Making the “Good Government” with the “Good People”: Collaboration between General Wu Peifu and Endeavor intellectuals 1920-1922

Abstract:
This article examines the collaborative project between Wu Peifu and a group of prominent intellectuals led by Hu Shi at Peking University to create a “Good Government” (好政府 Haozhengfu, hereafter Good Government) between 1920 and 1922. Challenging the conventional historiography that either exaggerates the antithesis between warlords and intellectuals, or studies them as two separate groups with little social, political and ideological overlap, this article argues that the Good Government movement is a tangible testimony to their active and constructive ideological engagement, and to their intensive networking through which their social and cultural capital was quickly converted into political power and impact. Even when their collaboration broke down due to their different views on federalism, Wu Peifu’s political thoughts still formed an integral part of the prevailing ideological commitment towards the Good Government.

Keywords: Warlord, May Fourth, Wu Peifu, Hu Shi, federalism, the Endeavor

In May 1922, only a few days after Wu Peifu had secured his victory in the Zhili-Fengtian Clique War (直奉戰爭 Zhi-Feng zhanzheng) and hence his control over the Beiyang Government, Hu Shi (胡適), Cai Yuanpei (蔡元培), Li Dazhao (李大钊), together with another thirteen prominent intellectuals issued a joint political statement, calling for the establishment of a “Good Government.” The Endeavor (努力周報 Nuli zhoubao), a weekly magazine “for the likeminded people” (同人雜志 Tongren zazhi), was launched at the same time to promote their political ideas and solicit public support. As a matter of fact, Hu Shi and his likeminded friends, notably Cai Yuanpei, Ding Wenjiang (丁文江), and Zhu Jingnong (朱經農), had already formed a small society called “endeavor” in May 1921, henceforth frequenting their discussions on political affairs during their afternoon-teas, dinner parties, and mah-jong games.\(^1\) The launch of the Endeavor one year later not only demonstrates their willingness to expand their network and foster wider political impact from their small-group discussions, but also shows that, Hu Shi, the leader of the Endeavor Society, was now determined to engage politics in a more organized manner.\(^2\) Although he suggested that the Society would remain an organization among intellectual friends, he nonetheless introduced explicit organizational rules

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and laid out detailed reform goals. This intellectual-led movement was immediately echoed by Wu Peifu, who expressed his commitment to realizing a government that is constitutional, public, and “with a plan.” The subsequent exchange of ideas and political collaborations between Wu and the Endeavor intellectuals resulted in the birth of a remarkable, albeit short-lived, Good People Cabinet (好人内閣 Haoren neige) in September 1922, comprising not only Wu’s confidants but also three distinguished intellectuals hailing from the Endeavor Society.

Wu Peifu, the first Chinese face to appear on the Time cover, was the most promising leader of the Beiyang Cliques (北洋軍閥 Beiyang junfa) – consisting of the Zhili Clique (直系 Zhixi) led by himself and Cao Kun (曹锟), the Anhui Clique (皖系 Wanxi) by Duan Qirui (段祺瑞), and the Fengtian Clique (奉系 Fengxi) by Zhang Zuolin (張作霖) – which, during the so-called warlord period (1916–1928), dominated the Beiyang Government. Between 1919 and 1920, his triumph over Duan Qirui and his support for the May Fourth Movement won him the fame of being a “revolutionary general.” He set up his headquarters in Luoyang, the capital city of Henan province, overseeing the Beiyang Government while consolidating his control over the military and civil affairs of Henan, Hubei, and Shanxi provinces. And two years later, his victory over Zhang Zuolin further helped him to reach the zenith of his power and influence: The four cabinets of the Beiyang Government formed between June 1922 and January 1923 were mainly composed of his confidants; the Good People Cabinet, in particular, was a product of his sophisticated political manoeuvres and ideological practices. He was seen by his contemporaries, including the Endeavor intellectuals, as key to initiating effective reforms from within the Beiyang system and to achieving constitutional rule and peaceful unification between the North and the South.

Historical accounts of Wu Peifu have focused on his conquests and politico-military capabilities as a “warlord.” Odoric Wou’s Militarism in Modern China is the first English-

5 The issue of national unification originated from the 1911 Revolution when the southern revolutionary forces led by Sun Yat-sen conflicted with the northern Beiyang Army led by Yuan Shikai (袁世凱). This issue persisted into the 1910s due to Sun’s continuous politico-military manoeuvres against the Beiyang Government. However, there has never been a clearly defined territorial or politico-military borderline between the North and the South, as many provinces faltered between the Beiyang Government and the Guangzhou Government established by Sun, while others claimed provincial independence. Between 1920 and 1922, the issue was complicated by the fact that many southern provinces supported federalism and provincial autonomy, while both Sun Yat-sen and Wu Peifu were keen to build a unitary state.
6 The early study of the warlord era has been done mainly in the category of warlord biographies; Wou’s monograph on Wu Peifu falls into this category. Other scholars have also studied Wu’s politico-military activities and relationships to demonstrate the political attributes and military dynamism of Chinese warlordism, although their focus is not on Wu. Wou, Militarism in Modern China; Lucian W. Pye, Warlord Politics: Conflict and Coalition in the Modernization of Republican China (Santa Barbara, CA: Praeger, 1971); Hsi-Sheng Chi, Warlord Politics in China, 1916-1928 (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 1976); Anthony B. Chan, Arming the Chinese: The Western Armaments Trade in Warlord China.
language monograph that comprehensively studies the internal politics and foreign relations under Wu’s aegis. Wou portrays Wu as a “traditional warlord”: Above all, Wu was traditional in ideological terms because he cherished Confucian values and customs, envisioning an ideal government based on a moral and humanistic foundation. Furthermore, he was traditional in social and political terms, operating within a clan-structured military and administrative system, while maintaining intimate, hierarchical social relationships with his advisors and subordinates. Ultimately, he was a warlord – all of his ideologies and diplomacies were dictated by his politico-military needs, and therefore were superficial, instrumental, and contingent.7

Since Wou’s monograph, there has been little comprehensive research into Wu Peifu until recent revisionist studies of the May Fourth Movement.8 This scholarship sheds light on Wu’s patriotic, if also progressive, stance during the Movement and his tactical management of political publicity through circulating public telegrams to promote his own policies. While this scholarship has, compared to Wou’s account, deepened the investigation of the ways in which Wu Peifu solicited, engaged with, and benefited from public opinion, it still fails to escape the reductive and ill-defined category of “warlord” – instead of portraying Wu as a “traditional warlord,” it presents him, at best, as a “nationalist warlord.” As a “nationalist warlord,” Wu was able to incorporate his personal, parochial, and factional interests into a broad nationalist platform during the May Fourth Movement. But he could never present a fundamental challenge to the warlord rule, because as a “warlord” himself, despite being “nationalist,” his success and influence would effectively enhance warlord politics even when his aim was anti-warlordism.9

The recent historiography of Chinese warlordism has begun to reapraise the category of “warlord” and re-evaluate the ideological and political relationships of the so-called “warlords.” The most significant advancements are achieved in the study of Chen Jiongming (陳炯明), the Cantonese strongman who launched a coup d’état against Sun Yat-sen (孫中山) in 1922. Scholars have investigated Chen’s anarchist, socialist and federalist thought and, in particular, his commitment to establishing a Chinese federal system based on the principle of provincial self-governance (聯省自治), which, they argue, eventually resulted in his resistance against Sun’s plan for national unification in a centralist manner.10 Such revisionist

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10 See Prasenjit Duara, Rescuing History from the Nation (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1995), 177-204; Leslie H. Dingyan Chen, Chen Jiongming and the Federalist Movement: Regional Leadership and Nation Building in Early Republican China (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1999), 157-206; Izabella Goikhman, “Chen Jiongming, Becoming a Warlord in Republican China” in Mechthild Leutner and Izabella Goikhman eds., State, Society and Governance in Republican China (Münster: LIT Verlag, 2014), 77-101; and Vivienne
study, however, has not included Wu Peifu for two primary reasons: Compared to Chen, Wu was more devoted to Confucian tenets, and unlike Chen who blueprint a Chinese federation largely along American lines, Wu was, similar to Sun, a centralist. Therefore, if being a radical – in both cultural and political terms – has made Chen Jiongming appear less like a “warlord” in the eyes of revisionist historians, Wu, with his relatively conservative ideological profile, can only be deemed a “warlord.”

The category of “warlord” is problematic not only because it sustains the “tradition vs. modernity” and “conservatism vs. radicalism” dichotomies in understanding the ideological activism of Chinese military strongmen, but, more importantly, because it prevents inquiries into the constructive ideological connections and political collaborations between military strongmen like Wu Peifu and prominent May Fourth intellectuals, such as Hu Shi. As Vivienne Guo puts it, “due to the constructed dichotomy between the man of guns and the man of letters, the historiography of warlord rule and that of the New Culture and May Fourth Movements have seldom incorporated one another, regardless of the inextricable relationship between the two.” It is therefore no surprise that when Jerome Grieder examines Hu Shi’s endeavor to promote the Good Government in 1922, Wu Peifu was only mentioned in passing as a “cut-above-the-average” warlord who happened to espouse a number of causes to which the intellectuals were committed but quickly deserted them in order to protect his own political interests. And Wou’s account, by downplaying the active engagement between Wu Peifu and the Endeavor intellectuals and by depicting Li Dazhao as merely an agent of the Comintern and the Chinese Communist Party (hereafter the CCP), reached a reductive conclusion that the Good Government was an achievement of the Comintern in approaching different political-military powers to aide China’s unification, and that Wu was interested mainly because a united China would help him secure more foreign funds.

In this regard, to rescue Wu Peifu from the category of “warlord” means not only to enquire into his role in the making of the Good Government, but also to remap his political thoughts and cultural stance within the ideological landscape of the Good Government movement where a variety of ideas – constitutionalism, federalism, pragmatism (read Hu Shi’s liberalism and reformism), socialism, Confucianism etc. – interacted with one another in shaping the trajectories of China’s political reformation. What were the ideas into which Wu and the intellectuals were united and what set them against one another? How did they initiate their political engagement, sustain their communication and networking, and, indeed, why did their collaboration dwindle or fail eventually? Delving into the collaboration unfolded between Wu

12 Guo, “Not Just a Man of Guns”, 163.
Peifu and the *Endeavor* intellectuals for establishing Good Government between 1920 and 1922, this article interprets Wu’s political thoughts as a complex May Fourth product rather than a personal parody of Confucian tenets, and examines Wu’s engagement with the intellectuals as typical May Fourth networking activities through which private communication became public, and social and cultural capital was transformed into political power and impact.\(^{14}\)

**The Collaborative Project: Political Communication and Social Capital**

On 14 May 1922, the second issue of *the Endeavor* published “Our Political Statement” to lay out the plans for establishing Good Government in China. Drafted by Hu Shi, the statement was signed by sixteen prominent intellectuals, eleven of whom were teaching or working at Peking University and two at the National South-eastern University:

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<td>National South-eastern University</td>
<td>Tao Xingzhi, Wang Boqiu</td>
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<td>Others</td>
<td>Ding Wenjiang (former Director of the Institute of Geological Survey), Tang Erhe, Wang Zhengmei (secretary of the Guoxin Bank Group)</td>
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The *Endeavor* intellectuals who signed “Our Political Statement”\(^ {15}\)

The statement articulated the nature of the Good Government: It will be constitutional because the Constitution is a fundamental prerequisite to any good governance. It will be public, that is to say, open and transparent, because public-mindedness is the only weapon against backroom deals. And it will be “with a plan” since even having a mediocre reform plan is much better than having no plan. The aim of the Good Government is to ensure the well-being of the people and to protect personal liberty and cultivate individuality. In order to establish such a government, the Good People (好人 Haoren), that is, the outstanding members of society or China’s educated elite, were called upon to stand out firmly against the evil forces: “Being good is no longer enough if we are hesitant to fight; complaining is no longer enough if our voices remain silent and passive – we must move forward and take action, and this will mark the beginning of our political reform.”\(^ {16}\)

Having outlined the principles and goals of the Good Government, the statement offered specific suggestions regarding current political affairs:

\(^{14}\) In line with Pierre Bourdieu’s theory, in this article “social capital” refers to the social networks formed among Wu Peifu and *Endeavor* intellectuals, while “cultural capital” refers to their shared cultural status as educated elite and, importantly, their capability of producing and circulating ideas. Pierre Bourdieu, “The forms of capital,” in J. G. Richardson ed., *Handbook of Theory of Research for the Sociology of Education* (New York: Greenwood, 1986), 241-258.


\(^{16}\) Ibid.
We believe the issue of national unification must be solved urgently before we can move on to address other issues such as the restoration of the Constitution and military demobilization. However, we reject the idea that unification should be achieved by force of arms. We demand establishment of a North-South Peace Assembly (南北和會 Nanbei hehui) that represents the people’s will and that is accessible and open to the public.

This Peace Assembly should:
1. Reach an agreement regarding the restoration of the Old Parliament (舊國會 Jiuguohui).\textsuperscript{17}
2. Instruct the Parliament to promulgate the Constitution.\textsuperscript{18}
3. Make a detailed plan and set deadlines for military demobilization.
4. Ensure that all its discussions are known to the public.

[...]\textsuperscript{19}

After detailed guidance was laid out regarding how to demobilize regional armies, reduce bureaucracy, organize presidential elections, and improve financial performance, the statement ended with an earnest call for “discussion, propagation, criticism and support” among the public. Clearly, the aim of the statement was not only to sketch a blueprint for the Good Government, but also to pronounce the leadership of the Good People in initiating concrete, useful reforms and mobilising a wider political movement. The plan might have been preliminary, but the spirit of the Good People was extremely high. Hu Shi even wrote a song entitled “Song of Endeavor” to galvanise the Good People like himself into bringing about the Good Government.\textsuperscript{20}

At the same time that “Our Political Statement” was published, Wu Peifu announced his political principles in Chenbao (晨報), a major daily newspaper published in Beijing: first, to summon a National Citizen’s Assembly (國民大會 Guomin dahui) for discussing national affairs; second, to resume the Old Parliament, restore the Constitution, and elect a new president; and third, to attain reconciliation between the North and the South and to achieve national unification.\textsuperscript{21} And on 15 May, only one day after “Our Political Statement” was published in the Endeavor, Chenbao reprinted the Statement and printed – on the same page, with bold headline – “Wu Peifu’s Plan for Unification.” As if he was responding to the

\textsuperscript{17} The Old Parliament, established in 1913, was the first parliament of the Chinese Republic. Having been suspended during Yuan Shikai’s rule, the Parliament was resumed in 1916 after Yuan had died, only to be disbanded during Zhang Xun’s (張勳) imperial restoration. After Duan Qirui drove out Zhang and took control of the Beiyang Government, he refused to restore the Parliament. Instead, endorsed by the Anhui Clique and the Anfu political faction, Duan formed a new parliament in 1918, commonly known as the Anfu Parliament (安福國會) or the New Parliament. Zhonghua minguo shishi rizhi 1912-1949 [A Chronicle of Events in the Republican Era 1912-1949], edited by Guo Tingyi (Taipei: Zhongyue yanjiuyuan, 1979), 104-715.

\textsuperscript{18} Although not specified, here the “Constitution” refers to the Provisional Constitution of the Republic of China (中華民國臨時約法 Zhonghua minguo linshi yuefa), established in 1912.

\textsuperscript{19} Hu, “Women de zhengzhi zhuzhang,” 1.

\textsuperscript{20} Hu Shi nianpu, 231.

\textsuperscript{21} “Wairen muzhong zhi Wu Peifu” [Wu Peifu in the Eyes of Foreigners], Shenbao (申報), 10 May 1922, 2; “Wu Peifu jiang fabiao shiju yijian” [Wu Peifu Will Publish His Views on National Affairs], Shenbao, 13 May 1922, 2.
suggestions given by the *Endeavor* intellectuals, Wu Peifu made a to-do-list for jumpstarting political reform:

1. To let the Parliament solve the presidential problems.
2. To restore the Old Parliament.
3. To let the parliamentarians of the Old Parliament promulgate the Constitution.\(^{22}\)
4. To separate military and civil positions: the same person must not hold both the military position “dujun” (督軍) and the civil position “governor.”
5. [this point is omitted in printing]
6. To divide the country into fourteen military zones, and to demobilize troops in three rounds.\(^{23}\)

Although Hu Shi and Wu Peifu did not mention one another in their reform plans, the relationship between “Our Political Statement” and “Wu Peifu’s Plan for Unification” was evident. First, the timing of these publications was critical: *The Endeavor* was launched on 7 May, two days after Wu Peifu had secured his military victory over the Fengtian Clique. Having heard the news, Ding Wenjiang, a founding member of the *Endeavor* Society and Hu Shi’s close friend, expressed his excitement: “Without Wu’s victory, we would soon be taken over by the northern barbarians.”\(^{24}\) Clearly, in the eyes of the *Endeavor* intellectuals, Wu Peifu should be differentiated from the “barbarous” Fengtian Clique occupying the vast Manchurian region north of Beijing. One week later, as soon as Wu revealed his political plan to the public, the *Endeavor* proposed, in a timely manner, the establishment of the Good Government through conducting a bit-by-bit reform.\(^{25}\) Second, there was a substantial overlap between Hu Shi’s blueprint for the Good Government and Wu Peifu’s political plan. Repudiating not only the Anfu Parliament formed by Duan Qirui in 1918 but also the Extraordinary Parliament by Sun Yat-sen in 1921, both plans called for the restoration of the Old Parliament and the Constitution, and for a legitimate presidential election. Despite their different names, the “National Citizen’s Assembly” advocated by Wu and the “North-South Peace Assembly” by the *Endeavor* Society suggest that the two parties had reached common ground on how to achieve reconciliation between the North and the South and to realize national unification. Furthermore, Wu, instead of evading the issue of military demobilization, offered a clear response to the concerns of the intellectuals and proposed a relatively feasible idea for diminishing military rule.

Starting in late May 1922, direct exchange of telegrams between Wu Peifu and the *Endeavor* Society became frequent. On 22 May, Cai Yuanpei, along with other prominent intellectual and political figures, addressed a telegram to Wu, affirming that Wu’s plan to restore the Old

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22 The constitution Wu Peifu endeavored to promulgate is the Tiantan Constitution Draft (天壇憲草), which was drawn up by the Old Parliament in 1913 and could be seen as an extended version of the Provisional Constitution. Due to the close relationship between the two and given the fact that contemporary writings seldom differentiated the two, in this article I would refer to both of them as “the Constitution.” Xiaohong Xiao-Planes, “Of Constitutions and Constitutionalism: Trying to Build a New Political Order in China, 1908-1949” in Stéphanie Balme and Michael W. Dowdle eds., *Building Constitutionalism in China* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), 47.


24 *Hu Shi riji quanbian* 3, 663.

Parliament and the Constitution and to, above all, convene a National Citizen’s Assembly was “the most convenient and efficient way to achieve peaceful national unification.”26 One month later, Wu Peifu’s passionate response reached Cai, in which he honoured Cai as “a man of virtue treasuring the well-being of the nation and the people” and humbled himself as merely a disciple longing for Cai’s teaching.27 Cai Yuanpei returned the compliment and expressed his willingness to negotiate the details of the “grand plan” (宏谟 Hongmo) with Wu in their future letters.28 Apart from the exchange of telegrams, meetings also took place between the key members of the Endeavor Society, namely Cai Yuanpei, Hu Shi, and Li Dazhao, and Wu Peifu’s strategists, namely Bai Jianwu (白堅武) and Sun Danlin (孫丹林). On 11 May, only four days after Wu’s victory, Bai Jianwu suggested that Wu employ Li Dazhao as a strategist.29 Li did not accept the post, but he nonetheless visited Luoyang three times between June and October to meet Wu in person, cultivating a detailed plan for restoring the Old Parliament and attaining peaceful national unification.30 In the meantime, Wu sent Bai Jianwu and Sun Danlin as his personal representatives to meet members of the Endeavor Society in Beijing.31 These private meetings, different from the circular telegrams that had mainly voiced grandiose plans, were centered upon one specific, urgent matter: to remove Xu Shichang (徐世昌), the current president of the Beiyang Government elected by the illegitimate Anfu Parliament, as well as Sun Yat-sen, the President-Extraordinary elected by the Extraordinary Parliament that he illegitimately assembled in Guangzhou.

Such intensive engagement between Wu Peifu and the intellectuals was not a sudden, contingent conduct, but rather an outcome of the long-standing friendship between Bai Jianwu and Li Dazhao. Bai and Li had become close friends during their school days at the Tianjin Beiyang Academy of Law and Politics, and their friendship was well maintained through exchange of letters and telegrams on a monthly basis after graduation. In August 1920, Li received a special letter from Bai. Attached to the usual personal letter was a separate letter to introduce Wu Peifu, who had just defeated Duan Qirui and thereby risen to politico-military prominence.32 Bai was convinced that Wu Peifu was the only Beiyang strongman worthy of his respect and loyalty. This introduction letter, sent during the very period that Bai decided to assist Wu as a strategist, suggests Bai’s attempt to expand this alliance to include his best friend. Although it is unclear whether Li Dazhao immediately shared Bai’s personal admiration for Wu, he certainly did not reject the idea of collaboration. Not only did he continue his

26 “Xiong Xiling deng xiangying Cao Wu zhi madian” [Response of Xiong Xiling and Others to Cao Kun and Wu Peifu’s Telegram], Shenbao, 27 May 1922, 2.
27 “Fu Cao Kun Wu Peifu dian” [Reply to Cao Kun and Wu Peifu], 22 May 1922, in Cai Yuanpei quanji 11 [Collected Writings of Cai Yuanpei Vol.11], (Hangzhou: Zhejiang jiaoyu chubanshe, 1998), 99; “Fu Wu Peifu dian, fu Wu Peifu laidian” [Reply to Wu Peifu, with Wu Peifu’s Telegram Attached], 30 June 1922, in Cai Yuanpei quanji 11, 132.
28 “Fu Wu Peifu dian, fu Wu Peifu laidian,” 132.
30 Bai Jianwu riji, 363-386.
31 Geng, “Wu Peifu yu Su’e ji Beijing zhishijie,” 47.
32 Bai Jianwu riji, 266.
correspondence with Bai when Bai was in Luoyang meeting Wu, but he also agreed to meet Sun Danlin, Wu’s other most trusted strategist.  

In November 1920, Li Dazhao, Bai Jianwu, and Sun Danlin met together for the first time in Beijing. It was a happy, relaxed get-together among friends rather than a political meeting with perfunctory rhetoric or pre-set agendas. Li Dazhao invited the guests to his home for lunch, and went out himself to buy meat, eggs, and some bean sprouts to enrich the dishes. The contrast between Li’s ascetic lifestyle and his hospitality deeply impressed Sun Danlin: “While he lived a frugal, strict life himself, he treated us with extreme generosity – such contrast makes him a respectable gentleman.” Before Sun left Beijing for Luoyang, the three met again. Already close friends by then, they enjoyed a long, pleasant, and heart-to-heart conversation accompanied by a big bottle of red wine. The details of their conversation were not recorded, but one thing, at least, was certain: They talked about Wu Peifu. As Wu’s strategists, Bai Jianwu and Sun Danlin could not help but solicit Li’s comments on current political affairs. And in the most candid manner, Li offered his advice: “If you would like to help Wu Peifu, you should begin with removing president Xu Shichang from office.” As to how the president should be removed, Li only said four words: “Restore the Old Parliament” (恢複法統 Huifu fatong). After he returned to Luoyang, Sun told Wu Peifu what Li Dazhao had suggested. Wu was extremely impressed.

But the time was not yet ripe in 1920. Although Duan Qirui had been overthrown by Wu and the Anfu Parliament dissolved, the Fengtian Clique which allied with Wu in ousting Duan subsequently extended its sphere of influence. As the Zhili Clique and the Fengtian Clique constituted a bipolar power structure after the war, no policy in Beijing could be made without the approval of Zhang Zuolin. Therefore, although Wu Peifu had, as early as 1920, published in the newspapers his plan to summon a National Citizen’s Assembly and to restore the Old Parliament, the plan was quickly vetoed by Zhang Zuolin and president Xu Shichang. But this does not mean that the initial engagement between Wu Peifu and Li Dazhao came to no fruition. In laudatory words, Li expressed his support for the revolutionary general, praising the organic law that Wu was drafting for the National Citizen’s Assembly as a true reflection of the spirit of democracy. As Odoric Wou argues, “Wu’s proposal for a National Citizen’s Assembly made him appear as a champion for the rights of the people, a leader who believed that government should be controlled by the people and for the people.” It is therefore no surprise that two years later, after Wu had finally defeated Zhang Zuolin and thus become the

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33 Ibid., 278-285.
34 Sun Danlin’s memoir, in Wen Fei ed., Wo suo zhidaode Wu Peifu [The Wu Peifu I Know], (Beijing: Zhongguo wenshi chubanshe, 2004), 28.
35 Ibid.
36 Bai Jianwu riji, 285.
37 Sun Danlin’s memoir, 28.
38 Ibid.
40 Zhonghua minguo shishi rizhi 1912-1949, 650; Wou, Militarism in Modern China, 34-35.
41 Li Dazhao, “Yao ziyou jihe de Guomindahui” [We Need a National Citizens’ Assembly Summoned by the People], Chenbao, 17 August 1921, in Li Dazhao Quanji 3 [Collected Writings of Li Dazhao Vol.3] (Beijing: Renmin chubanshe, 2006), 262-264.
42 Wou, Militarism in Modern China, 35.
strongest power controlling the Beiyang Government, the *Endeavor* intellectuals were willing to realize the Good Government under his auspices.

The timing was now perfect. After Wu Peifu and the *Endeavor* Society had published their political plans for restoring the Old Parliament in May 1922, the entire nation was brimming with enthusiasm. To restore the Parliament, the two current illegitimate presidents – Xu Shichang in the North and Sun Yat-sen in the South – must step down. Therefore Wu and the intellectuals first preoccupied themselves with urging the resignation of the two presidents and propping up Li Yuanhong (黎元洪) – who had been elected vice president by the Old Parliament in 1913 and succeeded to the presidency in 1916 until the Parliament was disbanded – to resume his office until a new president could be legally elected. Enormous pressure was then placed upon Xu Shichang and Sun Yet-sen. Xu soon gave in and resigned on 2 June 1922, but Sun did not. On 6 June, Cai Yuanpei circulated a long telegram addressed to Sun and the Extraordinary Parliament: “Now that the illegitimate president in Beijing has resigned and the restoration of the Old Parliament is in sight, it can be said that the purpose of your Constitution Protection Movement has been fulfilled. [...] We therefore beseech you to stop the Northern Expedition and to resign the presidency like Xu did.”

Two days later, Cai sent a circular telegram to Li Yuanhong, welcoming Li to "take over the Beiyang Government and maintain order.” Wu Peifu’s telegram, on the heels of that of Cai, also reached Sun Yat-sen. Having emphasized that Li’s presidency was “legitimate and constitutional,” Wu welcomed Sun to come to Beijing to support the Beiyang government. According to *Chenbao*, people from all walks of life joined Cai and Wu in exhorting Sun to resign. The National League of Commercial Associations even argued that the key to solving all the problems plaguing China lies in Sun’s resignation.

It is undeniable that the collaboration between Wu Peifu and the *Endeavor* Society for jumpstarting the Good Government was fruitful. On 1 June, the Old Parliament was reassembled. The next day, Xu Shichang resigned. On 11 June, Li Yuanhong, with the support of the Parliament, resumed his presidency. Wu Peifu left Luoyang for Beijing to take up his post as Chief of the Army. And five days later, on 16 June, Chen Jiongming launched his coup d’état against Sun Yat-sen. By driving out Sun, the coup d’état provided timely and

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43 “Guanyu ‘Women de zhengzhi zhuzhang’ de taolun,” 1-7; “Jiu guohui huifu yundong zhujuan zhanjiai” [The Movement to Restore the Old Parliament Unfolded], *Chenbao*, 30 May 1922, 2.
45 “Zhi Li Yuanhong dian” [Telegram to Li Yuanhong], 8 June 1922, in *Cai Yuanpei quanji 11*, 112.
46 “Zhi Sun Zhongshan xiansheng quan qie bishang” [To Mr. Sun Yat-sen, Beseeching Him to Come to Beijing], in *Wu Peifu shudu quanbian* [The Complete Collection of Wu Peifu’s Political Writings], edited by Jingzhi tushuguan, 1922, (The Microfilm Collection of the National Library of China), 110-111.
47 “Ge tuanti qing Sun Wen xia ye” [Different Social Organizations asked for Sun Yat-sen’s Resignation], *Chenbao*, 4 June 1922, 2.
48 “Li Yuanhong jinri lai Jing” [Li Yuanhong Arrived in Beijing Today], *Chenbao*, 11 June 1922, 2; “Wu Peifu ganlai jiuzi Luzhang” [Wu Peifu Came to Take the Post as Chief of the Army], *Chenbao*, 13 June 1922, 2.
crucial aide to the Good Government movement. On 1 August, the resumed Parliament summoned its first meeting. And on 19 September, the Good People Cabinet was formed – among the ten cabinet members three were intellectuals of the Endeavor Society, namely Wang Chonghui as the Prime Minister, Luo Wengan the Minister of Finance, and Tang Erhe the Minister of Education, and two were Wu’s confidants, namely Sun Danlin appointed the Minister of the Interior, and Gao Enhong (高恩洪) the Minister of Transportation.

Clearly, Wu Peifu’s engagement with the Endeavor intellectuals was not traditional – it resembled neither the hierarchical relationship between the imperial ruler and his Confucian bureaucrats, nor the often-romanticized personal bond between a benevolent patron and his devoted protégés. Rather, it was reflective of typical May Fourth networking activities. Above all, the Endeavor Society was a May Fourth intellectual society formed among likeminded friends, featuring their equal, independent position and horizontal networks. Although Hu Shi was determined to “move forward and take action,” he was also extremely cautious about allowing the Endeavor Society to degenerate into a political faction attached to Wu: “We would like to remain independent political commentators […], to exert influence on political affairs from outside political parties/factions.” In this regard, to the Endeavor intellectuals, their political impact would only be fostered from their intellectualism and sociality – that is, their professional expertise, their political independence and impartiality, and their extensive networks producing, propagating and reconciling different ideas. Their engagement with Wu Peifu was thus not about seeking a benevolent patron but finding a suitable partner whose political capability and sensibility could facilitate not only the transformation of their ideas into concrete plans, policies, and actions, but also the conversion of their social and cultural capital into political impact. Secondly, while personal relationships – those between Wu Peifu and his two strategists, among the colleagues of Peking University, and, in particular, between Bai Jianwu and Li Dazhao – were intrinsic to the collaboration, the Good Government movement was remarkably public-minded, being promoted within the May Fourth public space. The Endeavor and Chenbao provided an important forum where Wu and the intellectuals not only exchanged ideas among themselves but also intensely engaged public opinion. Their circular telegrams were addressed to each other as much as to their wider audience. As remembered by Cai Yuanpei’s confidential secretary, “Wu has always prioritized public opinion over his own subjective intentions.” In this case, to Wu Peifu, the Endeavor intellectuals were not his personal amanuenses but the spokespeople for the Good Government – they were the Good People who could both embody and channel the popular will.

The Breakdown: Wu’s Political Thoughts and the Ideological Landscape of the Good Government Movement

The Good People Cabinet, despite being a tangible testimony to the sincerity and depth of the engagement between Wu Peifu and the Endeavor intellectuals, soon proved to be the beginning

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50 Zhonghua minguo shishi rizhi 1912-1949, 829-843.


52 Wang Chongping xiansheng koushu lishi [The Oral Historical Accounts by Mr. Wang Chongping], interviewed by Wang Zhaojun, transcribed by Liu Fenghan, (Beijing: Jiuzhou chubanshe, 2012), 75.
of the end. Only one year and half after the launch of the Endeavor, Hu Shi lamented their failure: “Although the Good People Cabinet has worked diligently to materialize the Good Government and thereby brought about a new political atmosphere in Beijing, it was doomed to fail due to the factional divisions from within and sinister conspiracies of those from without who were unhappy about it.” Indeed, even before the first cabinet meeting was summoned, divisions had already surfaced within the Cabinet: On the one hand, Wu Peifu’s dominance over the Cabinet irritated the cabinet members supporting Cao Kun, the other mighty leader of the Zhili Clique. On the other hand, Xu Qian, one of the few cabinet members with close ties to Sun Yat-sen, still hesitated to take up his position due to his loyalty to Sun. In November 1922, only two months after the Cabinet had been formed, the Minister of Finance Luo Wengan – an Endeavor member – was falsely incriminated and imprisoned, subsequently resulting in the Cabinet’s dissolution. Wu Peifu tried to defend Luo, but his effort was not sustained due to the enormous pressure put on him by Cao Kun and Cao’s supporters who sought a quick demise of the Cabinet. The Endeavor Society was deeply dispirited. Protesting against Luo’s arrest, Cai Yuanpei resigned from his position as the president of Peking University. And Hu Shi, having condemned the “reactionary politics” in the past months, pronounced the split between the Endeavor Society and Wu Peifu. Starting from the 84th issue of the Endeavor (15 April 1923), the Endeavor Society retired from the political field and devoted their endeavors solely towards something they believed they could do better: intellectual emancipation.

This split might have been, as Hu said, doomed, but it was not simply the result of realpolitik as Hu seemed to suggest. Rather, it reflected the tenacious and inextricable ideological dilemmas overshadowing the collaboration. Above all, “Our Political Statement” and “Wu Peifu’s Plan for Unification,” despite proposing the same initial steps necessary to establish a legal and accountable government, did not promise the same end. While the Endeavor lent itself wholeheartedly to the cause of realizing national unification along federalist lines, Wu Peifu insisted that federalism was, in essence, the antithesis of national unification. Furthermore, they held different attitudes towards the Confucian tradition as a source of political legitimacy. While Wu Peifu made great efforts to marry Western constitutionalist principles with Confucianism, most members of the Endeavor Society frowned upon any attempt to refashion and endorse the Confucian moral codes.

In June 1922, after the Old Parliament had been restored, the collaboration entered the second stage – to make sure the new government had a plan. In his article “Politics and Political Plan,” Hu Shi urged Wu Peifu to make detailed plans and to follow them, step by step, towards realising compulsory education, military mobilization, and importantly, peaceful national

53 Hu Shi, “Yinianban de huigu” [Review of the Past One Year and a Half], Hu Shi Wencun 3 [Writings of Hu Shi Vol.3] (Beijing: Zhongyang bianyiju, 2004),141-149.
54 “Wang ge fabiao hou de xingshi” [The Situation after Wang Chonghui Cabinet Was Formed], Shenbao, 24 September 1922, 2.
56 Cai Yuanpei, Cai Yuanpei zishu [Cai Yuanpei’s Account of Himself], (Beijing: Zhongguo yanshi chubanshe, 2004), 179-180.
57 Hu, “Yinianban de huigu,” 141-149.
58 Grieder, Hu Shih and the Chinese Renaissance, 195.
59 Hu Shi riji quanbian 3, 758.
unification.\textsuperscript{60} Wu Peifu’s response was more than a perfunctory promise. On 16 June, \textit{Shenbao} published Wu’s detailed plan for military demobilization, which categorized redundant military personnel into five groups, proposed different arrangements for demobilized personnel, and delineated three stages to be finished in two years.\textsuperscript{61} In August, Wu further published his “three expectations” for the newly resumed Parliament. Having exhorted the members of the Parliament to become “China’s Hamilton and Franklin,” he outlined in detailed terms what needed to be done to attain, first, educational and labour legislation, second, the promulgation of the Constitution, and third, the balance of power between central and local levels.\textsuperscript{62}

But Hu Shi was far from being satisfied, as an irreconcilable discord between Wu Peifu and himself began to surface. To Hu and most \textit{Endeavor} peers, the Tiantan Constitution Draft – the very Constitution that Wu hoped to promulgate through the resumed Parliament – would not grant the province any legislative power. Therefore, they expected that the North-South Peace Assembly would be summoned in a federal manner to allow provincial representatives to discuss the promulgation of a federal constitution.\textsuperscript{63} China’s “Hamilton and Franklin,” in their opinion, should deliberate over the question of how balanced forms of state power could be established to ensure provincial autonomy.\textsuperscript{64} However, to Wu Peifu, China was only one step away from realizing peaceful unification now that the Old Parliament had been restored – as soon as the southern provinces recognize the authority of the Beiyang Government and the resumed Parliament, the Parliament would be able to proceed with the promulgation of the Tiantan Constitution, and hence bring about a strong, united Chinese republic.\textsuperscript{65} The job of “China’s Hamilton and Franklin,” to Wu, was to make sure that “the state centralize power to itself and, in the meantime, distribute power among the people” (集權在國, 分權在民 Jiquan zai guo, fenquan zai min).\textsuperscript{66} Having realized what Wu Peifu meant by “the balance of power between central and local levels” had little to do with provincial autonomy, Hu Shi did not hesitate to express his disagreement as well as disappointment with Wu: “If you are not willing to promote provincial constitutions and elections, how can you distribute power among the people? […] If the people are not allowed to participate in self-governance today, how will they practice democracy at all levels tomorrow?”\textsuperscript{67}

Clearly, Hu Shi’s federalist ideas were in line with his liberal stance concerning the limitation upon state powers and the cultivation of democratic consciousness – both of which would be, to Hu, realized through provincial self-governance based on a provincial constitution and elections. Fearing that Wu Peifu’s intention was to delay democracy, Hu reminded Wu that democracy should be a way of life, an experiment, and a belief: “The people would only enjoy democracy by practising it day by day, albeit with frustrations, anxieties, and failures.”\textsuperscript{68}

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{60} Hu Shi, “Zhengzhi yu jihua” [Politics and Political Plans], \textit{Hu Shi Wencun} 3, 168-171.
\item \textsuperscript{61} “Wu Peifu feidu caibing zhi jihua” [Wu Peifu’s Plan for Abolition of Military Governance and Demobilization of Army], \textit{Shenbao}, 16 June 1922, 2.
\item \textsuperscript{62} “Wu Peifu duiyu guohui tichu de sandian xiwang” [Wu Peifu’s Three Main Expectations of the Parliament], \textit{Shenbao}, 5 August 1922, 2.
\item \textsuperscript{63} Gao Yihan, “Shengzhi de taolun” [Discussions on Provincial Autonomy], \textit{The Endeavor}, Issue 6, 11 June (1922): 3.
\item \textsuperscript{64} Hu Shi, “Zhe yizhou” [This Week], 6-12 August 1922, in \textit{Hu Shi Wencun} 3, 203-206.
\item \textsuperscript{65} “Nanbei tongyi zhi anjiao – liansheng zizhi wenti” [The Obstacle of the Unification between the North and the South – the Issue of Federal Self-governance], \textit{Shenbao}, 5 July 1922, 3.
\item \textsuperscript{66} Hu, “Zhe yizhou,” 6-12 August 1922, 203-206.
\item \textsuperscript{67} Ibid., 204.
\item \textsuperscript{68} Ibid., 205.
\end{itemize}
However, contrary to what Hu might have feared, Wu, as a persistent proponent of the National Citizen’s Assembly, did not doubt the people’s right to and capability of discussing and deciding national affairs. In his essay elaborating on the National Citizen’s Assembly, he clearly and passionately advocated popular political participation:

There is no need to be overconcerned about ordinary people’s capabilities just because they do not possess rich legal knowledge or demonstrate sophisticated understanding of politics. All they need to do is to elect several representatives [into the Assembly] from local public associations – is it really that difficult? […] Although these representatives might not fully represent the will of the people, they would constitute a fair system that prevents the rich from controlling the government and the elite from dominating the Parliament.69

Despite being vague on the relationships between the government, the National Citizen’s Assembly, and the Parliament, Wu Peifu was clearly not opposed to democratic principles. What concerned him was not granting political rights to the people but allocating political autonomy to the provinces. In fact, Wu never concealed his disapproval of self-governance at the provincial level. Between 1921 and 1922, he and Chen Jiongming were getting close to forming an entente against Sun Yat-sen’s Northern Expedition.70 But when Chen listed “establishing a federal government and enhancing provincial autonomy” as the prerequisite for his collaboration with Wu, Wu made “the South’s withdrawal of the claim to provincial independence” his precondition to negotiation.71 A lengthy article in Shenbao thus concluded that the biggest obstacle thwarting national unification in 1922 was nothing but the sharpening discord over the issue of provincial self-governance.72

Inundated with letters and telegrams attempting to persuade him to convert to federalism, Wu Peifu illustrated what he saw as the problem of provincial self-governance:

[…] What has been the achievement of provincial self-governance in Hunan? In terms of demobilization, troops are still as many as forests; in terms of finance, nothing is left in the exchequer; and in terms of people’s well-being, refugees and migrants have crowded the entire province. […] While current experiments of provincial self-governance are far from satisfactory, the consequences of having a federal government would be even more alarming. The United States adopted a federal system to unite previously separate and independent states, but our “making of a Chinese federation” is to divide up a country into separate regional units. The only thing we can achieve is to transform our 22 provinces into 22 disunited states.73

70 Chen Dingyan, Chen Jingcun nianpu [The Chronicle of Chen Jingcun (Chen Jiongming)] (Taipei: Li Ao chubanshe, 1995), 294.
71 “Biaomian feichang chenji zhi shiju” [The Seemingly Stagnant Situation], Chenbao, 31 March 1922, 2.
Wu’s polemic against Hunan’s self-governance and his equation of federalism with separatism deeply frustrated the Endeavor intellectuals. Hu Shi, having heard Wu’s argument that federalists were “forcing federalism upon China at the expense of national unity while making a risky experiment when the country is surrounded by imperialist powers,” lamented Wu’s immature political thoughts: “I admire his extraordinary military talents, but his political ideas are still quite simple and naïve.” Wang Chonghui, by celebrating Hunan’s efforts to promulgate a provincial constitution under the auspices of the Hunanese strongman Zhao Hengti (趙恒惕), sent a strong message to Wu that although the Chinese federalist movement was still in its preliminary stages, it was important to give it time to grow rather than strangling it at birth in the name of national unification.

And Zhao Hengti, in his 5,000-word long circular telegram, made an assiduous, if not desperate, attempt to convince Wu Peifu that first, a federal system would never contradict national unification; second, provincial self-governance would suit China’s current conditions, and third, the provincial legislative assemblies and the newly resumed Parliament in Beijing would only complement one another. Believing that there was no fundamental contradiction between the federalist ideas and Wu’s political plan, Zhao forged a new term “federalized unitary state” (聯邦化的單一國 Lianbanghua de danyiguo) to reconcile the two. Zhao Hengti’s effort resonated with many intellectuals who advocated federalism, such as Li Jiannong (李劍農), the chief draftsman of the Hunan Provincial Constitution. In his article “The Question of Chinese National Unification” published in the Endeavor, Li, like Zhao, recognized the legitimacy of the newly resumed Parliament and thus Wu’s contribution to peaceful national unification. While urging the formation of a federal system, Li did not prioritize the interest of the province over that of the state and, presumably as a subtle gesture to please Wu, emphasized the role of the Parliament in mediating between the central and provincial power.

But their efforts, along with Zhao Hengti’s 5000-word circular telegram, were in vain. On 31 August 1922, Wu Peifu circulated an official telegram to pronounce his rejection of federalist ideas. It would be convenient to believe that Wu’s aversion to provincial autonomy was due to a warlord’s tendency to possess and centralize power – as Odoric Wou puts it, “Wu’s fight against the federal idea is an example of how practical politics and personal interest could negate a warlord’s acceptance of certain aspects of Western values.” However, the rest of this article will argue that, what negated Wu’s acceptance of federalism was not simply his personal power base, but more importantly the sophisticated ideological underpinnings of his state-building plan.

74 Hu, “Zhe yizhou,” 6-12 August 1922, 203.
75 “Wang Chonghui zancheng Zhao shengzhang dongdian” [Wang Chonghui Echoed Governor Zhao’s Telegram], Hunan Dagongbao (湖南大公報), 10 July 1922, 6.
76 “Zhao Hengti yu Cao Wu shangyi guoshi dian” [Zhao Hengti’s Telegram to Cao Kun and Wu Peifu Discussing National Affairs], Shenbao, 4 August 1922, 2; “Zhao Hengti yu Cao Wu shangyi guoshi dian, xu” [Zhao Hengti’s Telegram to Cao Kun and Wu Peifu Discussing National Affairs, Continued] Shenbao, 5 August 1922, 2.
78 “Wu Peifu tongdian fandui liansheng zizhi” [Wu Peifu Circulated Telegram to Reject Federal Self-governance], Chenbao, 31 August 1922, 2.
79 Wou, Militarism in Modern China, 43-44.
Wu Peifu received a traditional Confucian education and obtained the Xiucai Degree (秀才) at the age of 22. Although he later enrolled in the Baoding Military Academy and henceforth launched a professional career in the Beiyang Army, he never relaxed his efforts to become a Confucian gentleman and an “intellectual general” (儒将 Rujiang). 80 He opposed opium smoking, gambling, and prostitution, while being a lover of poetry, calligraphy, and Confucian and Daoist classics. 81 In his talks to students, military groups, and foreign visitors, he repeatedly emphasized Confucian ethics as the foundation for Chinese civilization and state-building, and illustrated the compatibility between Western political principles and indigenous ideals. 82 However, his commitment to Confucian tenets was not an unreflective nostalgia for China’s Confucian past, nor was it a kind of Burkean affirmation of the existing socio-political order. Instead of opposing socio-political changes, Wu sought to bridge the Western constitutional rule and the Confucian model of benevolent rule, and to strike a balance between the application of Western institutions and the Confucian practice of self-cultivation and self-restraint: “Science and the rule of law are of course crucial to our state-building, but if we can in the meantime preserve the Confucian moral decorum, the Chinese state will be unparalleled in the world.” 83 On the one hand, he relentlessly defended the legitimacy of the Old Parliament, the Constitution, and the to-be-summoned National Citizen’s Assembly, making the protection of the Chinese Republic his highest mission. On the other hand, he refused to abandon the Confucian virtues. Loyalty, filial piety, chastity, and righteousness – the essence of Confucian morality – were deemed by him the key to realizing a true Chinese Republic. 84

Wu’s faith in Confucianism further made him an unwavering believer of the consistency, integrity, and superiority of the Chinese civilization and a staunch supporter of unitary nation-state. He argued that the Chinese nation has adhered to a moral order instead of the material order that underpinned contemporary Western society, and this moral order made the Chinese civilization transcendent: “Despite the vicissitudes of fortune that have inflicted chaos, divisions, and occupations on some dynasties, the Chinese civilization remained intact and the moral integrity of Chinese people never withered.” 85 Upholding the Confucian cultural notion of “unified roads for cart, unified letters for writing, and unified virtue for behaviour” (車同軌 書同文 行同倫 Che tong gui, shu tong wen, xing tong lun), he was keen to bring about national

80 Wu Peifu quanzhuan [The Complete Biography of Wu Peifu], originally published by Shijie shuju chubanshe in 1923, source derived from Minguo wenxian leibian 928 [The Categorized Collection of Historical Documents of the Republican Era Vol.928], edited by the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences (Beijing: Guojia tushuguan chubanshe, 2015), 212-213.
81 Li Junling, “Wu Peifu yu chuantong wenhua” [Wu Peifu and Traditional Culture], in Wu Peifu yanjiu wenji 16, 257.
82 “Shiliu nian qiu zai Sichuan Fengjie xian dibashi Jiangwu xuexiao biye xuncii” [Talk at the Graduation Ceremony of the Jiangwu School of the Eighth Division, in Fengjie County, Sichuan Province], in Tang Xitong ed., Wu Peifu wencun [The Collected Works of Wu Peifu], (Changchun: Jilin wenshi chubanshe, 2004), 112-113.
83 Wu Peifu, “Junchen yilun de jieshi” [Elaboration on Political Ethics], in Zhao Hengti ed., Wu Peifu xiansheng ji [The Collected Works of Mr. Wu Peifu], (Taipei: Wenhai chubanshe, 1971), 315; “Sichuan Guang’an xian zhongxuexiao huanyinghui yanjiangci” [The Speech at the Welcome Event of the Middle School of Guang’an Town, Sichuan Province], in Wu Peifu xiansheng ji, 142.
84 Wu, “Junchen yilun de jieshi,” 315.
85 Wu Peifu, “Zhongguo tongyi lun” [Thoughts on National Unification], in Wu Peifu xiansheng ji, 320.
unification along with moral integrity and cultural integration in the Chinese Republic. While Wu Peifu’s personal moral integrity appealed to the Endeavor intellectuals, the traditional elements in his thoughts did not. Cai Yuanpei, Hu Shi, and Li Dazhao, albeit holding different ideas regarding the ways in which a cultural revolution should be attained in China, were unanimous in believing the obsolescence of the Confucian morality. Following Li Dazhao’s critique of “old morality” in New Tide, Hu Shi, in the Endeavor, displayed his antipathy to Confucian ethics. In 1922, Hu was astonished to learn that the Beiyang government granted a one-month leave to a Zhili-Clique military man so that he could return home to mourn the death of his father – in line with the Confucian tradition of filial piety.

Though not explicitly targeting Wu Peifu, Hu made it clear that “loyalty, filial piety, chastity, and righteousness” were not to the taste of the Endeavor Society. Furthermore, most members of the Society were critical of the notion of the 5000-year-long spread of Chinese cultural heritage and the egotistic assumption that the Chinese civilization was eternal, supreme, and predestined to triumph. To them, a Chinese federation was viable not only because federalism had facilitated modern state-building processes in Europe and America, but more importantly because the Chinese Republic had inherited from the late Qing a weak, divided country with multiple ethnicities, diverse cultures and religions, and different languages – rather than integrity and commonality, the Chinese civilization featured strong regional distinctiveness.

While it is evident that the split between Wu Peifu and the Endeavor Society was an ideological one, it would be too simplistic to argue that it was caused by the schism between a conservative, centralist warlord and the radical Endeavor Society which supported federalism. Above all, Wu’s attempt to reconcile Western political principles and the Confucian moral decorum was consistent with the persisting intellectual effort since the late Qing period at mediating between the Western and the Chinese for building a modern state. Calling this intellectual trend “modern conservatism,” Edmund Fung reminds us that the relationship between the May Fourth conservatives and the iconoclasts was not antithetical but dialectical. While the Endeavor Society was, to a great extent, situated on the radical side of the cultural spectrum, not every member of the Society shared Hu Shi’s aggressive attitude towards the Confucian tradition. Liang Shuming, the lecturer of Indian philosophy at Peking University and an advocate of the

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86 Wu Peifu, “Datong sixediang shuo” [Thoughts on Grand Commonality], in Wu Peifu xiansheng ji, 311.
87 Li Dazhao, “Yu Hu Shi tan Wu Peifu” [Talking about Wu Peifu with Hu Shi], 10 June 1922, in Li Dazhao Quanji 4 [Collected Writings of Li Dazhao Vol. 4] (Beijing: Renmin chubanshe, 2006), 97.
Good Government, like Wu, believed that Westerners should turn to China for moral institutions and inner life which would serve as an antidote to the crisis in materialism, while Chinese should reinvigorate Confucianism to be a universal philosophy and culture.\textsuperscript{92} Even among those cultural radicals, supporting federalism did not mean that they demanded a break with China’s past or an overhaul of Chinese cultural and political tradition. While Hu Shi refrained himself from using tradition as a source of ideological and political legitimacy, his mentor John Dewey made it clear that a federal system was suitable for China precisely because “China rested upon a network of local and voluntary associations cemented by customs.”\textsuperscript{93} And Chen Jiongming, albeit modelling a Chinese federation against the American template, argued that federalism in China must evolve from rural communities and their tradition of self-rule and self-sufficiency.\textsuperscript{94} Secondly, not every Endeavor intellectual understood federalism as the opposite of centralism. Li Dazhao, the linchpin of the collaboration and, in the meantime, the founding leader of the CCP, hoped to balance the prevailing currents of constitutionalism, federalism, socialism, and internationalism through the making of the Good Government. On the one hand, he was convinced that federalism, allowing for equilibriums between the local, national, and international, as well as between the individual and collective, would lead human beings towards not only national unification but also global commonality.\textsuperscript{95} On the other hand, he echoed Wu Peifu’s principle of Jiquann zaiguo, arguing that only a strong, united central government could end warlordism and bring about the well-being of the people.\textsuperscript{96}

**Conclusion:**

Between May 1922 when the Endeavor Society pronounced their plan for Good Government and November when the Good People Cabinet resigned, Wu Peifu and the Endeavor Society committed themselves to a six-month period of intensive intellectual exchange and political engagement. During these six months, they maintained consistent communication through letters, telegrams, and visits, and synchronized their actions in initiating the Good Government. The Endeavor intellectuals shared with Wu many fundamental constitutionalist principles: restoration of the Parliament, formation of a national assembly, and promulgation of a constitution, while both parties entered upon a bit-by-bit reform – through making concrete plans and policies – to realize military demobilization and peaceful national unification. Although they failed to accomplish the second stage of their collaboration to establish a government “with a plan” due to their divergent attitudes towards federalism, they had, nonetheless, accomplished a solid first step together: The Old Parliament was restored; the two illegitimate presidents were removed; and the Good People Cabinet was established. Their collaboration rested on an expansive personal network dating back to the 1910s. The close friendship maintained between Bai Jianwu and Li Dazhao provided a reliable channel of communication between Bai’s boss Wu Peifu and Li’s colleagues at Peking University. Since

\textsuperscript{92} Ibid., 75.
\textsuperscript{94} Guo, “Not Just a Man of Guns,” 171.
\textsuperscript{96} Li Dazhao, “Jiu Sun Wu liangshi tongyi Zhongguo de fangce yu Beijing zhoubao jizhe de tánhua” [Conversation with a Beijing Weekly Journalist Regarding the Plans of Sun Yat-sen and Wu Peifu for National Unification], 17 September 1922, in *Li Dazhao Quanji* 4, 115.
1920, communication between Luoyang and Beijing became frequent; conversations among friends crystallized into political consensus for promoting the Good Government and into their shared action of removing the illegitimate presidents. Scholars have illustrated how personal networks – native ties, teacher-student bonds, and alumni networks – played a crucial role in stimulating intellectual and political movements in the May Fourth era; clearly, the Good Government movement offers another example. But different from the other intellectual-led movements during this period, the Good Government movement was marked by a round of intensive negotiations and networking between the most eminent intellectuals of the time and the de-facto leader of China proper. And importantly, such networking unfolded in an equal, reciprocal manner, and within the May Fourth public space. Through such networking, the Endeavor intellectuals transformed their intellectualism and sociality into political impact, navigating both the ideology and practice of the Good Government. While Wu Peifu, by engaging the intellectuals and by making such engagement known to the public, demonstrated that he was not only a “revolutionary general” and “intellectual general” – but also a promising, modern leader of the Republic. Arguably it was Wu’s augmenting cultural capital and ideological-political authority, rather than his military capability, that changed the game of warlord rule and therefore frightened Cao Kun, who, instead of launching a military coup against Wu, orchestrated conspiracies to destroy the reputation of the Good People and Wu.

Although the split between Wu Peifu and the Endeavor Society was foreshadowed by their discord over federalism, this discord does not suggest a strictly dichotomous ideological division between a warlord and the intellectuals in Beijing. To fully understand Wu’s thoughts, we need to look more closely at the ideological landscape of the Good Government movement. While most Endeavor intellectuals did not believe that traditional Chinese culture, Confucianism in particular, would be of much help to the Good Government, Liang Shuming, like Wu, emphasized the essence of Confucianism – the intuitive devotion to righteousness and to humanistic principles – as an indispensable complement to the Western principles and institutions adopted. And while Hu Shi advocated federalism due to his profound faith in liberty, democracy and individuality – all of which were to be protected from a centralist state and cultivated through self-governance – as the only cure for China’s problems, Li Dazhao’s federalist ideas underlined a balance between the individual and collective, and between the local, national, and international, as the key to reconciling differences and realizing the grand commonality (大同 Datong). Like Wu, Li favoured integration over demarcation, unity over autonomy, and commonality over distinctiveness. It is thus no surprise that in late 1922, he attempted to enlarge the collaboration network to include Sun Yat-sen and the nascent CCP, and thereby to expedite national unification – in a centralist fashion. In this regard, Wu Peifu’s political thoughts, instead of being simply a personal parody of Confucianism or an

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99 Wou, Militarism in Modern China, 205-206; Geng, “Wu Peifu yu Su’e ji Beijing zhishijie,” 46-47.
antithesis of the *Endeavor* ethos, formed an integral part of the ideological commitment towards the Good Government between 1920 and 1922, and reflected the complex ideological interplay between *conservatism* and *radicalism*, as well as between *federalism* and *centralism* in this movement.