai Li and the Chinese Secret Service* [Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003], 63). For an alternative viewpoint on the Blue Shirts, see Maria Hsia Chang, *The Chinese Blue Shirt Society: Fascism and Developmental Nationalism* (Berkeley: Institute of East Asian Studies, University of California, 1985).

[6] Eastman, *Abortive Revolution*, 83–4, 303–6.

[7] William C. Kirby, *Germany and Republican China* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1984), 175; Michele Fatica, "The Beginning and the End of the Idyllic Relations between Mussolini's Italy and Chiang Kai-shek's China (1930–1937)," in *Italy's Encounters with Modern China: Imperial Dreams, Strategic Ambitions*, eds. Maurizio Marinelli and Giovanni B. Andornino (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014), 89–115.

[8] Recent major book-length studies of the radical right beyond Europe include Reto Hofmann, *The Fascist Effect: Japan and Italy, 1915–1952* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2015); Federico Finchelstein, *Transatlantic Fascism: Ideology, Violence,*

left-wing and right-wing aesthetics in cultural products such as films and literary writings or even the proliferation of cult-like, secret sects that answered directly to the Leader.[9] Instead, they struck at the very core of the right's approach to the reigning sociopolitical order and were internal to China's own history. Margherita Zanasi's pioneering study of Nationalist economic thoughts argues that China confronted the same political and economic crises that plagued interwar Europe. The currency autarky, corporatism and military industrialization enjoyed among Nationalist leaders cumulated in a "brand of state fascism" in 1930s China. They were tools anticommunist nationalists took from Fascist Italy and Nazi Germany to resist foreign imperialism.[10] This book builds on Zanasi's insight but shows that fascist tendencies in China needed no borrowing from abroad. Instead, they were intrinsic to the country's experience of what historical sociologist Giovanni Arrighi called the "long twentieth century" – the convergence of territorial and capitalist expansionism that propelled established colonial empires and more recent predators such as Germany, Italy and Japan.[11] For economically backward and (semi)colonized societies like China, the choice was one between joining the capitalist interstate system and, as in the case of the 1917 Revolution in Russia, challenging the premises of property and imperialist hegemony. What made the conservative revolution distinct in modern Chinese history and typical of contemporaneous radical right movements is the promise to overcome capitalism and its deleterious effects on the national community without challenging its structural foundation.

Nationalism and Opposition to Class Struggle

There were two core dimensions to the conservative revolution: nationalism and an obsession with the aesthetics of mass society. Nationalism lay at the heart of radical right attempts to offset the alienating effects of

and the Sacred in Argentina and Italy, 1919–1945 (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2010).

[9] Robert Culp, *Articulating Citizenship: Civic Education and Student Politics in Southeastern China, 1912–1940* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Asia Center, 2007), 197–206; Liu Jihui [Joyce C. H. Liu], Xin de bianyi: xiandaixing de jingshen xingshi [Perverted Heart: The Psychic Forms of Modernity] (Taipei: Maitian chuban, 2004), chap. 7; Wakeman, *Spymaster*, chaps. 7–8.

[10] Margherita Zanasi, *Saving the Nation: Economic Modernity in Republican China* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2006), 14–15.

[11] Giovanni Arrighi, *The Long Twentieth Century: Money, Power and the Origins of Our Times* (New York: Verso, 1994), 60–6. See also Karatani Kojin, *The Structure of World History: From Modes of Production to Modes of Exchange*, trans. Michael K. Bourdaghs (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2014), 170–5.

capitalist modernity. Cultural historians of Europe have emphasized populist nationalism as the basis of fascist mobilization. Fascist agitators appealed to emotions, brandished the nation's mythic qualities and promised rebirth out of collective malaise while embracing industrial modernization. They claimed to have brought about a synthesis of conservatism and socialism, energizing the populace to challenge a skewed international order without damaging social cohesion.[12] For example, Benito Mussolini found in the nation a substitute for class, identifying Italy as one proletarian collective to be saved from international bourgeois domination. The former socialist participated in a wider intellectual trend in late industrializing Europe, prevalent since the Great War, that valorized the ethnic community as the oppressed group while jettisoning class politics.[13] Suppression of communist and liberal opposition, building a dirigiste economy and crafting mass rituals and monumental architecture all contributed to the radical redefinition of the state's role in commanding social and political processes.

Investing in the nation-state's transformative potential was characteristic not only of fascists but also noncommunist revolutionaries and reformers with ambiguous socialist sympathies. The illusion that the nation was an affective, organic community where each citizen could be taken care of informed those politicians who were fed up with the crumbling liberal global order. Despite their jarringly different reputation and policy outcomes, progressives such as Franklin D. Roosevelt shared with the radical right on the European Continent belief in the nation-state's ability to bring meaning, order and succor to a crisis-ridden and demoralized populace.[14] The displacement of class politics by appealing to an underprivileged national community, which characterized Mussolini's position, resonated with Sun Yat-sen's (1866–1925) Principle of Livelihood (*minsheng zhuyi*). Rejecting Marxism, the *minsheng* theory posited that all Chinese people partook in the nation's poverty. "Since China's largest capitalists are poor men out in the world," Sun argued,

[12] Prominent examples include Roger Griffin, *The Nature of Fascism* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1991); George L. Mosse, *The Fascist Revolution: Toward a General Theory of Fascism* (New York: Howard Fertig, 1999); Zeev Sternhell, *The Birth of Fascist Ideology: From Cultural Rebellion to Political Revolution* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1994).

[13] Mark Neocleous, *Fascism* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1997), 21.

[14] Wolfgang Schivelbusch, *Three New Deals: Reflections on Roosevelt's America, Mussolini's Italy, and Hitler's Germany, 1933–1939*, trans. Jefferson Chase (New York: Metropolitan Books, 2006).

"then all the Chinese people must be counted as poor."[15] The revolutionary leader went on to lay out strategies conceived to prevent class divisions as the country industrialized. Sun's lament of China as a proletarian nation caught up in a world dominated by imperialist powers anticipated his anti-Communist followers' rejection of class confrontations as the bases of political action.

While nationalism had inspired all major modern Chinese political movements one way or another, the Guomindang's conservative revolution was unique in seeing the nation as an end in itself and irreconcilable with social revolution. Nationalism and statism, Peter Zarrow observes, undergirded modern China's participation in the international system, as the Qing empire transformed into a "people." Yet the nation-state was not consistently the ultimate ideal of the Chinese revolution; Mao Zedong (1893–1976), for one, was famously ambivalent about the party-state throughout his long political career.[16] To the contrary, the regime Mao's Communists replaced was singularly committed to the nation. GMD luminaries such as Dai Jitao (1891–1949) and Hu Hanmin (1879–1936) promoted national revival to counter proletarian internationalism. While nationalist goals were shared across the political divide, an appeal to the nation as an ideal community inherently incompatible with communism and social revolution was peculiar to conservative revolutionaries around the globe.

The GMD's unique brand of nationalism set the conservative revolution apart from the governments that preceded and succeeded it. It is, therefore, misleading to argue that the GMD had nothing specific to it but was only a stage in China's strengthening authoritarianism and departure from liberal democratic ideals. Narratives of the Nationalist period from the 1990s and the turn of the twenty-first century, produced against the background of the Communist state's political consolidation and economic liberalization in the People's Republic, situate the GMD state in the *longue durée* of modern nation-state formation and downplay its particularities. Characterizing the Nationalist regime as a case of "Confucian fascism," Frederic Wakeman notes Chiang Kai-shek's attraction to Germany, Italy and Turkey as ascendant interwar powers.

[15] Sun Yat-sen, *Sanmin zhuyi* (Taipei: Zhengzhong shuju, 1954), 210. Translation taken from Sun, *San Min Chu I: The Three Principles of the People*, trans. Frank W. Price (Taipei: China Publishing Co., n.d.), 173.

[16] Peter Zarrow, *After Empire: The Conceptual Transformation of the Chinese State, 1885–1924* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2012), 4, 288–9. As Alain Badiou observes, Mao's Cultural Revolution was a "revolution within – and largely against – a socialist state," in line with the communist commitment to the state's eventual demise (Badiou and Jean-Claude Milner, *Controversies: A Dialogue on the Politics and Philosophy of Our Times* [Cambridge: Polity, 2014], 46).

However, while the GMD party-state embraced the latest fascist organizational form, Chiang's "nativist" Confucian moralism "lent a fussy air to his imitative fascism," indebted not to Hitler and Mussolini but to China's dynastic past. Its defining features were comparable much less to Continental Europe's latest political fad than fidelity to imperial China's reigning ideology.[17] Taking as his points of comparison revolutionary movements, A. James Gregor posits that the radical right was no different from its left-wing nemesis. Defining fascism as a mix of "nationalism and Marxist revolutionary syndicalism," Gregor lumps Sun Yat-sen and Mao Zedong together with figures as diverse as Mussolini, Lenin and Stalin as redemptive nationalists committed to developmentalism and an aggrandized state. As for Chiang's GMD, Gregor offers the following:

> It was not Italian Fascism or German National Socialism, *per se*, that Chiang Kai-shek or the Blue Shirts recommended to the revolutionaries of China. What the Blue Shirts found admirable in Italian Fascism and German National Socialism was the same thing they and Sun Yat-sen found attractive in Bolshevism. All these movements had succeeded in restoring dignity to their respective national communities.[18]

From this line of argument, one infers that all Chinese political movements were merely nationalist and statist, rendering the radical right indistinguishable from revolutionary socialists. Of course, Gregor's intervention concerns not only China but all revolutions, which he saw as inherently antidemocratic and united in opposition to liberal democracy. This typology, drawn from totalitarian theorists prevalent in Cold War political science, erased fundamental differences between communist and right-wing approaches to revolution.

Making a Conservative Revolution

The GMD's nationalist revolution, like other movements on the radical right, was conservative. Yet, to the extent that it intersected with state politics, Chinese conservatism as an intellectual position was only partially aligned with the GMD. Historians have drawn attention to Republican conservatives' elevation of traditional culture as central to their nationalism but have stressed their varied and ambiguous relationship with the governing regime. Scholars also wrestle with the apparent

[17] Frederic Wakeman, "A Revisionist View of the Nanjing Decade: Confucian Fascism," *China Quarterly*, no. 150 (1997): 395–432.

[18] A. James Gregor, *A Place in the Sun: Marxism and Fascism in China's Long Revolution* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 2000), 15–16, 80; Gregor, *The Faces of Janus: Marxism and Fascism in the Twentieth Century* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2000).

paradox of China's modern elite espousing a conservative agenda. Benjamin Schwartz believes that China had no conservative tradition in the Euro-American sense. His example is none other than Chiang Kai-shek, who was a "conservative modernizer" and did not hold onto the political status quo. For Schwartz, therefore, conservatism in China was a cultural position, not a political one that called for the conservation of existing state institutions. For Guy Alitto, conservatism in China was similar to those of societies outside the "Western European cradle of modernization" in presupposing the binary between the national spirit and material modernity. While the latter was necessary, it was the former that lent meaning to social life. Conservatism in China, for Edmund Fung, was likewise part of the global questioning of Enlightenment rationality and progress.[19] Even as it did inform politics, conservatism, in these accounts, describes an intellectual disposition on national traditions that ran parallel to or tempered the modernizing thrust of twentieth-century Chinese society.

Nationalist revolutionaries' conservatism was not a cultural temperament but a form of political activism that was self-consciously modern. GMD ideologues were future-oriented because and not in spite of their espousal of national essence (*guocui*) and its relevance to modernity. Their cultural nationalism was articulated with the party's alacrity in leveraging an expanding state to build new social hierarchies and alliances to neuter challenges to unequal production relations.[20] Like fascism in general, conservative revolutionaries appealed to precapitalist and archaic forces not to conserve an idealized past but to create it for the first time. While claiming to recover what many Nationalists called China's "primordial traditions" (*guyou chuantong*), they joined radical right-wing activists around the interwar world in mobilizing popular sentiments and imagination through industrial-scale spectacles and political

[19] Charlotte Furth, "Culture and Politics in Modern Chinese Conservativism," in *The Limits of Change: Essays on Conservative Alternatives in Republican China*, ed. Charlotte Furth (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1976), 38–9; Edmund S. K. Fung, *The Intellectual Foundations of Chinese Modernity: Cultural and Political Thought in the Republican Era* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 65, 96–127; Benjamin Schwartz, "Notes on Conservatism in General and in China in Particular," in *The Limits of Change: Essays on Conservative Alternatives in Republican China*, 16–19; Guy S. Alitto, *The Last Confucian: Liang Shu-ming and the Chinese Dilemma of Modernity*, 2nd edn. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1986), 9–12.

[20] GMD theoreticians' fascination with national essence as they charted a course for China's future mirrored that of early twentieth-century revolutionaries such as Liu Shipei and Zhang Taiyan. See Tze-ki Hon, *Revolution as Restoration: Guocui xuebao and China's Path to Modernity, 1905–1911* (Leiden: Brill, 2013).

pageantry, often deploying the Leninist state form copied from the communists. Dai Jitao, the anticommunist theorist who lent intellectual weight to the April 1927 purge, took on board the conservative adoration of the nation as defined by its cultural, particularly Confucian, traditions. At the same time, he and other radical right Nationalists celebrated youthful vigor and a militant revolutionary vanguard that prized activist intervention. In their forward-looking vision, conservative revolutionaries shared formal elements with their socialist adversaries.[21] Dai, critical of imperialism, identified the GMD's mission as one that relieved China's modernizing economy from foreign grip on capital flow and urban industries. To serve nationalist ends, he argued as late as 1925 that alliance with the Soviet Union and incorporation of selected socialist principles were desirable.[22] Out of the party's interaction with Chinese Communists emerged a strategy that appropriated the organizational form and anticapitalist sentiments of Bolshevism. The GMD's radicalism was channeled, however, away from everything that formed the core of a communist movement. Class struggle and the overthrow of private property were deemed incompatible with the goals of building a virile national community, a self-contained economy and contented, productive workers under state coordination. This approach to shaping society represented a conservative alternative to Chinese Communist visions of revolution-making.

Opposition to social revolution, as much as commitment to national rebirth, undergirded the conservatism of the GMD's revolutionary project. Modern China was of course not the only society that hosted insurgencies targeting systematic changes. Reactionary movements worldwide since the French Revolution had sought to violently reimpose hierarchal order, industrialize the economy and mobilize the state and the populace to suppress class war. When the phrase "conservative revolution" was coined in 1848, Frederick Engels used it to characterize the 1830 Polish insurrection against direct Russian rule at which the Polish aristocracy sought to defend its own class interests by returning to the *status quo ante* of relative autonomy under the czar. "The insurrection of 1830," Engels declared, "was neither a national revolution . . . nor a social or a political revolution; it changed nothing in

[21] Peter Osborne, *The Politics of Time: Modernity and Avant-garde* (London: Verso, 1995), 164–6; Corey Robin, *The Reactionary Mind: Conservatism from Edmund Burke to Sarah Palin* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), 42–55.

[22] Dai Jitao, *Guomin geming yu Zhongguo Guomindang* [*The Nationalist Revolution and the Guomindang*] (1925; reprint, Shanghai: n.p., 1928), 70–2 (page citations are to the reprint edition); Dai, *Zhongguo duli yundong de jidian* [*The Basis of China's Independence Movement*] (Guangzhou: Minzhi shuju, 1925), 18–30.

the internal condition of the people; it was a conservative revolution." These aristocrats posed no threat to Russian colonialism, the post-Napoleonic international order that stripped Poland of its independence or a social system that dispossessed peasants and Jews.[23] In interwar Germany, conservative revolution came to encompass mass movements and paramilitary squads on the far right of the political spectrum. With their modernist and avant-gardist sensibility, intellectuals such as Martin Heidegger embraced "a form of revolutionary reaction" radicalized by Nazism into an ultranationalist, highly disciplined mass movement.[24] Yet, despite the Germans' radical veneer, they shared with Polish conservative revolutionaries an unwillingness to challenge the structures of power that underwrote unequal relations between the privileged and the dispossessed. Fascists sought an "*alternative* to social revolution." Conservative revolutionaries targeted not capitalist economics but its paraphernalia, in particular financiers, consumerism and what Karl Polanyi calls anarchistic sovereignty under *laissez-faire* international economics.[25] Compensating for social dislocation and chaos would be the wholesome, organic community that was the nation.

In exorcising Sun Yat-sen's national revolution of communist elements, the GMD aggressively expanded state command over society but ultimately constricted the transformative potential of politics. As Dai Jitao stated, "not having developed our own country and rejuvenated our nation, there could be no talk of world revolution."[26] The nation-state was, for the theoretician, not an agent for systemic transformation but an institution managing, consolidating and tweaking hierarchal power relations. In practice, as Joseph Fewsmith put it, the GMD state set out "to *administer* (rather than restructure) class relations."[27] That the GMD was as ready to lash out at capitalists as it was quick to suppress workers, intellectuals and students derived from the party's ideal of a state-coordinated capitalist economy. Its two competing modes of economic

[23] Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, "On the Polish Question," in *Collected Works* (London: Lawrence & Wishart, 1976), 6:550.

[24] Roger Woods, *The Conservative Revolution in the Weimar Republic* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1996), 3; Osborne, *Politics of Time*, 164.

[25] Neocleous, *Fascism*, 43–4, 56; Karl Polanyi, *The Great Transformation: The Political and Economic Origins of Our Time*, 2nd paperback edn. (Boston, MA: Beacon Press, 2001), 261.

[26] Dai Jitao, *Dai Jitao zuijin yanlun* [*Dai Jitao's Latest Remarks*], 2nd edn. (N.p.: Shangwu yinshuguan, 1928), 8.

[27] Joseph Fewsmith, *Party, State, and Local Elites in Republican China: Merchant Organizations and Politics in Shanghai* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1985), 181; see also Parks M. Coble Jr., *The Shanghai Capitalists and the Nationalist Government, 1927–1937* (Cambridge, MA: Council on East Asian Studies, Harvard University, 1980), 268.

planning, drawn from Nazi Germany and Fascist Italy, respectively, both allocated a domineering role for a technocratic state. Wang Jingwei's (1883–1944) economic nationalism, derived from Sun Yat-sen's Three People's Principles, called for Italian-style corporativism to ride out capitalist crises. Antonio Gramsci described this approach as a "passive revolution," in which the capitalist economy came under state control through reformist methods.[28] But despite its identity as the vanguard of a postliberal, omnipotent nation-state, the GMD elite was ever cautious to bring state machinery to bear on global capitalism. While Germany, Italy and Japan responded to the Great Depression of 1929 by delinking themselves from the international financial order, China remained wedded to it at the expense of the state's capacity to bring relief to the struggling industrial and agricultural sectors.[29]

China's conservative revolution brought a great deal of changes and action, but they related not to the social structure or the systemic conditions that relegated the country to the receiving end of the global economic order. The state's meekness in transforming political economy stood in jarring contrast with the revolutionary elite's radical self-identity and ambition to deliver China from capitalist imperialism. At stake was not only what Prasenjit Duara famously calls "involution," a process by which a state's expansion led to a lower capacity in bringing meaningful social changes.[30] The GMD's quagmire also highlighted the different functions played by nation and state, two distinct but entwined formations, in radical right-wing politics. As Fewsmith observes, the GMD's claim that it represented the interests of all classes meant collusion with capital at the expense of labor.[31] In essence, corporativism and economic nationalism represented the "union of state and capital," as the state sought to manage an increasingly privatized, domesticated bourgeoisie.[32] While the state's convergence with industrial capitalism proceeded at full steam, the nation disguised the disorienting effects and disparities that attended the hegemonic social order. The latter afforded an imaginary space for which desires for harmony and cooperation could be projected. As a locus of solidarity, it offered a sentimental outlet to

[28] Zanasi, *Saving the Nation;* Antonio Gramsci, *The Gramsci Reader: Selected Writings 1916–1935*, ed. David Forgacs (New York: New York University Press, 2000), 265.
[29] Tomoko Shiroyama, *China during the Great Depression: Market, State, and the World Economy, 1929–1937* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Asia Center, 2008), 234–7.
[30] Prasenjit Duara, *Culture, Power, and the State: Rural North China, 1900–1942* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1988), 251–5. Only the Chinese Communists, the author notes, were able to revert involution because its state-building program was coupled with meaningful social changes from the bottom up.
[31] Fewsmith, *Party, State, and Local Elites in Republican China*, 181.
[32] Karatani, *Structure of World History*, 172–3.

offset capitalism's profit logic by appealing to shared customs and spiritual traditions. Yet the nation was no more than an aestheticized response to social inequalities and offered opposition to neither the state nor capital. It "[took] on the guise of socialism" and sought to transcend state and capital through imagination.[33] Simply put, as an anti-Marxist alternative to capitalism, conservative revolutionaries offered an illusion of social solidarity while shielding the system of private property from political intervention.

Aestheticization of Politics

In practice, the conservative revolution involved meticulous management of emotions and sentiments to conceal social dislocation and compensate for political polarization. The GMD deployed tools from a range of traditions to inscribe its top-down corporate vision into the "minutiae of subjective experience," such that unequal power relations became internalized by the masses. This process of aestheticization followed on the heels of the violent anticommunist coup.[34] In the 1930s, the Leninist party-state, Eugenia Lean shows, was shrewd in exploiting print media-induced frenzy, channeling populist sympathy for apparently apolitical criminal cases for nationalist purposes.[35] As the following pages reveal, agitators of the anticommunist insurrection like Dai Jitao cherry-picked institutions and ideas from across the ideological spectrum to encode contented, docile and efficient production in citizens' habits, customs and pieties. From scouting typical of treaty-port semi-colonialism and total war mobilization to seemingly apolitical celebration of personal cultivation and Pan-Asianism, conservative revolutionaries infused their particular political vision in everyday experiences and articulated it with the nation's idealist, mythic core. A community of selfless and obedient workers became entwined with the ideal of a spiritually fecund nation-state that challenged Western modernity.

By deploying mass spectacles and appropriating preexisting institutions, the GMD countered the threat of class struggle by making citizens embrace a fixed cultural identity, behave as sleek, voluntaristic parts in the social machine and, in other ways, know their place. Class

[33] Ibid., 220, 258.

[34] For the relationship between aestheticization and conservative politics, see Terry Eagleton, *The Ideology of the Aesthetic* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1990), 20; Daniel Woodley, *Fascism and Political Theory: Critical Perspectives on Fascist Ideology* (London: Routledge, 2010), 18.

[35] Eugenia Lean, *Public Passions: The Trial of Shi Jianqiao and the Rise of Popular Sympathy in Republican China* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2007), 150–62.

struggle, prevalent among young urbanites influenced by radical ideas such as historical materialism, was equated to cultural rootlessness and ethical insouciance. A Nationalist by the name of Shiyong, for example, wrote to Dai in 1927 and accused Chinese Communists of enticing urban youths with faint promises of vanity, money and sexual pleasure.[36] The cadre echoed Oswald Spengler by lumping together ideological unorthodoxy, material desire and moral failure, albeit in a less theoretically sophisticated fashion. The German philosopher wrote some eight years before Shiyong that a materialist vision of history, with its emphasis on relations of production, wrenched cosmopolitan urban intellectuals off from religion and traditional values.[37] Marxism must be resisted for it represented a foreign-inspired affront to the ethnos. In a hostile global environment where the nation survived in contention with predatory imperialist powers, communism was a threat to ethnic cohesion and a symptom of modern decadence.

The GMD's aestheticized politics camouflaged capitalist dislocations and diverted citizens' attention away from political actions that led to social revolution. Rather than agitate for equality and material uplift, citizens were exhorted to revamp their own selves as parts of the national collective. The party's revised revolutionary theory targeted historical materialist critique of China's political economy to neuter radical challenges to power relations. Dai's interpretation of the *minsheng* principle in the run-up to the April 12 coup shifted Sun's examination of his compatriots' well-being from material concerns such as food, clothing, shelter and transportation to spiritual cultivation (*yu*) and enjoyment (*le*). The GMD's focus on managing prosaic details of the people's daily routine – hygienic practices, leisure activities, diet, sleeping habits etc. – signaled an individualist turn of political practice. That the individual became a prime battleground in the GMD's revolutionary crusade meant beautification of personal behaviors was a highly mediated matter, as Chiang Kai-shek's wartime exemplary life cited in the beginning of this book shows. Nationalist leaders including Chiang projected their own immaculate bodies and habits, in contrast to "filthy" Communists, as foci of public discussion and models for the multitude to emulate.[38] How citizens consumed, leisured and carried themselves was misrecognized as

[36] Shiyong to Dai Jitao, 1927, *wubu*, 1339, Kuomintang Archives.

[37] Oswald Spengler, *Preußentum und Sozialismus* [*Prussiandom and Socialism*], in *Politische schriften* (Munich and Berlin: Beck, 1933), 83–5, cited in Woods, *The Conservative Revolution in the Weimar Republic*, 66.

[38] Sean Hsiang-lin Lei [Lei Xianglin], "Xiguan cheng siwei: Xin shenghuo yundong yu fei jiehe yufang zhong de lunli, jiating yu shenti [Habituating the Four Virtues: Ethics, Family and the Body in Anti-tuberculosis Campaigns and the New Life Movement]," *Jindai shi yanjiusuo jikan*, no. 74 (2011): 169–70.

determinants of society's vitality and competitiveness. Politics, by extension, became a matter of taming one's own self instead of changing social relations.

Such concern for the superficial phenomena of everyday life was in tune with general conservative responses to China's freewheeling urban culture. Under the New Culture Movement in the 1910s, student activists coalesced around university dormitories, libraries and classrooms into an unfettered community that rejected social hierarchy. New ways of thinking about and organizing one's personal and social life thrived from the bottom up and fed into May Fourth political radicalism.[39] As patent signs of a new and, for some, threatening urban culture, individuals' mundane manners and habits became important social issues. Through the 1920s, the flourishing print media called on the state to intervene in student activism, romance between men and women and increasing commercialization in urban life.[40] GMD ideologues took this plea fully on board by collapsing politics with personal lifestyle, equating sexual laxity with communism and with challenges to a patriarchal social order that was touted as the essence of the Confucian moral universe.[41] This puritanism served not only to forge a docile, laborious community but also to strip oppositional groups of political reason by reducing them to moral failures.

This blend of the high-minded and the prosaic allowed conservative revolutionaries to project their own political project as a nonpartisan program that chimed in with intellectuals beyond the GMD, domestically and abroad. Intellectuals who were unenthusiastic about the party's authoritarianism or vanguardist approach to state-building could, out of liberal inclinations, nonetheless identify with the GMD's determination to perfect the hearts and minds of the citizenry. Like conservative revolutionaries, liberal intellectuals saw private individuals as composites of society in which structures such as class relations were secondary. A Confucian-inflected idea of spiritual self-introspection also formed the basis of the GMD's ideological affinity with India, where anti-colonialist resistance took on strong spiritual significance. Chinese

[39] Fabio Lanza, *Behind the Gates: Inventing Students in Beijing* (New York: Columbia University, 2010), 48–50.

[40] Rebecca E. Karl, "Journalism, Social Value and a Philosophy of the Everyday in 1920s China," *Positions: East Asia Cultures Critique* 16 (2008): 540–2.

[41] Maggie Clinton, *Revolutionary Nativism: Fascism and Culture in China, 1925–1937* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2017), 100. As Clinton observes, GMD fascists "addressed Communist insurrection with similar forms of military and epistemological violence" as a colonial state, seeing the revolutionary left as debased fanatics incapable of meaningful action. Communists were simple yet poisonously harmful miscreants, and did not constitute a political opposition with a rational agenda.

conservative revolutionaries, despite their lack of organizational similarities with the Indian National Congress, could claim solidarity with the likes of Mohandas Gandhi and Rabindranath Tagore by forging civilizational opposition to a Euro-American modernity obsessed with material interests.

Consensus-Building

As a response to May Fourth culture and in opposition to communist politics, the GMD's conservative revolution was internal to China's development and played to a domestic and international audience. The GMD embraced China's emergent mass society and devised a strategy to retain engagement with it while denying students and workers who took to the street since the late 1910s independent political agency. This form of non-antagonistic civic mobilization, unlike labor strikes and class boycotts, held attraction for urban middle and intellectual classes who craved stability and individual advancement. It appealed to liberals who viewed revolutionary violence as socially disruptive. Constitutionalist Zhang Junmai (1897–1969) lamented that Communists perverted society's spiritual cohesion; some foreign observers, even as they derided Chiang Kai-shek's conversion to Christianity, were effusive in their praise for Song Meiling's reform of wayward radical activists into humble laborers working away day in and day out making shoes or umbrellas.[42] That the Chinese social democrat and Western Christian missionaries found the Nationalists preferable to communist insurgents was no isolated examples. For Chinese and foreign elite concerned with mob rule, there was nothing less laudable than transforming youthful rebels into cogs in the wheel of the nation's moral and political economy. Imposing a salubrious routine onto citizens, insofar as it defanged their political radicalism, allowed Nationalists to make unnatural bedfellows with those who inhabited

[42] The centerpiece of Song's reformism, the New Life Movement, has been receiving a lot of attention lately. Examples include Lei, "Xiguan cheng siwei," 133–77; Clinton, *Revolutionary Nativism*, chap. 4; Hsiao-pei Yen, "Body Politics, Modernity, and National Salvation: The Modern Girl and the New Life Movement," *Asian Studies Review* 29 (2005): 165–86; Frederica Ferlanti, "The New Life Movement in Jiangxi Province, 1934–1938," *Modern Asian Studies* 44 (2010): 961–1000; Ferlanti, "The New Life Movement at War: Wartime Mobilisation and State Control in Chongqing and Chengdu, 1938–1942," *European Journal of East Asian Studies* 11 (2012): 187–12; Wennan Liu, "Redefining the Moral and Legal Roles of the State in Everyday Life: The New Life Movement in China in the Mid-1930s," *Cross-Currents: East Asian History and Culture Review*, no. 7 (2013): 30–59. For a classic examination, see Arif Dirlik, "The Ideological Foundations of the New Life Movement: A Study in Counterrevolution," *Journal of Asian Studies* 34 (1975): 945–80.

other ends of the ideological spectrum. Indeed, as this book shows, the conservative revolution enjoyed some success reaching out to liberals and traditionalists in China and abroad. Scout leaders, writers and anti-colonialists – particularly Pan-Asianists who saw both capitalism and communism as symptoms of Western materialist decadence – partook in the GMD's taming of youth activism, mobilization of wartime loyalties for Chiang Kai-shek and cultivation of an international anti-colonial alliance that stressed Asian spiritual values and excluded class revolution.

The GMD's ability to bring altogether constituents beyond party cadres in some form of consensus was critical to the conservative revolution's viability; it reigned over China since the April 12 coup for more than twenty years, holding attraction for moderate nationalists at home and in Asian societies such as India. Conservative revolutionaries within the GMD confronted the challenge of transforming their insurrection against their communist and left-leaning allies prowess in 1927 into a self-perpetuating regime. As it settled into the seat of power, the Nationalist Party saw its radical self-image clash with its new administrative role. It was reluctant to follow through with even limited campaigns against private property and to make good on its promise not to play heed to sectarian interests.[43] The claim to represent the entire nation and manage capitalism in the benefit of all classes, Karatani Kojin observes, marked the process whereby fascist movements evolved from insurrections into sovereigns of a postliberal domestic and international order. This ambition was by its very nature illusionary.[44] Aside from bureaucratic ossification and inability to bring fundamental changes to the political economy, the Nationalists had at their disposal a much weaker state than fascist regimes in Germany, Italy and Japan. Chiang Kai-shek, despite his dictatorial tendency, never managed to govern the whole of China due to the Communist military presence in the interior, inability to eradicate regional warlords, Japanese invasion and splits within the party leadership. Chiang's disputes with Hu Hanmin (1879–1936) resulted in a rival government based in the southern city of Guangzhou during the 1930s, while those with Wang Jingwei led first to the brief Wuhan government in 1927 and then to the Japanese-sponsored collaborationist regime from 1940 to 1945. The GMD's fractured rule, conspired with its ideological ambiguity, meant that conservative revolutionaries often sought support from far and wide.

[43] Fewsmith, *Party, State, and Local Elites in Republican China*, 183.
[44] Karatani, *History and Repetition*, 35–42.

Taking nationalism, anticommunism and emphasis on a hierarchal order as common denominators, conservative revolutionaries were eclectic in whom they included in their struggle for a new order. Recent studies have pointed to the relative catholicity of radical right-wing politics. Alan Tansman, writing on interwar Japan, describes a broad consensus among anticommunist politicians and intellectuals who saw in aestheticizing the everyday and fetishizing the nation a solution to modern social ills. Germinating from the bottom up was "fascism in cultural (or political) work that [did] not speak fascism's name."[45] Lacking an ideological straitjacket, China's conservative revolution was likewise all things to all people upset with the cultural dislocation, political chaos and social upheaval brought about by capitalism and left-wing activism. The GMD's dictatorial manners and occasional resort to terror might have been objectionable, but Communist revolutionary violence was even less appetizing. To traditionalists and some liberals, left-wing culture and politics were symptoms of an atrophic, frivolous urban society and associated with the privileged and the undesirable – naïve students, bohemians, Russophile thinkers etc. – who were unpatriotic, disruptive and parasitic. Desire for an orderly, industrious community that respected authority and rejected consumerist decadence compensated for the GMD's failure to lay down coherent agendas. It provided the conditions for liberals and traditionalists to rally behind an otherwise authoritarian regime that insisted on its Leninist revolutionary role.

Popular and intellectual consensus that legitimated GMD rule could and did easily unravel. Co-option of scouting by conservative revolutionaries instilled voluntarism, self-discipline and respect for hierarchy among urban youths but failed to create a generation of nimble, loyal workers. Aggressive drive to mobilize mass sentiments in support of resistance against Japanese invasion from 1937 to 1945 did not coagulate into a sustainable order beyond the war. Liberal and even conservative intellectuals who rallied around the GMD in the struggle against Japan soon withdrew their support; most of them refused to follow the Nationalists' retreat to Taiwan in 1949. Appeal to genteel good sense, fear of violent upheaval, patriotism and pan-Asian ethical pieties backfired when conservative revolutionaries guaranteed neither order, economic development nor national independence toward the late 1940s with rampant inflation, accompanied by intensified state terror and the

[45] Alan Tansman, "Introduction: The Culture of Japanese Fascism," in *The Culture of Japanese Fascism*, ed. Alan Tansman (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2009), 17.

GMD's submission to US demands.[46] With Taipei's dependence on Washington's patronage, the GMD's solidarity with the Indian National Congress, based on anti-colonialism and celebration of Eastern morality, proved hollow. As an extension of the GMD's anti-communist, aesthetic nationalism, Pan-Asianism appealed to Chinese and Indian suspicion against revolutionary socialism but was theoretically too flimsy to allow for a common response to the changing terms in which imperialist hegemony exerted itself in the early Cold War order of the late 1940s.

Chapter Overview

This book reconstructs the conservative revolution by grappling with its ideological articulations and organizational initiatives. The following five chapters trace the origins of the conservative revolution in the GMD right's reaction against Sun's alliance with Chinese Communists, assess its proficiency in mass politics in peacetime and at war, and piece together short-lived domestic and intra-Asian alliances. Together they reveal the multifaceted strategy by which conservative revolutionaries constructed a distinctive, if still inchoate, alternative to communism. This alternative shared many similarities with the revolution it sought to suppress – a Leninist organization, investment in mass mobilization, anti-colonialism and an international outlook, and sensitivity to the undesirable impacts on society attendant to China's uneven capitalist development. Yet, the GMD, unlike its left-wing nemesis, aimed not to overthrow capitalism and private property but to bypass its alienating effects by appealing to the nation and Eastern civilizational ideals. The goal was to drive capitalist development through heavy-handed state command while deploying the nation as an imagined community endowed with virility, harmony, full sovereignty and spiritual superiority to decadent Western imperialists.

Chapter 2, "Orthodoxy: Purifying the Revolution," reveals how anti-communist Nationalists coalesced into an ideological force that laid the foundation for the coup of April 1927. Known among Nationalists as "party purification," the violent purge gave ideological and institutional shape to the conservative revolution. It ended the GMD's four-year cooperation with Chinese Communists and divorced the goal of national independence from empowerment of workers and peasants.

[46] Nonpartisan forces were increasingly betting on the communist, not the conservative, revolution for sustaining a viable society. Thomas D. Lutze, *China's Inevitable Revolution: Rethinking America's Loss to the Communists* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007).

Party theoreticians – Dai Jitao (1891–1949), Hu Hanmin (1879–1936) and Li Shizeng (1881–1973) – who set the tenor of the coup were versed in socialism and met Communist foes on their own ground. They saw Sun Yat-sen's Three People's Principles as the only true formula for building an ethical, cooperative *gemeinschaft* that would put an end to the moral agnosticism of both capitalism and communism. Although Dai was keen to draw a genealogy that tied Sun with Confucianism, the purge signified not nostalgia for a decrepit imperial system but a futuristic vision of classless harmony where altruistic factory owners and contented workers joined together in the communion of labor under party supervision. It put forward a third way to securing modernization that competed with predatory capitalism and revolutionary socialism. Treatises that denounced the GMD's erstwhile coziness to Chinese Communists and their Soviet sponsors anticipated concerns that preoccupied the Nationalist government for the next two decades. These include searching for ethical norms that naturalized hierarchy and order, rationalizing and beautifying work and leisure and the obsession with youth as a crucial but potentially disruptive social category. The paramount objective of conservative revolutionaries was to turn the vanguard party into a potent machine to suppress class struggle and bring order to the national community.

Chapter 3, "The Masses: A Youth Movement for the Conservative Revolution," takes the story of the conservative revolution up to the early years of the Second Sino–Japanese War (1937–45), focusing on the rechanneling of mass politics from agitation to collaboration. Despite its anti-colonial and traditionalist rhetoric, the GMD appropriated reformist institutions and ideals that grew out of industrializing treaty ports. The scout movement was a paragon of convergence between a vanguard revolutionary party and a youth organization with colonial origins and liberal aspirations. The GMD subsumed the existing scout units under a malleable umbrella body rather than replacing it with a party youth wing. The Scouts of China General Association, set up in 1934, enlisted original leaders who brought along ideas and methods that characterized scouting as a treaty-port program. These practices appealed to party cadres because they formed a nonconfrontational alternative to students' and labor unions. Scout training privileged hierarchy over egalitarianism, discipline over rebellion, self-cultivation over demands for wider social change. It encouraged the right form of cosmopolitanism – well-behaved, hardworking, apolitical and middle-class – while leaving ample room for projection of statist and militaristic might in its rituals and training activities. Scouting as a mass movement anticipated and coincided with the New Life Movement in placing the burden of collective

progress on individuals young and old, tying their everyday chores with the nation's strength and development.

Chapter 4, "State Comes First: Wartime Spiritual Revolution," extends the story of mass engagement under the GMD by considering the dialectic of politicization and depoliticization during the Second Sino–Japanese War. While Japanese aggression forced the GMD and much of the intellectual elite from the relatively industrialized coastal regions into the impoverished hinterland, the contingency of total war presented an opportunity for the state to remodel the masses into a cohesive population undivided by ideological and class differences. Since the Mukden Incident of 1931, which resulted in the Japanese occupation of Manchuria, "emergency period" and "national mobilization" circulated widely in popular discourse. Inspired by parallel developments in Germany, the United States and particularly Japan, GMD and nonpartisan intellectuals billed the War of Resistance as an opportunity for a fresh round of nation-building. Full-scale military conflict unified the nation as one community around one government. Blurred distinction between trenches and the home front also served to refocus the revolution on the people's mentality, desires and bodies. The National Spiritual Mobilization Movement, launched in 1939, aimed both to suppress ideological dissent and reform mass morality. "Stray branches," as communism and other unorthodox political beliefs were called, became ever more eminent as targets of attack. Military discipline reined in frivolous entertainment, restricted import of luxury products, enhanced productive capacity, fought corruption, encouraged donations to the country, and promoted hygienic practices and physical training. War against Japan provided the GMD a unique opportunity to reconstruct the national community with a new militaristic everyday culture that delegitimized political contention and sanctified the party-state's stewardship of the Chinese people.

Chapter 5, "Convergence: Liberal Sentimentalities and the Conservative Revolution," explores how intellectuals outside the GMD converged with the conservative revolutionary agenda in their views on mass politics, culture and the social role of the elite. Writers and academics of liberal persuasion often found common ground with the party-state. Even though they might not endorse the party's authoritarian excesses and bureaucratic corruption, intellectuals were attracted to such putatively "nonpartisan" goals as restoring a stable cultural order, maintaining the elite's self-identity as conveyors of civilization and checking philistinism and savagery. In particular, both the state and liberal intellectuals were anxious to tame the masses, whether they coalesced as protesters on the street, consumers indulging in seedy

pleasures or individuals complaining excessively about social wrongs. By focusing on aesthetician Zhu Guangqian (1897–1986), I show how his short stint writing for the party organ *Central Weekly* during the Second Sino–Japanese War was a logical development of, not aberration from, liberal fear of mob rule. Experiences of beauty, as Zhu defined them in his writings before and during the war, became integral to a self-disciplinary regime that tasked individuals with refining their own lives despite social crises, corrupt bureaucrats and extended warfare. Like scout training and the National Spiritual Mobilization Movement, Zhu's prescription for readers turned mass politics on its head. Rather than more equal social relations, national revival hinged on enthusiastic participation of salubrious individuals in the common moral, sublime project that was China's war against Japan. The state, alongside the intellectual elite, served as an ethical agent that guided the masses along in this endeavor.

Chapter 6, "World Revolution: China, Pan-Asianism and India," argues that the appeal to ethics and culture was characteristic of not only domestic politics under Nationalist China but also its international relations. GMD theoreticians like Dai Jitao and his associates understood their revolution as having a regional, if not global, significance. It provided an alternative to Moscow's proletariat internationalism and anticipated a form of moral existence superior to the West's materialism and plundering of other countries. Nationalist China presented itself as the leader of an Asia-wide bloc that upheld Eastern civilizational virtues for heralding a new order freed of capitalist colonialism and social alienation. While China initially considered Japan its natural Pan-Asianist ally, military conflicts from the 1930s forced the former to turn its attention to other Asian societies, particularly India. Buddhist academic Tan Yunshan (1898–1983), although not a cadre, served as the GMD's major institutional and intellectual link to Indian nationalism. Having joined the faculty of Visva-Bharati, a college founded by Rabindranath Tagore (1861–1941), Tan partook in the Nobel laureate's hope that a revived spiritual Asia would overcome the banality of mass culture, instrumental reason and bourgeois modernity. He managed to attract Nationalist funding for the sinological institute Cheena Bhavana, which became the locus of an idealistic and Buddhist-inflected concept of a unified Asia based in Visva Bharati. During the Pacific War, the ideal of a decolonized, conflict-free Eastern civilization became the rhetorical basis for Chiang's outreach to the Indian National Congress, with Tan playing an intermediary role between the two nationalist movements. Yet this apolitical Asianist vision ran into conflict with China's failure to call for an immediate end of British colonial rule in 1942 and quickly

Figure 1.1 Cover of *Chairman Chiang's Daily Life and His Outlook on Daily Life*

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unraveled with the onset of Cold War politics as left-wing Third Worldism replaced civilizational discourse as the main driver bringing together decolonizing societies in the region.

This book ends with a brief discussion of the conservative revolution's afterlife as part of the Cold War anticommunist crusade in 1950s Taiwan.