Uniting China Under A New Life

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Introduction

“The reason why China suffers bitterly from endless wars is because of the existence of feudal lords and kings.” - Qin Shi Huang

History often works in cycles. Cities rise, cities fall. Empires rise, empires fall. These cycles often follow the ebb and flow of natural phenomenon. In the case of Chinese civilization, a unique dynastic cycle characterized its millennia of existence. In 221 BC, the Middle Kingdom, consisting of various fiefs in the “Warring States Period (475-221 BC),” was united under the iron fist of the first Huangdi (emperor), Qin Shi Huang. The Qin Dynasty became the first imperial dynasty of what would be the longest continuous civilization in the world. Now, Qin Shi Huang is a legendary figure, often cast as a ruthless and brutal tyrant, who is renowned for his economic and political reforms that set the foundation for two thousand years of Chinese rule. The first emperor's strongman methods are seen as a necessity for the greater good and the persisting stability of the civilization. Several notable remnants of his reign are the Great Wall of China, the terracotta soldiers, and the standardization of units, which have become symbols of the Middle Kingdom's might.

During the early twentieth century, the great civilization found itself in a similar precarious situation; the fall of the Qing Dynasty in 1911 witnessed the fragmentation of China, with power falling in the hands of regional warlords, while the Kuomintang (KMT) party struggled to restore order to the once-great dynastic state in the succeeding decades. At the time of Dr. Sun Yat-sen's death in 1925, the KMT was still attempting to consolidate power against the various regional warlords who ruled the northern territories of the country. China was in dire need of modernization in order to restore her formal glory. Who was going to take on the task of welding the broken links of China into a chain, strong enough to pull the country into the modern world? Chiang Kai-Shek, known in the West as the Generalissimo, possessed a genuine desire and the initiative to breath “new life” into his nation. After Dr. Sun's death, Chiang Kai-Shek won a power struggle to take over the helm as leader of the Nationalists and in that position he attempted to do what Qin Shi Huang had
done two millennia ago. Like the first emperor, Chiang possessed the dual qualities of being a national hero to many while being seen as ruthless and authoritarian by others. It was his belief that he himself would be the person to lead China back to prominence. The New Life Movement (NLM) was an instance of a project Chiang introduced in an attempt to identify and fix the country's problems. Through a study of the NLM, we can understand Chiang’s personal philosophy and approach to creating a China for the modern world. This paper argues that Chiang Kai-Shek united China and attempted to develop China through methods such as the NLM, which contained fascist and Confucian undertones, that worked to rejuvenate the citizens. Ultimately, his endeavors ended in failure, due to their inorganic natures, which did not allow for any truly popular movements to foster.

The NLM was introduced on February 19, 1934 as a way to remedy some of the problems that plagued China at the time. One of those was the “unpreparedness of the people for the responsibilities of public life.”1 Chiang believed the people of China had become distanced from governmental and national affairs, becoming focused solely on the welfare of their families. Additionally, he believed the people were “spiritless,” and consequently, “officials tend to be dishonest and avaricious; the masses are undisciplined and calloused; the adults are ignorant and corrupt; the youth become degraded and intemperate; the rich become extravagant and luxurious; and the poor become mean and disorderly.”2 The NLM sought to create and develop a “new national consciousness and mass psychology” and serve as the “social regeneration” of China.3 As a whole, the movement was designed as a part of Chiang’s interpretation of Dr. Sun's Three Stages of Rule, which laid out the steps towards a constitutional democracy.

The nature of the NLM shows that Chiang was a man who deeply cared for the improvement of the nation. However, the NLM also reveals Chiang’s overwhelming belief that he himself (as the leader of the KMT) has to be the one who will help China rise out of the depths of its troubles. The movement was implemented as a way to prepare the people to become citizens for the regime. The movement’s explicit top-down approach suggests a rigid and inorganic organization, impervious to real democratic change. Of course, the KMT maintains that the people must obtain this “new life” as a pit stop towards

1 Chiang Kai-Shek, Outline of the New Life Movement (China: The Association for the Promotion of the New Life Movement), 1.
2 Ibid., 4.
3 Ibid., 2.
a democracy. However, Chiang ideology, as exemplified by the NLM movement, suggests an inclination towards a more fascist and authoritarian state of rule.

**Historiography**

There is a paucity of scholarship for something that characterizes a significant part of Chiang's ideology and plan for Nationalist rule in the 1930s. It is fascinating that the NLM only gets a passing mention in several books written about the Republican period of China. As it stands, the scholarship that exists on the topic is not pluralistic; there isn't a huge debate on the effects of the NLM itself. Instead, scholars have chosen to examine differing aspects of the NLM to study. Some scholars, including Arif Dirlik, examine the ideological characteristics of the movement. Others, such as Jennifer Oldstone-Moore, go further and examine a singular element, in Oldstone-Moore's case, Confucianism and the NLM. Some scholars look into the movement's effect on specific groups of people. For example, Yen-Hsiao Pei investigates how the NLM contributed to the image of the modern Chinese woman. Federica Ferlanti hone in on the diverse aspects of the movement in Jiangxi province. While Maria Hsia Chang's work, “Fascism' and Modern China,” is not about the NLM, it is valuable to my insight on Chiang's plan for China at the time the NLM was implemented. Personally, I will be examining the ideological basis of the movement and the role it played as a function of Chiang Kai-Shek's motives.

Arif Dirlik's work, “The Ideological Foundations of the New Life Movement: A Study in Counterrevolution,” stood as a revisionist view of history in the 1970s. Until then, the movement had been dismissed of any standing importance. The movement was seen as an attempt to revive the same Chinese traditions that had already failed in the modern world. Dirlik, however, honed in on the ideological foundations of the movement, believing it was essentially revolutionary through it's re-purposing of tradition. He said, “the stress on the revival of native morality was the most striking aspect of the movement with its historical context, and endowed it with an aura of conservatism that overshadowed its revolutionary claims and has dominated its image since then.” The New Life was “conservative in a specific sense” and “fashioned by and in response to the twentieth-century Chinese revolution.”

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5 Ibid., 953
perception, Dirlik thought the inability for the New Life to evolve contributed to its feeble image. He also notes that the “New Life Movement was intended not to challenge but to enhance the existing structure of authority.” Dirlik further describes the goal of the KMT in instituting this policy:

Its basic intention was to substitute ‘political mobilization’ for social mobilization, thus replacing revolutionary change from the bottom (which threatened the social structure) with closely supervised change orchestrated from the top (which would serve the goals of the state). The Kuomintang hoped to simultaneously eliminate social radicalism and convert the masses into instruments of its will.

This view that the NLM was a top-down organization contributes to the authoritarian image of Chiang. This paper takes Dirlik's ideas about the “repackaging” of Chinese tradition and applies it to the NLM and its place in Chiang's plan for mobilizing the nation.

A more contemporary scholar, Federica Ferlanti, wrote “The New Life Movement in Jiangxi Province, 1934-1938,” in which he argues that the movement made an impact and a lasting impression in Chinese society. Although the New Life achieved little in the way of what the Nationalist government planned, it still played a prominent role in KMT policy as well as war preparation. Ferlanti saw the practicality of using the New Life ideology to uphold the Nationalist government. Concepts like “filial loyalty” were used to remodel traditions like Confucianism in order to secure the citizens loyalty to the regime. Ultimately, Ferlanti thought the ideology of the NLM did not pan out but the structures created to implement its policies were useful in a practical sense, such as using the networks to shape mobilization and support for the war effort. My research also holds parallels to Ferlanti's ideas, specifically the idea of using New Life ideology to gain loyalty from the people.

Additionally, my paper focuses a lot on the fascist undercurrents of the NLM, especially in Chiang's own ideas. Maria Hsia Chang's "Fascism" and Modern China' studies the appearance of fascism in Republican China and deals with the intricacies of fascist ideologies in China. The fascism of the Blue Shirts is often the point of analysis for scholars as the group was the most explicitly fascist entity of China at the time. One intriguing point about the Blue Shirts' intrigue in fascism is in its “mobilizing and control capabilities” rather than its

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6 Ibid., 953.
7 Ibid., 947.
ideology. This sentiment is something that I elaborate on in Chiang's NLM language, which links his Confucian values with fascist organizational properties.

Chiang intended to promote inherently “Chinese” values in the movement as a means to an end. The choice for touting “Chinese” values follows as a reaction to the intellectual movements of the 1920s in China. Chiang genuinely believed in those values, as shown by his actions, but was also using them as a political tool. I would venture to say that the NLM, which contained a clear fascist tone in its intent, is an embodiment of the KMT party and its failure. The reason it failed was because it exercised a rigid top-down system, which restricted any organic mobilization to occur. Having little impact on people's lives, the citizens of China ultimately turned to the Communists instead.

*A Shift in Ideas: From Sun to Chiang*

The fall of the Qing Dynasty in 1911 saw the fragmentation of China. The subsequent decades were characterized by the struggles of the KMT party, led by Dr. Sun Yat-sen, to restore order to the once-great dynastic state. China was divided into rule by separate regional warlords as the KMT struggled to consolidate their power. Dr. Sun Yat-sen did not live to see his party reunite China. The KMT dealt with an internal power struggle during the years after Dr. Sun's death. At one point there were even separate KMT governments, one led by Chiang Kai-Shek in Nanking and the other in Hankow.

The period from 1927 to 1937 is known as the Nanking decade. It started when the Chiang-led Northern Expedition was underway. At this point, the status of the KMT still lay on shaky foundations. Chiang was challenged for Dr. Sun's old position by rivals such as Wang Ching-wei, Hu Han-min, and Liao Chung-k'ai, some of whom had been closer to Sun and possess a considerably more extensive revolutionary background. Scholars of the Nanking decade, however, cite three advantages that Chiang had which put him in a position to succeed Sun: (1) he was a soldier at a time when power in the military was an important political currency, (2) he had a superior financial base through the resources of Shanghai, and (3) his knowledge of factional and warlord politics.

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Chiang gained much of his military power through his command of the military academy at Whampoa, a position he was appointed to by Sun Yat-sen. In that capacity, he was able to secure the loyalty of many cadets through a teacher-to-student relationship. These connections were pivotal in his grab for power and these advantages made a significant difference during his stint in forced retirement in August 1927, when he still commanded the loyalty of the army. Chiang's recognition of the importance of Shanghai, a financial hub, provided him the resources to fund the monumental expenditures of maintaining an army. Having spent time in the city in the 1910s, Chiang had maintained ties with the financial community there. Ultimately, Chiang took advantage of his and the Shanghai capitalists' mutual hatred of the communists and made a deal exchanging money for their purging. His last advantage is one that is indicative of his political prowess altogether. He was skilled at playing factions off of each other and against the warlords he “isolated his opponents and eliminated them one by one.”

At the time, Chiang's main objective was to gain power, but scholars believe his intent was not only to satisfy a hunger for power. Chiang genuinely believed that China's success and future was dependent on his own success at consolidating power. The nature of his approach to governance can be seen more clearly in this speech he delivered in 1933:

The most important point of fascism is absolute trust in a sagely, able leader. Aside from complete trust in one person, there is no other leader or ism. Therefore, within the organization, although there are cadre, council members, and executives, there is no conflict among them; there is only the trust in the one leader. The leader has final decision in all matters… I believe that unless everyone has absolute trust in one man, we cannot reconstruct the nation and we cannot complete the revolution.

This quote explicitly states a desire towards a more authoritarian order and his tendencies toward fascism. Of course, the “one leader” is referring to Chiang himself. It is widely accepted by most scholars that Chiang had fascist leanings such as his affiliation with the Blue Shirts Society, a group of military leaders, many from the Whampoa Academy, whom exerted considerable influence in the KMT. It is debatable whether or not Chiang was power hungry, but what truly matters is if he had good intentions, which I believe was the case.

There was a clear shift in the ideology of the KMT under the leadership

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11 Ibid., 130.
12 Ibid., 131.
13 Ibid., 133
of Chiang Kai-Shek. Dr. Sun Yat-sen's Three Principles of the People was still promoted as the reigning political philosophy of China. The Three Principles of the People consists of three axioms: nationalism, democracy, and people's livelihood. It served to unite the Chinese people, institute western democracy, and introduce social welfare. However, the philosophy was reshaped in Chiang's own thought, which was strongly influenced by traditional Chinese values such as Confucianism. In Sun's vision of China, there would be three stages of rule: (1) military rule, in order to consolidate power, (2) political tutelage, to rule on behalf of the people while simultaneously fostering local government to prepare them for the next stage, and finally (3) democratic rule. The conclusion of the Northern Expedition was the end of the first stage of rule. The beginning of the 1930s would see the implementation of political tutelage. This is where the NLM comes into play. The NLM was organized as a way to prepare the citizens, cleanse society, and uphold the current regime. However, this is where Chiang's ideology diverges from Dr. Sun's vision. If the NLM is any indication, democratic rule was most likely never the goal given Chiang's preference for a more authoritarian type of rule.

**Ideology of the New Life Movement**

Introduced on February 19, 1934 by Chiang Kai-Shek in Nanchang, Jiangxi, the NLM was a way of invigorating the Chinese. The movement was to lay the groundwork for the rebuilding of China, starting with the most minute aspects of life, such as hygiene. China was remarked to be sluggish, “filthy,” “hedonistic,” “lazy,” “decrepit,” “barbaric,” and “devoid of reason.” The movement sought to remedy the situation by addressing social problems such as opium use and gambling, and improving life by reducing expenditures on weddings and funerals, and promoting the use of native commodities. At the beginning of the movement, the NLM targeted the most basic aspects of civilization for reform, such as “clothing, food, residence, and behavior.” The purpose of these initiatives was to reform the basic habits of the people, which would create ideal citizens and a better society.

What is most striking about the ideology of the NLM is its attempt to repackage tradition for modernity. The goal was not to choose a single tradition

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15 Sun yat-sen, *San Min Chu I* (Shanghai: China Committee, Institute of Pacific Relations, 1927), 1, 151, 363.
17 Ibid., 950.
18 Ibid., 955.
such as Confucianism, but to look at history and find a sense of “Chineseness.” 19 With that said, the NLM is mostly based on Confucian values. There is a humanistic sense that people are improvable, that their actions will lead to better lives: “...if we want to change men's hearts, we must stress external training to mold good personalities; to reform their everyday lives and nourish good habits. For example, a soldier, after receiving a long training, cannot but manifest the spirit of a soldier in his actions.” 20 A person’s way of life was held to be a representation and standard for Chinese civilization. The object of the New Life was to improve the lives of people. However, using a philosophical program to change the quality of people's lives seems misguided in this context. Philosophy rarely has a direct impact on the common people. A more realistic way of raising a nation's standard of living would be economic development, which was outside the NLM's focus.

Confucianism undoubtedly influenced Chiang Kai-Shek and there are well documented cases of efforts to educate individuals about the Confucian classics. For instance, “army officers were urged to study the Four Books, the central Confucian classics, and in the early 1930s a 'Read the Classics' movement launched for all Chinese.” 21 The language of the NLM is rife with Confucian ideals. On the eve of the fifth anniversary of the movement, Chiang gave a speech urging people to keep in mind the purpose of the NLM; “our aim was to revive the old virtues in our national heritage and to make modern citizens out of our people. All our people should understand the meaning of Li, I, Lien, and Chi’ih (Propriety, Justice, Integrity, and Conscientiousness).” 22 Having these familiar virtues would improve and rejuvenate Chinese society and lead to their support for the government. This support is based on the belief that the people are not capable of leading themselves. Instead, they should make themselves the best citizens possible for the good of China and the KMT. This strategy put the ball in the people's court, deliberately dumping responsibility on their shoulders for the success of the nation: “whether the policies of a government can be successfully carried out depends greatly upon the customs and habits of the people at the time.” 23 In the end, the movement never progressed to a point where it could effectively engage the people in national and governmental affairs.

19 Ibid., 957.
20 Ibid., 957.
21 Sheridan, China in Disintegration, 217.
23 Chiang, Outline of the New Life Movement, 3.
Chiang strived to be the unquestioned leader of this new China. This is strongly suggested by his personal tendencies towards fascism and a more authoritarian government, which can be gathered from New Life texts. Perhaps the most well known of the fascist movements in Europe, Italian fascism, led by Benito Mussolini, set the standard for fascist ideology. A basic idea of his political philosophy is shown in the following passage:

Fascism sees in the world not only those superficial, material aspects in which man appears as an individual, standing by himself, self-centered, subject to natural law, which instinctively urges him toward a life of selfish momentary pleasure; it sees not only the individual but the nation and the country, individuals and generations bound together by a moral law, with common traditions and a mission which suppressing the instinct for life closed in a brief circle of pleasure, builds up a higher life, founded on duty, a life free from the limitations of time and space, in which the individual, by self-sacrifice, the renunciation of self-interest, by death itself, can achieve that purely spiritual existence in which his value as a man consists.  

Fascism, as prescribed by Mussolini, is a symbiotic relationship formed between the state and the individual. The individual, through this bond, will find itself working for the good of the nation, renouncing “selfish momentary pleasure,” which also leads to his own transcendence. There is a prevalence of “fascist” language in the NLM, mostly in the form of an emphasis on the collective over the individual. In schools, lessons of Confucian ideals such as “virtues of propriety, rectitude, uprightness, integrity, and sense of shame were emphasized in combination with the teaching of filial piety (zhongxiao) and benevolence (ren'ai). This filial respect was further extended to the concept of sacrificing oneself for the sake of the nation.” This is an example of rebranding traditional Chinese ideals for a new purpose.

A further examination of NLM language shows stark parallels with the fascism of Mussolini. During the war, Chiang requested all citizens to “demonstrate their ability to unite against a common enemy to help each other in time of peril, to defend the country against alien aggression, and to struggle together for the existence of the State.” Chiang's *Outline of the New Life Movement* contains a call, which incorporates a riveting resemblance to Italian fascism, for the people to step up: “Obviously, in order to make the law or the machine work, it does not depend so much upon the law or the machinery

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themselves as it does upon the personnel.”27 This is an outright pronouncement of the state over the individual. However, the language also expresses Chiang’s desire to make the nation great, sacrificing individuality for the good of the collective whole.

Other excerpts strongly emphasize the importance of adhering to the hierarchy established by the NLM, perhaps due to a hybrid Confucian/fascist ideology. In the fifth anniversary speech, Chiang tells the people “to obey and carry on all the laws and orders of the State without thought of personal gain or loss” and he continues to elaborate on what economy is: “the control of selfish desires and the disciplining of body and mind so that nothing is done that is detrimental to the State or harmful to the national life.”28 The call for limiting selfish desires for a higher cause resembles the language of the fascist doctrine of Mussolini. We can see a combination of the Confucian ideology of the movement with the good of the nation in the speech as well:

To sum up, everyone should understand the demands made upon him by our national resistance and reconstruction and should discharge his duties to the State loyally, bravely, and whole-heartedly, regardless of hardship and sacrifice/Above all, we must not be afraid of sacrifices for the national cause. This is to apply 'propriety, justice, integrity, and conscientiousness' to our mode of living in wartime./We must understand that the life and conduct of individuals cannot be separated from the welfare of the nation and the good of society.29

The language of the NLM rarely contains the expression of individuality. Instead, people should live to support the state. Consideration should be made that the NLM is technically part of the political tutelage stage, which requires the people to trust the state, as they are incapable of ruling themselves yet. But, in order to move to the next stage, democracy, the people must be allowed to grow and learn, which the NLM fails to consider.

**The New Life Movement in Practice**

The first couple of months after the implementation of the NLM were rife with action. There were promotional exercises being held constantly, with the bulk of the action taking place in Jiangxi province with the intention that it would serve as a model for the rest of the country. Chiang Kai-Shek delivered many speeches, calling for a renewed China through the NLM. Various local associations were created within the first two years of the movement’s

29 Ibid., 191.
initiation.

Through March and April, New Life Promotional Associations were established in nine provinces as well as three municipal centers. By the first anniversary of the movement in February 1935, fifteen provinces, three municipalities, and nine railway centers had New Life organizations. As of the end of 1935, organization had reached nineteen provinces, five municipalities, twelve railway centers, and ten overseas Chinese communities. At the lower administrative level, the organization had been extended to 1132 districts (hsien) by 1935.30

The NLM clearly started out as a high profile and high priority item on the KMT agenda. An extensive top-down organizational structure was created for the promotion of the NLM. Given the moves made early on in the movement, there was a facade of enthusiasm. However, after the first year, progress slowed quite a bit. Even Chiang Kai-Shek resigned to acknowledge the lack of accomplishments on the two-year anniversary of the movement.31 Most of the promotional events were organized through associations rather than the general public. It is safe to say that these events did not come to fruition through the spirit of the public. The question is whether the public would be more engaged if it were more involved from the start.

The movement began after the purging of the Communists and the KMT, at the time, was still acting to secure their power. To do this, they tried “fighting the Communists with their own weapons – mobilizing the rural population on the government's side, rather than relying exclusively on military force.”32 The KMT held the belief that “in order to permanently eliminate the system of government organized by the Communists, they needed to take hold of the formal administrative agencies together with the loci of informal power (such as schools and peasant associations).”33 Even though their goal was to reach out to individuals, the movement's organization was from the top-down. What appeared to be a spontaneous burst of NLM activity was mostly artificial. Mass demonstrations were often organized through local organizations such as schools and the Boy Scouts.34 The action that took place at the start of the movement was mostly from organized promotional associations rather than an organic uprising. Chiang and militaristic elements dominated the movement until 1936 when it became Mme. Chiang's pet project.

31 Ibid., 952.
32 Ibid., 953.
33 Ferlanti, “The NLM in Jiangxi Province,” 967.
With the outbreak of war, more pressing issues came into the fray pushing the NLM out of the picture. For instance, “the tension between the territory's administration and the military control over it stemmed from the necessity of preparing civilians to the war against Japan rather than being an aimless restoration of order.”\textsuperscript{35} The reality of war shifted the priorities of the KMT, as Chiang tried to use the NLM to intensify the wartime effort. During his fifth anniversary address, he listed four things that embodied the New Life in wartime: (1) all able-bodied male citizens should enlist in the military and receive training; (2) give full cooperation to local governments; (3) develop handicraft industries and utilizing all economic resources; (4) contribute capital, technical skill, and labor to various economic and communication projects in the southwestern and northwestern provinces.\textsuperscript{36} At this point in time, the KMT was more inclined towards worrying about the war rather than instilling a “new life” into civilians. The NLM, having failed to rejuvenate the citizens, was used instead to encourage citizens to support the war effort. The same NLM language is still used to serve as an argument for national fervor during the war. This shift is also present in the local associations. The relocation of the Jiangxi NLM Association, due to battles, led to their work with supporting the war effort, although they did not discontinue the emphasis on public hygiene.\textsuperscript{37}

By the fifth anniversary of the NLM, the failure of the movement to take off was clear. Even Chiang acknowledges the failures and notes that the “people have not been thoroughly aroused in spirit, nor have they exerted themselves to the utmost.”\textsuperscript{38} A year later on the sixth anniversary, Chiang's language sounds even more dispiriting. He recalls his message from the year before and his call for action. Chiang then goes on to voice his disappointment in the people, who “have really not done their best to meet wartime responsibilities.”\textsuperscript{39} Eventually, the NLM faded away. As the citizens became disillusioned with the Nationalists, the Communists eventually gained the upper hand, forcing the Nationalists to relocate across the strait to the island of Taiwan.

\textbf{Conclusion}

\textsuperscript{35} Ferlanti, “The NLM in Jiangxi Province,” 986.
\textsuperscript{37} Ferlanti, “The NLM in Jiangxi Province,” 997.
\textsuperscript{39} Ibid., 187.
So why was the movement ineffective in reshaping Chinese society? The inorganic nature of the movement contributed to its demise. The KMT was too careful in controlling civilian mobilization and grassroots organization. This contributed to a detachment between the citizens and the regime. In order to move towards a democratic order, people need to have freedom to express themselves. But was democracy really the end goal for Chiang and the Nationalists? Through the examination of the NLM, all indications point the other way. There is no doubt that Chiang preferred a more authoritarian type of rule making it debatable whether he desired democracy as an end for China. But that is irrelevant since nothing was done throughout the years to move towards democratization. Any intention for citizens to think freely is rendered moot by the condition that ultimately, they could not undermine the regime. The individual came second to the collective good of the country. Moreover, the citizens were never inspired to fight for their country. Without organic inspiration, even a fascist regime could not survive since it feeds off the individual. From a fascist standpoint, Chiang failed as well. Even though he possessed a genuine desire to make China relevant once again, his regime essentially worked as an unsuccessful autocracy rather than one that inspired selfless contribution for its citizens.

The NLM was a compilation of values that were inherently “Chinese.” Its goal was to create a “new life” and a new citizen that would ultimately serve the collective good of the nation. It would fit into the second phase, political tutelage, of Sun Yat-sen's ambitious plan for China, which Chiang and the KMT vowed to continue. Dirlik's idea that the movement was a counterrevolution against the intellectual movements of the 20s and that its attempt to revive something familiar with China's history in order to build on it is a novel idea. Had the NLM been implemented with genuine interest in that goal, from grassroots movements, it might have worked. However, its failure was due to the ineffectiveness of the movement where the ends, supporting the regime, were more important than its means. This was due to Chiang's belief that he must be the person to lead China through its troubles, which made any movements such as the NLM a campaign an effort to support the regime.

The Qin Dynasty was short-lived. However, Qin Shi Huang united China under one name and his rule laid the foundations for two thousand years of Chinese civilization. The fall of the Qin can be attributed to the loss of the “Mandate of Heaven” and its loss of popularity. While Chiang Kai-Shek's role in history is precarious, he did successfully consolidate power under the KMT and
had a genuine interest in getting China back on its feet. He had a vision for revitalizing the country with the NLM. Much of what Chiang and the NLM worked towards was contingent on the participation of the citizens. However, the movement derived from Confucianism, containing fascist undertones, did not succeed. Chiang's authoritarian rule eventually lost public support and his tenure in China was as short-lived as that of the first emperor. Only history will tell what his lasting legacy will be.