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CYBERNATIONALISM AND CYBERACTIVISM
IN CHINA

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Abstract

Nationalism in the Internet age is increasingly becoming an essential factor influencing agenda-setting within Chinese society, as well as China's relations with foreign countries, especially the West. For China, a better understanding of the universal theoretical structure and behavioral patterns of nationalism would facilitate the overall social articulation of this trend and enhance its positive role in social agenda setting. On the other hand, a study of Chinese cybernationalism based on a Chinese perspective in western academia is an attempt at transculturation. From the viewpoint of the current rather urgent international relations and geopolitics, such an attempt would help to enhance China's compatibility with the current western-dominated world order, reduce misinformation between China and other countries, and lay the cultural and ideological groundwork for various other international collaborations. Considering the current state of Chinese nationalism research and the mass participatory nature of cybernationalism, this dissertation focuses on cybernationalism in the following three parts.

The first is a study of the historical origins of Chinese cybernationalism. This section includes both an exploration of the social consensus in ancient China and a survey of the influence of nationalism in modern Chinese history. The historical origins study not only shows us the chronological sequence of experiencing the development and evolution of both proto-nationalism and nationalism in China, but also reveals a decisive impetus for the current claims and behaviors of cybernationalism.

The second part deals with the process of formation and rise of cybernationalism since the 21st century. The important background for the move from nationalism to cybernationalism is the informatization process of Chinese society. After we have completed the study of the basic situation of Chinese Internet society, especially the study of social media as a public space, we can link the Internet with nationalism and examine the new development of nationalism in the era of mass participation. The ultimate goal is to connect the proto-nationalism, nationalism, cybernationalism, and furtherly construct an understanding of cybernationalism that is consistent with both the universal principles of nationalism and the Chinese context.

Finally, we validate the results derived from the previous study through social reality, i.e., by studying the cyberactivism practices of cybernationalism to judge its general sufficiency as well as validity. We will conduct several natural language processing case studies based on big data to reproduce the behavioral logic and actual impact of cyberactivism in the closest possible way to the Internet reality while avoiding the unilateral argumentation and under-representation flaws of traditional case studies.

UNESCO nomenclature for fields of science and technology:

6307.07: Technology and Social Change.

5901.05: Problems of International Relations.

Resumen

El nacionalismo en la era de Internet se está convirtiendo cada vez más en un factor esencial que influye en la agenda-setting de la sociedad china, así como en las relaciones de China con los países extranjeros, especialmente con Occidente. Para China, una mejor comprensión de la estructura teórica universal y de los patrones de comportamiento del nacionalismo facilitaría la articulación social general de esta tendencia y potenciaría su papel positivo en la agenda-setting social. Por otra parte, un estudio del cibernacionalismo chino basado en una perspectiva china en el mundo académico occidental es un intento de transculturación. Desde el punto de vista de las relaciones internacionales y la geopolítica actuales, que son bastante urgentes, este intento ayudaría a mejorar la compatibilidad de China con el actual orden mundial dominado por Occidente, a reducir la desinformación entre China y otros países y a sentar las bases culturales e ideológicas para otras colaboraciones internacionales. Teniendo en cuenta el estado actual de la investigación sobre el nacionalismo chino y la naturaleza participativa de las masas del cibernacionalismo, esta disertación se centra en el cibernacionalismo en las tres partes siguientes.

El primero es un estudio de los orígenes históricos del cibernacionalismo chino. Esta sección incluye tanto una exploración del consenso social en la antigua China como un estudio de la influencia del nacionalismo en la historia china moderna. El estudio de los orígenes históricos no sólo nos muestra la secuencia cronológica de la experiencia del desarrollo y la evolución tanto del proto-nacionalismo como del nacionalismo en China, sino que también revela un impulso decisivo para las reivindicaciones y comportamientos actuales del cibernacionalismo.

La segunda parte trata del proceso de formación y ascenso del cibernacionalismo desde el siglo XXI. El importante antecedente del paso del nacionalismo al cibernacionalismo es el proceso de informatización de la sociedad china. Una vez completado el estudio de la situación básica de la sociedad china de Internet, especialmente el estudio de los medios sociales como espacio público, podemos vincular Internet con el nacionalismo y examinar el nuevo desarrollo del nacionalismo en la era de la participación de masas. El objetivo final es conectar el proto-nacionalismo, el nacionalismo y el cibernacionalismo, y seguir construyendo una comprensión del cibernacionalismo que sea coherente tanto con los principios universales del nacionalismo como con el contexto chino.

Por último, validamos los resultados derivados del estudio anterior a través de la realidad social, es decir, estudiando las prácticas de ciberactivismo del cibernacionalismo para juzgar su suficiencia general así como su validez. Llevaremos a cabo varios estudios de caso de natural language processing basados en big data para reproducir la lógica de comportamiento y el impacto real del ciberactivismo de la manera más cercana posible a la realidad de Internet, evitando al mismo tiempo los defectos de argumentación unilateral y de infrarrepresentación de los estudios de caso tradicionales.

Nomenclatura Internacional de la Unesco para los campos de Ciencia y Tecnología:

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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. Nationalism's rising in digitalizing Chinese society

This dissertation is inspired both by the author's personal experience and the reality of a relevant research gap. The dissertation's author was born in 1991. Even the computer was something unimaginable for most Chinese citizens in that era, not to mention the Internet. Also, China's economy was not as prosperous as in the second decade of this century. The GDP per capita was less than 350 dollars¹, while employment in agriculture occupied almost 60%² of the total labor force. In short words, China was a poor and agricultural country in 1991. In 2008, the author began his study abroad, while in China, the GDP per capita had reached 3468 dollars¹, and 300 million people had gained access to the Internet (CNNIC³, 2019, p. 19). Ten years later, these two numbers have jumped to 9770 dollars¹ and 828 million. In the second decade of the 21st century, China is richer and much more digital than three decades before. However, there is still room for further development. 26.56%² people are working in agriculture, and almost 600 million people have never had any Internet experience. This is why China is an industrializing/digitalizing society but not an industrialized/digitalized one.

From the data mentioned before, we can easily conclude that in China, the process of industrialization and the process of digitalization are highly synchronized. This is a particular characteristic of today's Chinese society because almost every developed country began its digitalization as an industrialized society, which means most social challenges brought by industrialization were already solved before the Internet came in. However, in China, society has to face challenges from both industrialization and digitalization at the same time.

The industrialization has many effects on society, and one of the most discussed is the rise of nationalism. Many influential investigators have made beneficial progress in understanding the relationship between these two concepts. First, according to Ernest Gellner (1983), nationalism results from the expansion of a common "high culture" that the standardized state educational institution disseminates, and this high culture provides a mobile and educated labor force for industrialization. That is to say, industrialization demands nationalism, and the expansion of the high culture/nationalism makes industrialization possible.

Second, industrialization unprecedentedly empowered the governments and increased their violence and surveillance ability, both inside and outside the boundary (Giddens, 1985), which intensified the conflict

¹ World Bank, World Development Indicators. (2019). *GDP per capita (current US\$)* [Data file]. Retrieved from <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/NY.GDP.PCAP.CD?locations=CN>, retrieved on March 9 of 2020

² World Bank, World Development Indicators. (2019). *Employment in Agriculture (modeled ILO estimate)* [Data file]. Retrieved from <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SL.AGR.EMPL.ZS>, retrieved on July 19 of 2019

³ CNNIC: China Internet Network Information Center

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among political entities. To answer the question of “reason of loyalty” for its own people, the government has to develop a new mobilization tool that consolidates the link between the society, the people, and the government itself (Hobsbawm, 2012), so nationalism is an inevitable companion of the sovereignty (Mann, 1995).

Third, during industrialization, the traditional sense of belonging is challenged and partly destroyed. People are more independent from the agricultural style of a big family, but the might of monarchy and religion is questioned as the ordinary individual is more capable than before. As a result, this vacuum of sense of belonging is fulfilled by nationalism (Anderson, 2006).

Therefore, even excluding any other factors, only considering that China is firmly pushing forward its industrialization process, the rise of nationalism in Chinese society seems reasonable, especially among those who have experienced and are experiencing this dramatic industrialization. However, industrialization is not the only social change the Chinese are experiencing. Digitalization also has been deeply rooted in Chinese society since the 1990s.

Digitalization, or the expansion of the Internet, the same as industrialization, has multiple effects on society, including “the spread of technological innovations, word-of-mouth effects in marketing, the spread of news and opinion, collective problem-solving, and sampling methods for hidden populations” (Liben-Nowell & Kleinberg, 2008, p. 4633). Among these effects, due to China’s political reality before the digitalization and the purpose of the dissertation, we should pay particular attention to the spread of news and opinion.

There are two principal characteristics in disseminating information over the Internet, personalization and decentralization (Kermarrec, 2013; Deng & Valle de Frutos, 2019 August). The Internet is like a supermarket of information at self-service. The customers can choose what to buy and what not to; on the other side, the traditional supplier can no longer monopolize this market, which means the topside of the traditional information pyramid – the “socioeconomic elites and mass media” (Deutsch 1968, pp. 147-159, as cited in Wessels, 1992, p. 4) – lost their informational dominance over the vast majority population.

Chinese news media were heavily influenced or even directly controlled by the government, and human-to-human communication is weakened because of the enormous amount of population and colossal territory. Since the digitalization began, the outdated and boring official narrative – including the official speaking on nationalism – has become unpopular and has been challenged among the internauts. As Chinese researchers already found: “The government...cautiously tries to incorporate such mass nationalism – including the cybernationalism – into the official value system; however, because the cybernationalism from grassroots is born as a challenger of the status quo, the contest between the official narrative and the cybernationalism has naturally emerged.” (Zhou & Miao, 2016, p.135)

Nevertheless, cybernationalism is tightly bound together with China’s official narrative, so the mentioned contest is de facto a mixing of confrontation and cooperation. In many cases, cybernationalists

would cooperate with the government or hold a similar if not more aggressive stand. For instance, the conflict between China and the U.S during the late 1990s and early 2000s; the incidents around the 2008 Olympic Games; the reeducation camp in Xinjiang; In other cases, like the privileges of minorities or expatriates in China, cybernationalists would show a strong intention in confronting the government's "Appeasement." In fact, all mentioned cases, both cooperations, and confrontations, are not rumors or heard of but are personally experienced by the dissertation's author and will be investigated throughout this work.

Additionally, this trend of nationalism over the Internet is underestimated or misinterpreted by Western researchers, and this error is deeply rooted in their traditional understanding of nationalism and Chinese nationalism, as they continuously insist that "nationalism appeared only with the emergence of the state-nation in Europe" (Pye, 1993, p. 109). Based on this credo, Chinese nationalism emerged only after the arrival of foreign hegemonies and the Chinese first attempt at industrialization, which, as we will discuss later, has undermined the broader and more profound comprehension of Chinese nationalism's real potential impact.

Another trend we have encountered in the Western academy is the overemphasis on the Communist Party of China – the CPC's influence. "(CPC) was articulating patriotism as the main value system to delimit the legitimate boundaries of dissent" and "has placed nationalism at the center of its claim to maintain a monopoly on political power ever since the days of Mao Zedong's leadership" (Hughes, 2006, p. 6). Of course, as the worldly communism fever cooled down after the dissolution of the USSR, CPC needed something new to survive the "Crisis of Confidence" and fulfill the ideological void.

At last, a balance between the universalism of western theories and Chinese exceptionalism is what we need. Most influential researchers of nationalism are from Europe or North America. Compared with China, the difference between Europe and North America is much limited and acceptable for the direct transplant of nationalistic theories. Many similarities can be found in Spain and French nationalism, but the existent western experience of nationalism may reach a dead-end in the Chinese context. Some researchers try everything to squeeze Chinese nationalism into the western pattern, as professor Pye did, while some other researchers labeled Chinese nationalism as heresy. Professor Greenfeld from the U.S. stated: "Neither freedom, nor—more importantly—equality, are of great value in China, where fraternity is possible in their absence, and dignity in its nationalism does not depend on the presumption that 'all men are created equal'" (Greenfeld, 2018, p. 156).

On the other hand, Chinese society is made up of humans, and thus China is not inherently different from other nations, which means Chinese exceptionalism is not better than universalism. While investigating Chinese nationalism and related Chinese subjects, those essential norms and instructive theories from other countries are still applicable. Another reason for the necessity of western theories is that the Chinese academy did not develop an independent nationalism narrative. Some Chinese researchers follow the narrative from the western academy: "the CPC leaders began to wrap themselves in the banner of nationalism which, they found, remained the one bedrock of political belief shared by most Chinese people despite the rapid decay of

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Communist official ideology” (Zhao Suisheng, 1998, p. 289). Some others just repeat the official Stalinist style definition that the nation is a community that shares a common language, a common living space, a common economy, and a common psychological structure, and focus more on defending CPC’s current nationalistic political practices such as upholding the equality of each ethnic group (Zi, 2013, p. 57; Tang Jianbing, 2012, p. 41; Gao, 2013, pp. 80-81).

In the second decade of the 21st century, globalization has achieved an unprecedented level. As the second-biggest economy in the world, Chinese people and society are far more tightly connected with the world than any before. The bilateral understanding between China and other countries is essential for further development, cooperation, and welfare of all humankind. As works are being done in numerous aspects, through this investigation inspired by personal interests and research gaps, by combining the history and the present, from traditional classics to virtual society, from individual to collective, the author tries to offer a Chinese perspective on cybernationalism and its cyberactivism.

1.2. Conceptual framework

Our primary investigation object is Chinese nationalism, and certainly, we will lift the Chinese context to embed it into the international nationalism theory structure during the research. However, a difference may occur when the cultural background lies in the middle of the concepts’ translations. Even though this difference might be too small to be noticed, it could result in significant misleading information undermining our neutral and objective purpose of presenting the true Chinese cybernationalism. Also, the following concepts, Minzu, China Nation, and Han nationalism that were originally generated in Chinese society, should be elaborated on before their usage during the investigation.

1.2.1. Minzu

Our investigation has two essential concepts: “Nation” and “Ethnic Group.” Their relationship is still being argued in the western academy. Many occidental researchers follow the modernist paradigm of nationalism and play down the role of ethnicity in a nation’s formation, while others strongly disagree with such an opinion (Hutchinson, 2000). Moreover, as no decisive definitions of both concepts have been widely accepted by the academy, it is hard to clarify the boundary of each concept and conclude the similarities and differences between them.

Generally speaking, researchers tend to paint the word nation with political color: “Nationalism is primarily a political principle, which holds that the political and the national unit should be congruent” (Gellner, 1983, p. 1); “(nation) is a social entity only insofar as it relates to a certain kind of modern territorial state the Nation-state, and it is pointless to discuss nation and nationality except insofar as both relate to it” (Hobsbawm, 2012, pp. 9-10); “(nation) is an imagined political community - and imagined as both inherently limited and sovereign” (Anderson, 2006, pp. 5-6); and as Anthony Smith said: “(the nation is) a named human community residing in a perceived homeland, and having common myths and a shared history, a distinct public culture, and common laws and customs for all members” (2001, p. 13).

Smith also has proposed a definition of *ethnie*, which is “a named human community connected to a homeland, possessing common myths of ancestry, shared memories, one or more elements of shared culture, and a measure of solidarity, at least among the elites” (Ibid, p. 13). On the other hand, although not perfect, the general understanding of the ethnic group focuses more on the cultural boundary. As Barth stated (but disagreed with), the ethnic group: is largely biologically self-perpetuating; shares fundamental cultural values, realized in overt unity in cultural forms; makes up a field of communication and interaction; has a membership that identifies itself and is identified by others, as constituting a category distinguishable from other categories of the same order (Barth, 1998, pp. 10-11).

During a practical investigation, we found that to define the concept of nation and ethnic group perfectly is unnecessary as it may lead to a reciprocating argument and submerging in the ocean of any tiny details. It is more amiable to establish a clear dividing line between these two concepts and leave their detailed definition for the next step. Summarizing all the above discussions, we propose that the standard to distinguish between nation and ethnic group is the level of one human community involved in political mobilization. A highly mobilized human community is a nation, and the insufficiently mobilized one is an ethnic group. Therefore, an ethnic group can be mobilized to convert into a nation, and the contrary situation might also happen. This standard looks good and clear, but it encounters some problems in the Chinese context.

Sociologically and anthropologically, the most accepted translation of “nation” in Chinese is 民族 (Minzu), which contains two Chinese characters, 民 (Min) stands for people, and 族 (zu) stands for family/clan. In English, the word nation can be interpreted as a political-sovereign term, and its political connotation is loud and clear; however, the Chinese word Minzu is more related to the cultural connotation, like the English word ethnic group. In fact, the Chinese translation of ethnic group is 族群 (Zuqun), 族 (Zu) for family/clan, and 群 (qun) for the group. Linguistically, the difference between the two Chinese words Minzu and Zuqun is too small to be noticed and could easily lead to misuse and confusion. One possible optimization is, through long-term differentiation and usage, the public and academy would eventually distinguish these two words and use them properly, but it requires persistent participation and voluntariness from all the society, which was not feasible in China.

The first large-scale usage of the word nation was in the late 19th century and early 20th century when Chinese republican revolutionaries tried to overthrow the dynasty ruled by the minority Manchu. Influenced by western theories and political reality in China, many intellectuals and revolutionary leaders had expressed their own understanding of the nation. Liang Qichao, the famous historian and philosopher, defined the term nation as an integration of all Chinese ethnicities, “integrating Han, Manchu, Mongol, Hui, Miao, and Tibetan so to form a big modern Minzu⁴” (1989, vol. 13, p. 76). Politician Wang Jingwei said: “The changing of Manchu-Han power structure is not only a political revolution but also a racial revolution.”

⁴ All Muslim were considered as member of the Hui ethnicity at then.

so the nation-state should be “dominated by our Minzu while absorbing others”(Luo, 1994, p. 70). The later first republican president of China, Sun Yat-sen, also stated that “In China, I think the ethnicity (Han) is the nation, I think the ethnicism (of Han) is the nationalism” (Sun, 2000, p. 2)

Obviously, Minzu used by Liang can be translated as the western perspective’s nation, and his idea is very similar to today’s civic nationalism. The reason for this ideology might originate from his early experience as a leader of the constitutionalists and deep link with the Manchu royal family, but those revolutionary leaders were more fascinated with ethnic nationalism. When Wang used Minzu, he was clearly referring to ethnicity but not nation, and Sun tried to minimize the existence of any other ethnicities in his republic. Due to the minority (Manchu) domination, these later de facto leaders of China could not understand or subconsciously denied the difference between the nation and the ethnic group, so the vast majority of the Chinese population, the ethnicity Han, could assimilate all other minorities to become a modern nation as what western theories had described. As a result, during the rule of the Republic of China (ROC) that was founded by Sun, no significant anthropological research on the differentiation between nation and ethnic group had been made, the broad and inaccurate concept of “Five Ethnicities’ Republic” (五族共和) was waved as the flag while many other ethnic groups – according to later experience, they did exist – were ignored. During this period, Minzu was understood as an ethnic group.

After CPC took power in 1949, they launched a huge campaign to identify Minzu in China. Anthropologically, this campaign has achieved a lot of “first” in Chinese history, but the confusion between nation and ethnic groups persisted. At first, those 56 Minzu identified by Chinese researchers were officially translated as 56 nations or 56 nationalities. An example of this translation is the South-Central University for Nationalities (中南民族大学), which was founded in 1951⁵. This translation implied high political participation for those minorities, and the concept of the ethnic group seemed to be abandoned. However, after China reopened its gate to the world and the collapse of the USSR, the translation of Minzu became a sensitive topic among Chinese researchers, and the reuse of ethnic groups as a result of the reconnection with the western academy further complicated the already chaotic situation.

In 1998, a prestigious anthropology Ruan Xihu published a small essay about the concept of ethnic group/族群 Zuqun. In his opinion, the ethnic group should not be translated as 族群 Zuqun but 民族 Minzu instead, while the Chinese word 族群 Zuqun and the English word nation/nationality should both be abandoned for the anthropologies because that nation/nationality is more widely used in political science and may cause confusion (Ruan Xihu, 1998). Professor Shi Yilong from Xiamen University fought back against this proposal, and he stated that ethnic group is a concept with a broader connotation than the nation, which also can refer to tribe, culture, and race; the nation’s anthropological use is mainly for the term nation-state, in which the ethnic group cannot be the alternative. Therefore, both the nation and the ethnic group should

⁵ <http://english.scuec.edu.cn/>

be used and should be translated separately (Shi, 1999). However, professor Shi also admitted that neither nation should be Minzu's English translation.

In China, 'Minzu' has its specific signification. Actually, it refers to those human communities with cultural differences that were politically identified and then confirmed by state authority. Such a nation confirmed by the state does not exist in foreign countries. Therefore no foreign term can be used as a direct translation. ...the best solution (in English content) is using the pinyin of 民族 - Minzu to particularly refer to those 56 cultural communities inside China. (Ibid)

Except for these two professors, many other Chinese researchers also have expressed their opinion on the usage of Minzu, nation, and ethnic group. Some researchers strongly disagreed with the Minzu-Nationality translation because it implied that all 56 Minzu in China have the right of "ethnic separation" and will damage the unity in the People's Republic of China (PRC). For example, short sentences like "the people of the Tibetan nationality" or "for the interests of the Tibetan nationality" will fortify the western stereotype of the China-Tibet relationship (Zhai, 1999, pp. 72-73). Another group of researchers believes that minorities in China are already enjoying a sort of "ethnic separation" under constitutional autonomy (Jiang Deshun, 2002; Pan, 2003), and the term ethnic group implies possible discrimination against the minorities (Pan, 2003; Zhu, 1997). Thus the Minzu-Nationality translation should be preserved. Also, some scholars supported the direct transliteration of 民族(Minzu) in English content, but some others rejected it as Minzu itself is a conception imported from the outside world, transliteration would reduce the efficiency of communication and cause unnecessary explanation work. (Jin, Bi, & Han, 2012)

No consensus has been reached, and confusions continue to be seen in Chinese society. For instance, universities designated for minorities in China are often called 民族大学 (literally in English: Universities for Nationalities). In these institutions, which should be the most experienced in the nation/ethnic group issues, we can see many different translations of the term Minzu. For example, in figure 1, we can see three school badges of universities for nationalities. The left and the middle one are from the same university, 西南民族大学, or Southwest University for Nationalities. The vast majority of these two badges are the same, and the only difference appears in the English translation: while the left one writes Southwest University for Nationalities, the middle one writes Southwest Minzu University. In fact, the left badge is the older version and is now removed from the university's homepage; however, Southwest Minzu University's English homepage link is <http://english.swun.edu.cn/>. The "SWUN" is the abbreviation of SouthWest University for Nationalities. Apparently, this university does not distinguish the difference between Minzu and nationality.



Figure 1. School badges of some Chinese Minzu universities
Source: Own Elaboration

The term ethnicity is also used as the translation of Minzu and the equivalent of nation in some cases. The school badge on the right of figure 1 is of the South-Central University for Nationalities (SCUN). Although the word “nationality” is well persisted in most documents of this university, their English homepage link is <http://english.scuec.edu.cn/>. The “scu-” is clearly the abbreviation of South-Central University but “-ec” has nothing to do with neither nation nor Minzu, and the clue of this myth comes from a top state department, the State Ethnic Affairs Commission, 国家民族事务委员会 (SEAC).⁶ For this commission, the word 民族 is translated as Ethnic, so it is reasonable to confirm that the -ec in SCUN’s homepage link is of the word Ethnic. However, one official example does not verify the ethnic group as the unique official interpretation. The word 民族 is once again translated as nationalities in the Chinese constitution. For example, article 4 states, “All nationalities in the People’s Republic of China are equal” (中华人民共和国各民族一律平等)⁷.

Since the end of the 19th century, these four terms, nation – Minzu, ethnic group – Zuqun, have already caused much confusion in Chinese society, including educational institutions and state departments. This confusion will be found throughout this dissertation, and holding it in mind will help us understand the inherent logic of those cases we investigated that seem contradictory.

⁶ Homepage: <http://www.seac.gov.cn/>, another alternative English translation is “National Ethnic Affairs Commission”.

⁷ Constitution of the People’s Republic of China (2018 Amendment).

<http://www.lawinfochina.com/display.aspx?id=27574&lib=law&SearchKeyword=&SearchCKeyword=>

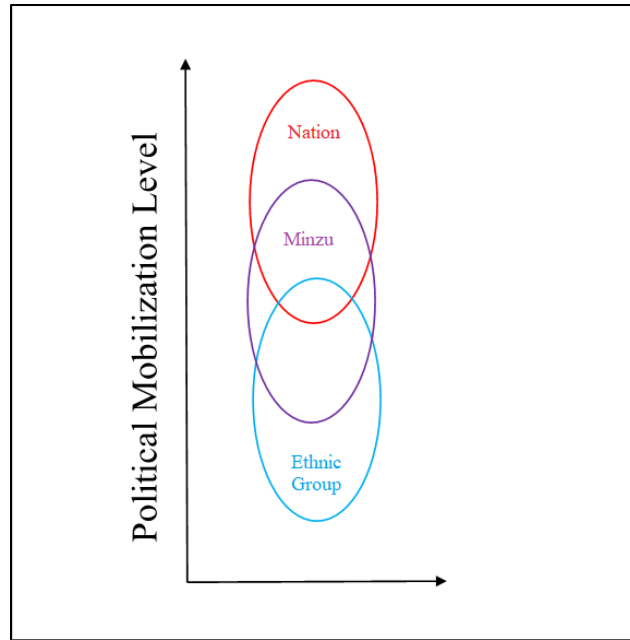


Figure 2. Relative scope of the term Minzu

Own Elaboration

As we have done enough explanation work, we will use the word Minzu to describe all 56 nationalities in China. However, as our investigation involves both western and Chinese researchers and their works, we still need to summarize the relationship between Minzu, nation, and ethnic group in advance to facilitate our readers.

Based on the debates among Chinese researchers, the proposed distinguishing criteria between nation/ethnic group, and the detailed investigation of Chinese minorities, which will be presented in a later chapter, here by now, as figure 2 shows, we suggest that the term Minzu in the Chinese context is a concept located between nation and ethnic group. The lower blue cycle close to the X-axis stands for the ethnic group for its insufficient political mobilization level; the upper red cycle stands for the nation due to its vigorous political mobilization; the purple cycle, which is located in the middle of the first two concepts stands for Minzu.

There are two points we should notice here. First, the purple cycle's scope includes parts of both red and blue cycles. This is because as the Chinese government politically confirmed many Minzu, their political mobilization level, especially the voluntary political mobilization, is very unreliable and questionable; on the other side, some Minzu with a long history in political mobilization are de facto nations from the western point of view. Second, the purple cycle did not exceed the blue cycle's lower limit or the red cycle's upper limit. In terms of the lower limit, it is because all Minzu in China are guaranteed the same political rights, including a minimum number of representatives in the Chinese parliament – the People's Congress – both centrally and locally. Therefore, Minzu's minimal political mobilization level is higher than the ethnic groups.

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However, according to the constitution of the PRC, a certain ceiling of Minzu's political mobilization is also set up:

All national autonomous areas are integral parts of the People's Republic of China... In the struggle to safeguard the unity of the nationalities, it is necessary to combat big-nation chauvinism... The state will do its utmost to promote the common prosperity of all the nationalities... (and) to build China into a great modern socialist country that is prosperous, powerful, democratic, civilized, harmonious, and beautiful and achieve the grand rejuvenation of the Chinese nation”.

These first four usages of nation/nationality refer to the term Minzu. Obviously, in PRC's constitution, Minzu can not be the holder of PRC's sovereignty, its right to independence, any form of ethnic separation is denied, and Minzu's political mobilization cannot reach the level of any western-defined nation. Therefore, the only legal holder of PRC's sovereignty lies in the final usage of the term nation, the “Chinese nation,” which is an entirely different concept from the Minzu.

1.2.2. China Nation

China Nation, 中华民族 (ZhonghuaMinzu), also can be translated as the Chinese Nation, is a specific term used in the Chinese context. It is composed of two substantives, Zhonghua and Minzu. Minzu has already been discussed before, and Zhonghua is the alternative of Zhongguo (中国/China) with less political connotation but more in culture. Although it contains the term Minzu, for Chinese intellectuals of the past two centuries, ZhonghuaMinzu/China Nation is always considered a superior concept to any other Minzu, especially in political content.

The China Nation concept emerged in the same period as the concept of “nation” in China. Liang Qichao was the first person who publically used it. In the publication “Main trend of Chinese academic thoughts' change” in 1902, he stated that “In ancient times, only people from Qi region of our Zhonghuaminzu understood the sea power theory” (p. 21). From Liang's point of view, the China Nation is mainly based on the Han Minzu while its origin is multiple ethnicities: “Today's Chinese nation, is also the ordinary called Han...from the very beginning, the China Nation is composed by not only one but many ethnic groups” (1989, vol.41). On the other side, the republican revolutionaries once again held a more aggressive opinion. Zhang Taiyan (1907) firmly defined the China Nation as just Han people and suggested proactive assimilation of all other four ethnic groups: Manchu, Mongol, Muslim, and Tibetan.

Although the later ROC recognized itself as a republic of all five ethnicities, Chinese scholars tended to explain the China Nation as a simple integral substance due to the international challenge. After the Japanese invasion began in 1937, the anthropology Gu Jiegang published his famous article – 中华民族是一个 (the China Nation is a whole one), in which he stated that “all Chinese people are of the Chinese nation, within this China Nation we must never precipitate any other nations – from now on we all should pay attention to the usage of such ‘nation’ term” (1939). Most scholars and the government had supported Gu's

statement during the wartime because Japan was luring Chinese minorities to the Axis side; however, rather than a result of scientific investigation, Gu's opinion is better to say a political manifesto.

After the foundation of the PRC in 1949, communism sustained China's political ceiling. As we can see in Minzu's English translation, every cultural group in China was considered a nation and unified by the common ideal of communism. Nevertheless, after Mao's death and the ebb of communism, a new political ceiling is essential for refilling the vacuum and maintaining China's integrity, so the concept of the China Nation was capitalized on once again. However, the government can easily wave this flag without detailed discussion, but for Chinese scholars, the definition of the China Nation is still an essential question under discussion.

Generally speaking, there are four opinions on this definition of the China Nation: 1. A name of the collection of all Minzu in China; 2. A Complex of nation; 3. An integrity of nation; and 4. A complex nation integrity.

Professor Zhao Jianjun from Northwest University for Nationalities believes the China Nation is just a collective name of all Minzu in China:

We believe that the basic feature of the existence of the China Nation is the acknowledgment by all Minzu in ancient and modern China for the co-created Chinese civilization. Chinese civilization is the basic bond that will gradually closely unite the members of all Minzu that have survived in the Chinese territory from ancient times to become an integral whole. Therefore, the China Nation is a collective name of all the ancient and modern Minzu in China that link with the Chinese civilization and share a sense of belonging with the Chinese civilization. (2004, p. 14)

In contrast, Professors Xu Lixin and Ran Jingfu believe the China Nation is not the name of the simple summation of all Minzu in China. "It is the name of a complex nation created through the interchange of language, economy, and culture of all Minzu living within the Chinese territory. Han is the main body during its formation, an equal component of this complex just like any other minority" (Xu & Ran, 1998, p. 86). Some other researchers tend to consider the China Nation as a concrete entity of nation, according to Professor Ma Rong: "Inside the Chinese nation there are multiple levels of sense of belonging, but the decisive and determinate level is the Chinese nation, because that politically, economically, culturally and demographically, all Minzu in China now have formed an indivisible integral entity" (Ma Rong, 1999, p. 6). Professor Jin Chongji agrees with Ma Rong, as he said: "56 Minzu composes the Chinese nation, it is an organic integrity, a solid community formed through the long-term history evolution...as a stable community of Minzu, it cannot be interfered by anybody...no one can deliberately dismiss its existence" (Jin Chongji, 2008, p. 15).

Disagreements do exist but are not irreconcilable. Researchers that define the China Nation as just a collective name also recognize the cohesiveness of the Chinese civilization; those researchers consider the China Nation as indivisible integrity does not deny the existence of a lower level sense of belonging. Therefore, the dominant perspective – also a compromised one – among Chinese researchers is that the China

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Nation is both complex and integrity, and its leading advocate is Fei Xiaotong, one of the most famous Chinese sociologies.

With a Ph.D. degree from L.S.E, Fei had already gained fame during the ROC era. In fact, he was one of the few researchers who publicly questioned Gu Jiegang's opinions (Jin, Bi, & Han, 2012, p. 3). After almost 50 years, while still agreeing with the multiple origins of ethnicities in China, Fei believed that the China Nation is integrity with pluralist origins. He has three principal arguments: First, the China Nation is nation integrity, and it offers the top level of sense of belonging for all 56 Minzu; second, the Chinese nation's cohesion mainly depends on the Han Minzu, but the China Nation cannot be simplified as Han; third, the top identity does not necessarily exclude or replace those lower ones, identities of different level can respectively evolve different features, and togetherly form multilingual and multicultural integrity. (Fei Xiaotong, 2000, p. 7)

Fei's ideas are broad and vague. It might be good enough for the official ideological construction – at least for a while – but it also essentially avoided discussing the contradiction between the complex and the integrity. If the China Nation was integrity, it could not be divided into two or more components; on the other side, a complex nation comprises at least two different ethnicities/nations. This structural contradiction between the integrity and the complex foreshadows the Chinese nationalists' theoretical confusion and identification difficulty.

For scholars, the China Nation is never precisely defined, but it leaves a substantial fuzzy zone that allows every Minzu to develop their own identities while also supporting the current Chinese government. As we can see in the Chinese political slogan, “The great rejuvenation” is of “the Chinese nation” but not of any Minzu. Under this description, the China Nation is defined as the matrix and the boundary of all Minzu, the unique holder of all China territory's sovereignty. Hence, it could be the most powerful concept, as the government welcomes it and if every Minzu supported it, but it also could be as fragile as it can be, as it is exactly what Benedict Anderson has described, a totally imagined community. According to Chinese scholars mentioned before, its existence and cohesiveness depend on Han Minzu's endorsement.

1.2.3 Han nationalism

According to the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS), in China, the vast majority of the population (91.51%) are of the Han Minzu, and the other 55 minorities form 8.49% (2011). Therefore, it is pervasive to confuse these two Chinese and Han concepts, and Han nationalism is also considered another name for Chinese nationalism, which is incorrect.

Chinese nationalism is a more civic nationalism that focuses more on the international relationship, while Han nationalism is a more ethical nationalism that focuses more on the relationship between different Minzu. The Chinese nationalists tend to support the government's decisions, but Han nationalists tend to question if the government had sacrificed Han's interest in subsidy minorities. Another huge discrepancy between them is the attitude towards the last Chinese dynasty Qing (清朝). As the minority Manchu ruled it,

Today's Han nationalists hold an extremely negative opinion towards it, while the Chinese nationalists are much more moderate.

Of course, what we have mentioned are all ideal criteria. In the real world, a person can hold opinions from both sides. A Chinese who defends Taiwan as an inseparable part of China could also despise the government's minority preferential policies. Actually, as the digitalization goes on, and the newly emerged cybernationalism continuously expands its influence over the Internet, Han nationalism also becomes more and more moderate and switches its focus to the revival of traditional Han culture. Those who still maintain a strong hostility against minorities are now called Han Royalists (皇汉), as they believe that compared with the current PRC, dynasties ruled by Han – especially Ming (明朝), which Qing replaced – were better protecting the dignity and interest of ordinary Han people.

Due to the minority preferential policies, Chinese nationalists are not indifferent to the minority problem. They could also show similar opinions to the Han nationalists in many cases. However, Chinese nationalists do not emphasize their Minzu identity on such topics. As we will discuss later, the entry point of the Chinese nationalists on preferential policy problem is the equality of each individual, not just Han but also other minorities' Chinese nationalists would participate. Therefore, the term Chinese nationalism/nationalist will be used in most circumstances of this dissertation, and when Han nationalism/nationalist is mentioned, it refers to the Han Royalists.

1.3 Objectives and Hypotheses

As this dissertation is an interdisciplinary investigation, including history, communication, and sociology studies, its consistent objectives refer to an overall evaluation of cybernationalism in China. In order to understand any nationalism, one key question is to find out what it is opposing/defending. In the case of Chinese cybernationalism, this question can be further elaborated into three main objectives: Investigating the origin and development of the Chinese cybernationalists, Explaining the cybernationalists' potential political demand, and Analyzing the Internet's usage by Chinese cybernationalists.

As briefly introduced in the first section, Chinese nationalism is a topic that is essentially influencing China and its relationship with the world. Without a serious and in-depth discussion on this topic, it could be impossible to understand the current Chinese society cause misunderstandings and disputes. However, simply denying the existence of such ideology in China or labeling it as a government's puppet does no help but just provokes more misunderstanding and dispute. Hence our first objective is to find out who are those Chinese cybernationalists, and for such purpose, we will need to go back through some most crucial historical events that shape today's Chinese society, from the ancient Confucianism system to the modern minority policies, and also the foreigner factors, too.

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We also need to find out the potential political demand of the Chinese nationalists. Gellner said that the primary political principle of a nation is that “the political and the national unit should be congruent” (Gellner, 1983, p.1). According to Anthony Smith, the three fundamental ideas of nationalism are national autonomy, national unity, and national identity (Smith,2001, p.28). Liah Greenfeld emphasized that “nationalism...inaugurated the age of continuous social change oriented toward the realization of the principles of popular sovereignty, fundamental equality of national membership, and inclusive identity” (Greenfeld, 2018). All these principles and ideas are orientations during our investigation on the Chinese cybernationalism’s political demands, but we call such political demand “potential” because, on one side, some of it may be stated by the Chinese government already, for example, the national unity; on the other side, some of it could be suppressed for against the government’s interest. As no systematic summarization nor manifesto is ever made by the Chinese cybernationalist, seeking their political demand will be a jigsaw puzzle through analysis of different incidents.

Our investigation’s keyword is “Chinese cybernationalism” but not “Chinese nationalism” because, under the current Chinese political system, the government’s narrative of nationalism is still dominant in most public spaces except the Internet. Cybernationalism is closer to public opinion than the official version, while investigating the normal nationalism may put us into the loop of official definitions and explanations, which, as we mentioned before, have avoided the implementation of nationalism theories in social movements. However, the prefix “cyber” is not just about the huge amount of personal experiences shared through the Internet but also the form of how they have been shared, this change of the communication channel could lead to an evolution of nationalism’s content and further shape the definition of the Chinese nation. Therefore, cybernationalism is not just the nationalism expressed on the Internet but also the nationalism formed with digital communication attributes.

Based on the three objectives mentioned in the last section, following both qualitative and quantitative research approaches through multiple case studies, this dissertation focus on the origin, the presence, and the possible future of Chinese cybernationalism, also on its effects on the Chinese society, too, therefore, we have proposed seven hypotheses for this investigation, which are:

1. **Nationalism is an imported ideology in China and only emerged after the 1840 Opium War:** In the western academy, the French Revolution is the authentic beginning of the term nationalism as a modern ideology (Smith, 2010, p. 53), but its authenticity is mainly because of other collective consensuses before the year 1789 were too vague, without enough rigorous history record, or just not that influential. That is to say, we should view the French Revolution as a dividing line, and nationalism only becomes sufficiently scientific and important to be considered as an investigation object after it. However, it does not mean that there was no cultural-political consensus similar to nationalism before the French Revolution. One paradigm of the nationalism school is the perennialism that believes nations existed in every period of history. Even Eric Hobsbawm, who claims to be of the modernism paradigm, has to use the

idea of proto-nationalism to describe the origin of modern nationalism (Hobsbawm, 2012, p.46). Colin Kidd also has written an excellent book on the British consensus before nationalism (1999). However, all these western academic discussions on collective cognition before the French Revolution disappeared in the China academia. Chinese researchers would praise the sacrifice made by the Chinese people during World War II and call it the China Nation's spirit, but they would never give a dividing line on the formation of the China Nation, only point out that before the Opium War, the China Nation was not completely awakened (Liu Chao, 2005, p. 128; Zi, 2013, p. 68).

2. **The nationalist movement in today's China is mainly the result of the government's manipulation:** As mentioned before, many scholars would view nationalism as just CPC's self-salvation tool, assert that there is no genuine nationalism in China. Under such judgment, all massive nationalistic movements in China – at least after the foundation of the PRC – are definite manipulations of the government.
3. **Chinese cybernationalists' political demands comply with the universal principle of nationalism:** As both news media and academies in western countries have paid attention to the more and more confident – or assertive – Chinese government and people, we must understand the nature of the ideology behind this tendency. Based on the early investigation, the author believes it is nationalism because, according to western scholars, it would naturally emerge in an industrializing society, and then necessarily, the Chinese supporters of the confident tendency would also obey the universal principle of nationalism just like their other global counterparts.
4. **Chinese cybernationalists' political demands are attributed to the particular context in China:** This hypothesis is a further development of the first two. On the one hand, by exploring the cybernationalists' political demands, we will have the opportunity to locate their historical background and current cause, which furtherly leads to verifying whether a connection can be found between nowadays' nationalism and the history before the Opium War. On the other hand, it would be possible for us to uncover the relationship between the Chinese government and nationalists because a totally manipulated massive movement would only represent the government's interest but never go against it.
5. **The Internet is the public sphere for Chinese cybernationalists:** The Chinese government has strict control over domestic news media, and the Internet has shown its ability to break the upper elites' monopoly of news media in western countries. Therefore it would result in a fundamental change if Chinese cybernationalists could develop a public sphere on the Internet, where they can establish a new communication form and take control of the information flow – at least partially. Because only in a sphere with enough autonomy and openness can nationalists state that their movement is for the public interest.

6. **Cybernationalists' activism mainly takes place online:** Any social movement is committed to causing some changes or at least some impact on reality, and traditionally the movement's objective is achieved by offline actions such as demonstrations and strikes. However, before the Internet era, China was a huge country with a low urbanization level, which means the core activist group, according to Samuel Huntington – the middle class in the city (2006, p. 290), has very limited influence over the vast majority rural population. For example, in the 1989 Tiananmen Square Incident, participants were formed of students, intellectuals, and urban citizens concentrated in several main cities (Zhao Dingxin, 2007, pp. 115-158.), while the countryside was barely untouched by the movement. Additionally, the 1989 incidents also made the Chinese government quite vigilant against any massive offline collective action. Therefore, we believe that for the nationalistic activists in the Internet era, their strategy should be attracting the most publicity without triggering government repression. Hence their activities will mainly occur online.
7. **Cybernationalists' activism has controversial impacts:** The activism is meant to affect society. In other words, the social responses are proof of successful activism. Based on initial research, we infer that the cybernationalists would have enough energy to force many social entities to obey their demands, while due to their ideological belief, some other entities would act confrontational against their activism.

1.4 Methodologies

After determining the research object in social science research, the most critical step is to choose an appropriate methodology. As Robert Yin has repeatedly mentioned in his book *Case Study Research*, the two most important questions for researchers are “How and Why” (2009), explaining to the readers the process from event x leading to event y. Unfortunately, in this process, a prevalent mistake is that the researcher only notices the connection between x and y and mistakenly believes that there is a direct causal relationship between the two while ignoring the possible existence of the third-factor z (Ibid, p. 42). Professor Rafael Caldach Cervera also said, the methodology “es el conjunto de tareas o procedimientos y de técnicas que deben emplearse, de una manera coordinada, para poder desarrollar en su totalidad el proceso de investigación” (2014, p. 27). Therefore, at the beginning of the article, we must start from a comprehensive perspective and establish a methodological system that can support the close connection between the contexts and verify the hypotheses by analyzing the relationship between the investigation's objects and objectives.

Our primary research object is today's cybernationalism in China. As mentioned above, Chinese nationalism from the western perspective is mainly regarded as an appendage of the CPC and communism. In many works, even from the nationalist theory masters such as Hobsbawm or Gellner, Chinese nationalism is usually backgrounded without detailed discussions. On the other hand, when Chinese scholars discuss nationalism, they are limited by the debate and analysis of various definitions. This is because most modern nationalism research paradigms were introduced into China mainly after the 1980s. Therefore, the

incorporation of past communist political practices into today's western paradigms does not entirely depend on the conclusions of Chinese academia. The regrets mentioned are not only one of the driving forces of this dissertation but also an important guide for our design of the structure and distribution of the dissertation: the research must include the exploration of the historical background of nationalism – whether it is from ancient China or the Mao Zedong era.

Nevertheless, we cannot induce today's nationalism from these historical backgrounds alone. As an ideology that symbolizes massive participation, public opinion and public interest are two indispensable elements of nationalism. The study of both requires us to pay attention to the social realities that are undergoing. Given that our investigation objects are cybernationalism and its cyberactivism, these “social realities” can be divided into three parts: those related to the Chinese Internet, those related to nationalism, and those related to activism. When studying social reality and relying on the analysis of many documents and events like studying historical background, we think it is necessary to introduce the methodology of the case study. Although Robert Stake believes that case studies cannot help with theory building (2005, p. 445), Robert Yin believes that “in doing a case study, your goal will be to expand and generalize theories (analytic generalization) and not to enumerate frequencies (statistical generalization)” (2009, p. 15). Therefore, by combining the case study results with the previous part of the theoretical construction, we could acquire answers to questions related to cyberactivism and further practical verification of the proposed hypothesis.

Therefore, the methodology of this dissertation consists of two parts: traditional qualitative methods based on text and historical materials/events and quantitative methods based on network and big data, which serves the case studies.

1.4.1 Qualitative methods

The first qualitative method is the **Descriptive** method. It is to make an exhaustive exposition and demonstration of the investigation object and related realities. This approach aims to understand reality as it derives from direct observations made by the researcher or gained through information provided by other authors. It is, therefore, a method of acquiring, interpreting, and presenting information about reality most rigorously possible. Clearly, during its implementation, the key process is the interpretation work, which should be done within the criteria established by each scientific discipline. Therefore, in our dissertation, we must select the material most closely related to cybernationalism and cyberactivism, and apply the descriptive method to it to build a general understanding based on the paradigms already established by foreign and Chinese scholars.

After obtaining a preliminary understanding of the research material's basic characteristics and internal structure, we should adopt an **Analytical** approach to distinguish and categorize its essential elements and the relationships they maintain with each other. This method includes two paths, structural analysis, and functional analysis. The former focuses on studying the structural relationships between elements within the material, while functional analysis studies how the constituent elements of the material are related to each

other to produce specific effects or perform certain functions. Both paths will be applied during our investigation as they contribute to the break from superficial material to the inner logical relationship and theoretical structure, which fit better for the introduction of the nationalistic perspective.

We also use the **Synthetic** method to summarize the research material's general knowledge. The synthetic method aims to achieve a simplified reconstruction of reality, which means we must focus on the most central elements and relationships. Furthermore, the sufficiency of synthesis will be provided by its verification with reality itself. Since the synthetic method only provides knowledge with specific validity for the event under investigation, so it is mainly used in each chapter's breve conclusion sections.

Based on the three methods mentioned above, we can further use the **Comparative** method. Through a comparison made between the main elements of the reality under investigation with those of other similar realities already known – for example, between what we have achieved with cybernationalism during the investigation and classical nationalist theories, or between the demands of cybernationalists and China's policy practices – we can find similarities and differences among them. Thereby, we can identify the dominant factors in shaping China's cybernationalism and further promote the research's development. However, it must be noted that the comparison is not a comparison of all aspects but is mainly based on generalized elements derived from the synthetic method.

The most important step is the use of the **Inductive** method. After the comparison between the research material and other similar realities and between the research material itself, through induction, we can integrate the various fundamental factors to gain knowledge of general validity, which is the formulation of a scientific law. For this paper, it can be interpreted as the gaining of generalized law of Chinese cybernationalism.

However, just like the synthetic method's sufficiency needs to be verified by reality. The generalized law of Chinese cybernationalism should also be further confirmed by studying its consistency with realistic practice cases, for which we need to introduce the case study methodology, and quantitative methods will be employed during the process.

1.4.2 Quantitative methods

This study has also conducted multiple case studies on nationalism and cyberactivism. In chapter 4, we have investigated the agenda-setting by western news media on China, and chapter 5 is mainly formed of case studies that focus on the massive amount of expressions done by Chinese internauts. The former includes an analysis of journalistic content that contains a large amount of text, while we also do not want to design any questionnaire for Chinese internauts as its scope is limited and its result is easily manipulated through the question design. Therefore, the computation approach will be applied, particularly the Big data methods.

1.4.2.1 Collection

Big data includes two phases, the collection of data and its analysis. The “web crawler” is the primary technic in the first phase. A web crawler is an Internet bot that systematically browses the World Wide Web to download and index its content. The goal of such a bot is to learn what (almost) every webpage on the web is about so the information can be retrieved when it is needed.⁸

For this dissertation, through the usage of a web crawler, we can retrieve massive public information from a designated Internet thread. For the journalistic case, it includes the headline, lead, and author/s, while for cases about internauts’ expression, it contains the internaut’s I.D., the time of his/her publication, the content of the publication, and the interaction made by other internauts (usually in the form of “like” “upvote” “comment” and “repost”). All this information is unfiltered, so both the study’s breadth and authenticity are guaranteed, which is crucial because this study is about a mass ideological-political phenomenon. During this phase, two web crawler tools are used: the Octoparse program developed by the Octopus Data Inc, which is very convenient in most Chinese virtual communities’ environments and also foreign news portals; the weiboSpider project developed by Chen Lei (dataabc) on Github,⁹ which is designed explicitly for the Weibo platform.

1.4.2.2 Analysis

After collecting the information, the second phase is to carry out the analysis. In order to ensure a neutral and unmanipulated investigation, the analysis also should be done through computation technologies, which involve three approaches: the Keywords Extraction, Sentiments Analysis, and the use of Latent Dirichlet Allocation (LDA).

The keywords extraction means we need to find out those most repeated words among the raw material as they can be clues for understanding the trending opinion among internauts. Unlike English, the Chinese language is not composed of words but characters. Hence the first preparation of keywords extraction is the sentence segmentation, which can be done by importing the Jieba Chinese segmentation module (结巴中文分词)¹⁰. The second preparation is applying the stopwords list. This is because our investigation material is mostly of personalized expressions and might contain informal oral words, and these noisy words must be excluded from the keywords list. A stopwords list will indicate to the machine which words are to be ignored and leave those meaningful; however, a regular stopwords list may exclude some critical words for an investigation about nationalism, for instance, those pronouns like We, You, Them. After many attempts and corrections, based on the Chinese stopwords list developed by Harbin Institute of Technology, we have concluded a specific stopwords list for this dissertation, which is available on Github <https://github.com/AureliusDeng/modified-cn-stopwords> along with other been used programming modules.

⁸ <https://www.cloudflare.com/learning/bots/what-is-a-web-crawler/>

⁹ <https://github.com/dataabc/weiboSpider>

¹⁰ <https://github.com/fxsjy/jieba>

For English content, there is no need for segmentation, but a stopwords list is still required, for which we have used the stopwords.iso program developed by Gene Diaz on Github (<https://github.com/stopwords-iso>).

After fully prepared, three algorithms can be used for keyword extraction. The first two are TextRank and TF-IDF: The TextRank is an extractive and unsupervised text summarization technique. By building up a vector for each and every word, the similarities between word vectors are then calculated, and finally, a certain number of top-ranked words will be listed (Mihalcea & Tarau, 2004). TF-IDF stands for Term Frequency – Inverse Document Frequency. Typically, its weight is composed of two terms: the first computes the normalized Term Frequency, the number of times a word appears in a document, divided by the total number of words in that document; the second term is the Inverse Document Frequency, computed as the logarithm of the number of the documents in the corpus divided by the number of documents where the specific term appears (Jones, 2004).

Skytech Engine offers the third algorithm. It uses a *Simple Math* algorithm for the keywords extraction, which has two corpus, one named focus corpus and another reference corpus. In our case, the focus corpus is the summarization of all headlines and leads of one specific language; the reference corpus is usually a preset document with huge amounts of text content. As the formulas of Figure 3 show, the term's frequency is a normalized number that depends on its times of occurrence and the size of the corpus, the focus, and reference, respectively; the keyness score is closely related to the quotient between the two frequencies, while a smoothing parameter N which usually is set to 1 is added (Kilgarriff, 2009).

$$fpm_{rm} = \frac{\text{number of hits} \cdot 1,000,000}{\text{corpus size}}$$

$$\text{Score} = \frac{fpm_{rm\text{focus}} + N}{fpm_{rm\text{ref}} + N}$$

Figure 3. Simple Math Score Calculation.

Source: <https://www.sketchengine.eu/>.

The keywords extraction can demonstrate the central themes discussed by Internauts, but in many cases, only the themes cannot offer sufficient evidence for the inference of the public opinion, for which another two computation technics, the Sentiment Analysis and LDA model of Natural Language Processing (NLP) can be good auxiliaries. Basically, Natural Language Processing or NLP is a field of Artificial Intelligence that enables the computer to read, understand and analyze the content, emotion, and attitude expressed through human languages. The sentiment analysis can be applied in most internaut's expressions, combing with the interactions between internauts – for example, the popularity of any text content – it can offer us a general perspective of the trending attitude about any specific events or contents, and thence we can deduce the public tendency with much more reasonability. For the main part of our case studies, the

Chinese content's sentiment analysis, we have adopted the famous SnowNLP library¹¹, which will offer a result that varies from -1 to 1. The 1 represents the most positive expression, and the -1 means the most negative. However, as we must simultaneously compare journalistic reports in Chinese, Spanish, and English in chapter 4' case study, we must first translate the Chinese and Spanish content into English for sentiment analysis with the same criteria. We have applied the Google Translation Project¹² for the machine translation work and the TextBlob library¹³ for sentiment analysis. According to various researches done before, the google translation has shown enough accuracy in the Spanish-English task, especially for news text of formal expression (Savoy, & Dolamic, 2009; Guzmán, Nakov, Thabet & Vogel, 2012). In the case of Chinese, although TextBlob's sentiment analysis result is formed of polarity and subjectivity – which also varies from -1 to 1, its qualification on translated Chinese news text is proved through a specific comparison with the SnowNLP library by the author.

The last NLP approach is the LDA model proposed by David Blei, Andrew Ng, and Michael Jordan in 2003. It is a topic model that gives the topic of each document in a document set as a probability distribution. Therefore, after extracting their topics (distribution) by analyzing some documents, topic clustering or text classification can be performed according to the topics (distribution). At the same time, it is a typical Bag-of-words model, which considers that a document is composed of a set of words, and there is no sequential relationship between words. In addition, a document can contain multiple topics, and each word in the document is generated from one of the topics. Generally speaking, the LDA infers the topic distribution based on a given document, which can be understood as an update of traditional keywords extraction.

1.4.3 Case Studies' Information Sheets

In the thesis, we completed a total of five case studies with independent data collection: Journalistic Agenda-Setting case, Year Hare Affair case, God's Eagle case, Muslim Job Interview case, and BBC Reeducation Camp Report case.

1. Journalistic Agenda-Setting case

Raw data source: the New York Times website search with the keywords “China” and “Wuhan;” El País website search with the keywords “China” and “Wuhan;” Deutsche Welle Chinese website search with the keywords 中国 and 武汉.

Data Period: January 1 to March 31 of 2020 for all three news agencies.

Data Collection Date: October 1, 2021.

Data Collection Tool: Octoparse.

Types of Data: Headlines, leads, and publish date of the report.

¹¹ <https://github.com/isnowfy/snownlp>

¹² https://github.com/lushan88a/google_trans_new

¹³ <https://textblob.readthedocs.io/en/dev/>

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Number of Raw Data: 374 for the New York Times, 305 for El País, 334 for Deutsche Welle Chinese, and 1013 in total.

Analysis Approach: Keywords extraction with Simple Math algorithm; Sentiment analysis with TextBlob library.

Data Appendix: NYTChinaWuhan.xlsx; ELPAÍSChinaWuhan.xlsx; DWChinaWuhan.xlsx.

2. Year Hare Affair case

Raw Data Source: Internauts' comments for the Year Hare Affair comics on the Bilibili platform.

Data Period: Until July 31, 2019

Data Collection Date: August 18, 2019.

Data Collection Tool: Octoparse.

Types of Data: Internaut ID, the comment's content, and the upvote received for each comment.

Number of Raw Data: 960 expected but 851 effective.

Analysis Approach: Keywords extraction with both TF-id and TextRank algorithms; Sentiment analysis with SnowNLP library.

Data Appendix: Year Hare Affair_Comments_Bilibili.xlsx.

3. God's Eagle case

Raw Data Source: Microblogs published by God's Eagle on Weibo.

Data Period: From July 10, 2010, to August 3, 2019.

Data Collection Date: August 4, 2019.

Data Collection Tool: Weibospider.

Types of Data: Microblog's content, publish date, numbers of upvotes/comments/reposts

Number of Raw Data: 2850.

Analysis Approach: Keywords extraction with TextRank algorithm; Sentiment analysis with SnowNLP library.

Data Appendix: God's_Eagle_weibo_data.xlsx.

4. Muslim Job Interview case

Raw Data Source: Internauts' reactions to the Muslim job interview microblog on Weibo.

Data Period: From May 9, 2019, to October 26, 2019.

Data Collection Date: October 28, 2019.

Data Collection Tool: Octoparse.

Types of Data: The repost's content, the number of reposts (the re-repost)/upvotes, and the publishing time of the repost.

Number of Raw Data: 3239.

Analysis Approach: Keywords extraction with both TF-id and TextRank algorithms; Sentiment analysis with SnowNLP library.

Data Appendix: WeiboData_Job Interview of a Muslim.xlsx.

5. BBC Reeducation Camp Report case

Raw Data Source: Internauts' reactions to the BBC's Uyghur in reeducation camp report on YouTube.

Data Period: From October 25, 2018, to March 20, 2022.

Data Collection Date: March 25, 2022.

Data Collection Tool: Octoparse.

Types of Data: Internaut ID, the comment's content, and the upvote received for each comment.

Number of Raw Data: 4312.

Analysis Approach: Keywords extraction and categorization with LDA.

Data Appendix: Uyghurs in the reeducation camp_BBC News.xlsx.

2. CHAPTER TWO: NATIONALISM IN CHINA BEFORE THE DIGITALIZATION

2.1. Cultural-civilizational dimension of China

Today when we talk about China, we generally refer to the 1.3 billion population and the government – The People’s Republic of China. On the one hand, from the political-modernization perspective, we can describe China as a very young country because the foundation of the present regime was the year 1949, less than 100 years. On the other hand, from the cultural-civilizational point of view, we should also note that the Chinese civilization’s history is more than 3600 years. Compared to other ancient civilizations (Mesopotamia, Egypt, Greece, etc.), China is the only civilization that maintains its own cultural characteristics and the continuity of its political system. From the beginning of the imperial era (221 BC) until today, the Chinese continuously use a **language system** with relatively small changes compared with other languages. The **Confucian ideology** dominates their virtual world and social activities. Even the **centralized political system** has persevered for thousands of years.

The political system, ideology, and language are three essential factors for the development of nationalism. In Hobsbawm’s view, the nation is a result of the state and nationalism, which is a social entity only insofar as it relates to a particular type of modern territorial state. (Hobsbawm, 2012, p.10) Here the concept “modern territorial state” refers to a centralist state. This is because the development of centralism causes tremendous political participation and puts forward two political problems: a new administrative way to combine the government and each individual, and a new object to lay the loyalty (Hobsbawm, 2012, pp.81-82). Ernest Gellner considered nationalism as the popularization of a “high culture” (Gellner, 1983, p.18). He believes that in an agricultural society, the high culture was only shared by the upper classes, while after entering the industrial age, the progress of education brought about the popularization of the high culture, and subsequently nationalism is formed based on this high culture. Although primarily Gellner does not acknowledge the existence of (modern) nationalism in the agricultural age, he also mentioned that the Chinese bureaucracy “showed a certain type of nationalism” because of its desire to spread its culture to the lower classes (Gellner, 1983, p.16). At last, most researchers agree that the language always constitutes a crucial factor of national emotion, or in other words, the sense of national belonging. According to Anthony Smith, the language-symbolism itself can be understood as one of the three main contents of nationalism (Smith, 2010, p.6).

Therefore, to inquire into today’s Chinese nationalism, the search for those three factors’ origin is indispensable. Although in Europe, nationalism emerged only after the 1789 French Revolution, due to its particularities, in the case of China, we need to go back to a much earlier history to find the origin, the era of Qin and Han (秦汉时期).

2.1.1 Foundation of a centralized bureaucratic state

After many years of war, there were only five hegemonies in the year 722 BC, and in the year 221 BC, the Qin kingdom conquered its last rival, and King Zheng (嬴政) became the dominant of all of China (Fu, 1992, pp. 146-154). Thus, King Zheng used a new title to describe his power: Shi Huangdi (始皇帝, literally: Beginning Emperor). After the foundation of the empire, Emperor Zheng took various measures for the consolidation of the regime. Culturally, his Primer Minister Li Si (李斯) invented a new way of writing letters and compulsorily applied it throughout the empire. This writing system is called the “Small Seal Script” (小篆). Economically, new units of measurement were invented and implemented. Militarily and geographically, the Great Wall was constructed to defend the Huns from the north, which also divided the civilization and the barbarians. Educationally, Emperor Zheng prohibited the publication and circulation of many books, demanded full state control of education, and private schools were closed.



Qin Dynasty Empire (221–207 B.C.)

Figure 4. Qin Dynasty Map.

Source: Internet with public domain

Shaped by these mentioned policies, the subjects ruled by Qin acquired many fundamental elements that were crucial for nationalism: a stable territory with a clear political border, figure 4 shows us the location

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of the Great Wall. For quite a long time, the Great Wall was the north border of many Chinese regimens, and its construction concretizes the ethereal concept of the border, a prototype but not a complete version of sovereignty. A primitive unitary economy was formed. Although the tyranny of distance still blocked the formation of a real “national economy” (Hobsbawm, 2012), the unification of the standard of measurement significantly encouraged domestic economic exchanges and fortified the sense of unification. Moreover, Qin’s common language and state control of education is precisely the “monopoly of legitimate education” (Gellner, 1983, p. 34), of which the universal high culture can be created.

All these policies are important, but the most significant one is about the political system. Before Qin’s unification, there were five noble ranks in China, Duke-Marquis-Count-Viscount-Baron, during the war, those hegemonies, one after another, had proclaimed the title king, but the main body of ruling cliques was still of the five ranks. After the unification, Emperor Zheng abolished the traditional noble rank system and implemented the Prefecture-County System (PCS).

War brought more changes than just the king’s title. According to Francisco Fukuyama and Zhao Dingxin, the war was the main motivation for the political reformation (Fukuyama, 2011, p.104-105; Zhao Dingxin, 2015). The cruel unification war had lasted 500 years and proposed international and domestic challenges to the kings. Traditionally, noble obedience from the low level to the high level was not obligatory. The bonding of the same ancestor or the marriage was not enough to support a stable and effective political system, and total control only existed in the demesne. At the same time, rebellions occurred from time to time, and even a kingdom can be divided into three. For a King challenged by both international and domestic rivals, the maximum direct control population was crucial as it secured the taxation and the army manpower. Therefore, after conquering new territory, the hegemonies tended to establish a new local administration that did not belong to the traditional noble system, and that local administration is called “county” (县). The county did not have a feudal lord but was ruled by a replaceable mayor assigned by the central regimen. Thus, this local political entity directly corresponded to the kings and changed the balance of power between the king and his feudal vassals. In addition, the establishment of the county also facilitated communication between the central government and local communities, and traditional fidelity to the feudal lord was replaced by fidelity to the central king.

The establishment of the prefecture (郡) also originated from military necessity. By expanding territory, effective communication between the capital and the distant regions became a problem for hegemonies, mainly for the border regions that were against another kingdom or the barbarians. In order to reduce reaction time, increase flexibility, and also ensure the combativeness of distant regions, several counties could be integrated into a new administrative level, the prefecture. Like the county, the prefecture’s governor was assigned by the central government and replaceable. At first governor’s responsibility was on main military matters. As the war went on, the prefecture’s role gradually transformed from a pure military unit to a comprehensive administrative unit. The governor became the region’s political, economic, and military leader. Although the power was greatly expanded, governors (also mayors) still were designated and

replaceable. In this way, the traditional aristocratic lineage rule was replaced by bureaucratic rule with a term limit. After the unification, Emperor Zheng implemented the PCS throughout China, virtually destroying the five ranks noble system. Before the fall of Qin, a total of 756 counties and 54 prefectures were established (Hou, 2008, pp. 116, 449).

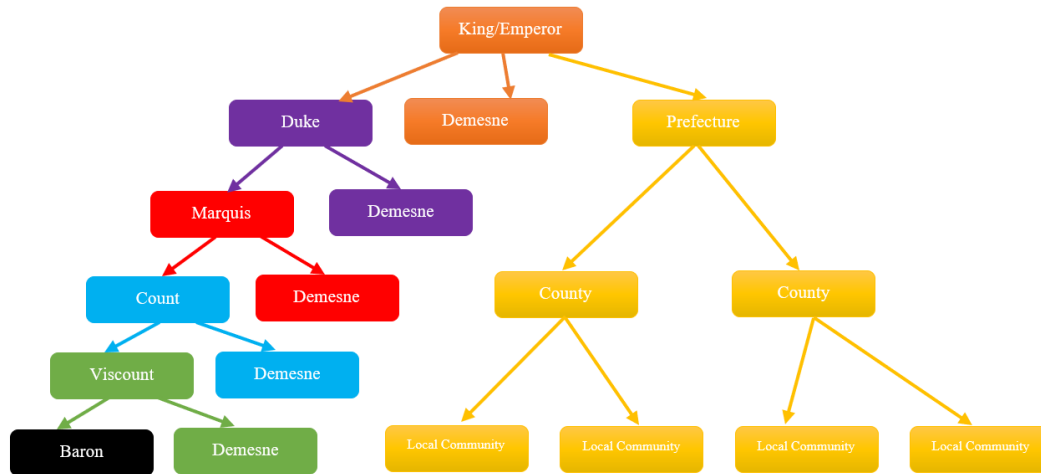


Figure 5. Administrative chain comparison between the traditional noble system and the PCS

Source: Own Elaboration

Figure 5 shows the difference between the traditional noble system and PCS on the administrative chain. The left multicolored side shows how power is divided in the noble system: the king’s direct control only happens in his demesne, while his vassals, the vassals of his vassals, and the demesnes of all feudal lords maintain a relatively isolated and independent status, and subjects inside the kingdom had their different loyalty objects.

The right side shows the power division of PCS. The actual executors of the ruling of PCS are the bureaucrats. If the traditional noble rule could be described as the alliance between different noble families, the PCS can be described as the emperor and the bureaucrats’ personal alliance. Compared to the traditional noble system, PCS is a system with a prominent characteristic of centralism. Under this system, the power of the emperor is extremely consolidated. First, all administrators are replaceable assigned bureaucrats. The emperor can fully execute the power of personnel all over China. Unlike aristocracies, the bureaucrats know their power comes from the emperor and is not permanently guaranteed; thus, they must closely follow the emperor to get a better position inside the system. Second, although direct administration in local communities was still impossible due to technical limitations, through PCS, Qin’s central power had influenced the local community to an unprecedented degree – at least in breadth – as this administrative chain covered all of China. For local communities, they had to respect the influence of the central and seek cooperation, or they had to face the emperor’s anger carried out by the PCS.

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On the other hand, local communities also have acquired a chance to protect their interest. In the traditional noble system, local communities' fate is controlled by their feudal lords without any chance to appeal, while in PCS, local administrators are still powerful but not that unquestionable like feudal lords because now the higher levels had the power to intervene in lower levels' issues. In a most extreme situation, even the emperor himself may be involved. At last, the abolition of the noble system also means the power centralization within the royal family. The royal members had lost their right to get a fief. Sometimes they still could play an important role in the political system, but that was achieved through the PCS with the emperor's permission. In this case, royal members' interests now was closely and directly linked with the emperor.

For the people under PCS rule, the emperor is the one and only loyal subject. However, the emperor lives inside the forbidden city and barely goes out, and his presence is out of reach for the normal people. Thus, during the daily life of normal people under PCS, the emperor himself is very much conceptualized and symbolized. The entity that collects the tax, handles the irrigation, and punishes the criminal is the bureaucratic system. People pledge loyalty to the conceptualized emperor and are ruled by the bureaucrats; meanwhile, the bureaucrats, especially those top ones, are under the emperor's direct personal command. Thus to a certain degree, the emperor's authority and the state's political power are integrated into one, just as Luis XIV said thousands of years later: *L'État, c'est moi* (The state, it is I).

PCS is a typical pyramid hierarchy. Its frame structure is maintained through loyalty to the emperor, both symbolized and personal, and its daily operation depends on the bureaucrats. As administrators, the bureaucrats should originate from an educated group, which means the first bureaucrat group is inextricably linked with the traditional noble class and divides them from the vast majority of illiterate people. When the nobles existed and resisted the PCS, bureaucrats were naturally supporters of the emperor, but after the nobles were wiped out from the power structure, it was also naturally the bureaucrats would form a new solidified class and tend to maintain the power within this class or even the particular family. Thus, for the emperor, keeping the bureaucrats' openness and loyalty are two crucial questions for his PCS domination. In the case of China, these two questions were solved by one answer, Confucianism.

2.1.2 Confucianism as the official ideology

Qin is not a Confucianist state but a militarist one. When emperor Zheng was alive, the PCS could be maintained through his personal prestige, but only one year after his death, in 209 B.C., multiple rebellions aimed to restore the noble system and conquer kingdoms burst out. Seven years later, a new unified dynasty was established by a former official of Qin. This new dynasty is called Han (汉).

Although Han was born in the rebellion against Qin, Han's political system was mainly a successor of Qin. The PCS was inherited and perfected. Except for 1575 counties and 103 prefectures, a new administrative level, province (州), was also established. Including the province where the capital was located, 14 provinces were established during the Han dynasty. The ruler of the province, like the prefect and the

mayor, is an assigned bureaucrat. Therefore Han's administrative system was "Central Government-Province-Prefecture-County," which is almost the same as the modern administrative system in China, "Central Government-Province-Municipality-County."

Like Qin, Han also encountered the problem of maintaining the PCS. After several rebellions against the PCS had been suppressed, since its seventh ruler, Emperor Wu (141 B.C. – 87 B.C.), Han had adopted Confucianism as its dominant philosophy. In 136 B.C., Emperor Wu established "doctorates on five Confucian classics" (五经博士) and strengthened Confucianism's discourse power in the central government. Two years later, in his dialogue with Emperor Wu, the famous Confucianist Dong Zhongshu formally proposed that the government should ban all non-Confucianist schools, which was accepted:

The unification of divided kingdoms is the normal of the universe and ancient-modern. Today the intellectuals are teaching different schools, the people hold different opinions, and different scholars have different theories on the administration. Thus, the government can't find a path to maintain the unification; the regulation changes frequently, and the people don't know what to obey. I believe all those scholars who don't follow Confucius should be banned for spreading their ideas. Once the evil thoughts are extinguished, the unification can be preserved, the law can be clarified, and the people know what to obey.¹⁴

Another move to consolidate Confucianism's influence among the bureaucrats was the Trail with Spring-Autumn (春秋决狱). Spring-Autumn was a history book recorded by Confucius himself, one of the five Confucianist classics. Since the era of Qin and Han, the Chinese law system was already a codified law, judges' discretion was limited, but after the introduction of Spring-Autumn into the law system, judges could cite cases from the history book as moral guidance on the adjudication, which sometimes could be subversive (Lv, 2000).

All these mentioned actions are part of the so-called "Dethrone hundreds of schools and follow Confucianism alone" (罢黜百家，独尊儒术), but why other hundreds of schools were abandoned, and only Confucianism was endorsed? This is because Confucianism solves the two questions of the PCS: bureaucrats' openness and loyalty.

The "clerisy-style" class in most agrarian societies has little interest in expanding the literate culture into the massive illiterate population, as the "horizontal cultural cleavages... furthers the interests of the privileged and the power-holders" (Gellner, 1983, p. 11). However, the Confucianists are quite different. They had shown a strong interest in public education. This might be because Confucius himself began his career as a master. According to Confucius, "In teaching, there should be no discrimination in classes¹⁵" (有教无类). The restoration of order and peace during the centennial wars depends on the cognition and acceptance of the classic "decorum" (礼) among all the people, which can only be achieved through education.

¹⁴ 《汉书，董仲舒传》 Book of Han, Biography of Dong Zhongshu, 39. <https://ctext.org/han-shu/dong-zhong-shu-zhuan/zhs>

¹⁵ 《论语，卫灵公》 The Analects. Weilinggong, 39. <https://ctext.org/analects/wei-ling-gong/ens>

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Confucius's successors kept this idea as one of their core values. After they stepped into the bureaucratic system and consolidated their absolute dominance since the era of Emperor Wu, the Confucianists now could put the idea into practice. After his dialogue with Dong, in the central, Emperor Wu established a new organization, Taixue (太学, literally: Imperial University), as the top education institution; at the local level, public and private schools were opened up by governments, retired bureaucrats, and civil Confucianists.

The trends of encouraging public education had dramatically expanded the number of Confucianists, their social influence, and the openness of the bureaucrats, especially in the long run. In the Han dynasty, the bureaucrat was selected mainly through a recommendation system, and influential Confucianist families determined the recommendation result. It was a “seller’s market” between the government and Confucianists. Seven centuries later, in the Sui dynasty (581-619) (隋朝), the number of Confucianists had grown so much that the government had applied a new examination system – Keju (科举) – to select its bureaucrats, the once seller’s market now was a buyer’s market. In the Song dynasty (960-1279), in one year, more than 7% of the total adult male population had participated in Keju (Bao, 1992, p. 83). As a famous poem praising study written in the same era said: “Moring I was a peasant, dusk I am in the emperor’s palace; generals and ministers are not out of lineage, common people should endeavor to make a future.” Obviously, the increasing literacy under the PCS and bureaucratic system gave the emperor more leverage when bargaining with the Confucianists.

On the other hand, Confucianism also consolidates bureaucrats’ loyalty to the emperor. For Confucianism, the political order and the social-family order are the same. In the dialogue with a duke, Confucius proposed the idea that “There is a government, when the prince is prince, and the minister is minister; when the father is father, and the son is son¹⁶.” According to Confucius, the relationship between king-courtier is the same as father-son. Confucianists of the Han dynasty had expanded this theory to the entire bureaucratic structure, and thence a political-social-family principle was formed: the emperor is the father of bureaucrats and people, a governor is the father of the mayors and people of his province, and so on for other levels of bureaucrats. This principle is similar to the Russian “Little Father Tsar” concept (Himka, 1980) but more systematical.

As the family and political relationships were combined, the state was also transformed into a large family formed by many small families. According to the Confucian classic Great Learning, the ideal path of a Confucian is “self-cultivation, regulate the family, govern a country, and ultimately pacify the whole world¹⁷.” From this progressive order of the ideal path, we see that the relationship between the family and the state is dialectically-united. The agrarian patriarchy empowered the fathers, the mayors, the governors, and eventually empowered the emperor and the PCS. In return, the bureaucratic state also empowered the patriarchy. The natural sense of family dependence easily became a sense of belonging to the state, one of

¹⁶ 《论语，颜渊》The Analects. Yanyuan, 11. <https://ctext.org/analects/yan-yuan/ens>

¹⁷ 《大学》Great Learning, 2. <https://ctext.org/liji/da-xue/ens>

many iconic results is, in the Chinese language, the word country (国家) is formed by the word state (国) and the word family (家).

2.1.3 China's Proto-Nationalism

After the Confucianism dominated bureaucrats, Chinese society entered an “ultrastable structure”(超稳定结构) (Jin & Liu, 1992), with these three fundamental factors: Emperor, PCS, and Confucianism. Emperor’s prestige and Confucianist ideology endorse the PCS; Confucianism and PCS ensure the superiority of the emperor; Emperor and PCS entitle and enable the Confucianist to dominate the bureaucrats and daily administration. In the agrarian era, these three factors were interdependent trinity. However, as we mentioned before, the emperor’s figure was symbolized quite often. Its role in this ultrastable structure was mainly impersonal and immaterial. It referred more to the outset and summit of the political power chain. To a certain degree, this conceptualized “emperor” can also be interpreted as the political roof or the bedrock of the “imagined community.” It offers a primary impetus for the sense of belonging for the whole bureaucratic system and Chinese people during ancient China.

Besides the inside-attractive core and geography, Confucianism and PCS also contributed to an external boundary on the concepts between “them” and “us” in ancient China.

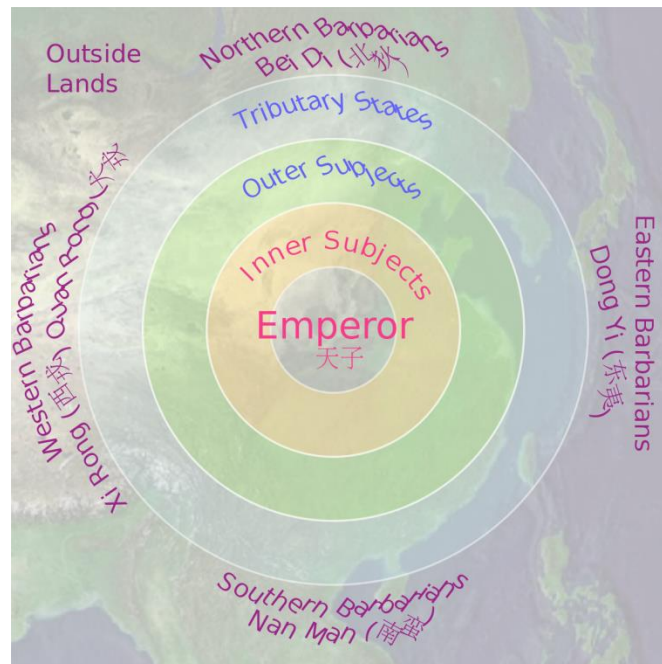


Figure 6. Confucianist Worldview

Source: Internet with public domain

First, for Confucianists, there are two conflicting group concepts: China and Barbarian. As figure 6 shows, China/Emperor is at the center, surrounded by its subjects; according to its intimacy with the emperor,

subjects are categorized into different groups, while outside the sphere of emperor influence is the Outside Lands (化外之地), occupied by different barbarians.

The intimacy with the emperor is profoundly affected by the geographic distance, but the culture is also important, if not more crucial. Culturally China has another name, HuaXia (华夏), because Confucianists had proposed that “China has the grandeur etiquette, thus is Xia; China has the gorgeous civilization, thus is Hua.”¹⁸ HuaXia stands for the Chinese lifestyle and civilization. While for the barbarians, Confucianists despised them for uncivilization, “The reason Chinese people are more elegant than the barbarian, is that the Chinese can learn civilized knowledge. If people only live by instinct like animals, they are as bad as barbarians.”¹⁹

We should notice that this cultural distinction criterion is not race-related nor insurmountable. A classic Confucianist view is: “Outside barbarians may also adore the Chinese civilization, although they were born in the Outside Lands, their hearts are with China, so I don’t call them barbarian...those attracted, love our civilization, happy to follow Confucius’s path, aren’t they Chinese of the Outside Lands?”²⁰ Thus Confucianists were also interested in “changing barbarians with Chinese doctrines²¹,” which can be done through the same way that Confucianists enlighten the Chinese people.

However, Confucianist’s educational and political structure needed a stable agricultural society to support the long-time training required Confucianist-bureaucrat class. During most times of ancient China, lands suitable for such an agricultural society were mainly located within the Great Wall due to geographic reasons. Samely, the Chinese-Confucianist dominance was also mainly limited within the Great Wall, which the western scholars called “China Proper.” The stable farming-nomadic boundary led to a stable separation between China and Barbarians, both conceptually and practically. A clear understanding of “them” emerged from this separation for the Chinese side.

So, the ancient Chinese now built up an operatable separation between “us” and “them” based on a solid economic, political and cultural boundary, but can this identification be considered nationalism? In his book *Nations and nationalism since 1780*, Hobsbawm had made a beneficial explication of this primary sense of belonging, which he called “proto-national.” First, he defined the proto-national as “certain variants of feelings of collective belonging which already existed and which could operate, as it were, potentially on the macro-political scale” (p. 46). He believed there are two kinds of proto-national. The first is a universal common identification that goes beyond the geographical restriction; the other is about the initial core mobilization group of the modern nationalist movement. To better use these two definitions, we will use

¹⁸ 《春秋左传正义》 Commentary on Zuo’s History. Volumen 11th, 12.

<https://ctext.org/wiki.pl?if=gb&chapter=756177&remap=gb>

¹⁹ 《论衡，别通》 Lunheng. Bietong, 17. <https://ctext.org/lunheng/bie-tong/ens>

²⁰ 《全唐文》 Full Tang’s literatures. Volumen 821st, 16. <https://ctext.org/wiki.pl?if=en&chapter=623750&remap=gb>

²¹ 《孟子，滕文公》 Mengzi. Tengwengong, 4. <https://ctext.org/mengzi/teng-wen-gong-i/ens>

proto-national to describe the persona group in the following content, while proto-nationalism describes the ideology.

Obviously, the ancient Chinese identification is the proto-nationalism, but according to Hobsbawm, the proto-nationalism can not be identified as modern nationalism, for which he gave two reasons.

Proto-nationalism usually originated from three elements: language, ethnicity, and religion, but these three factors are not always conducive, if not neglectable, to the birth of modern nationalism. For Hobsbawm, the language, or the modern national languages, are semi-artificial constructs that did not exist before the general primary education, while the proto-nationalism's language boundary is mainly of spoken dialect. The visible ethnicity tends to be negative. It helps more in defining "who are them" but not "who we are"; the religion's contribution to modern nationalism is hard to determine unless "rulers who are ex officio heads of their churches" (p. 72). Furthermore, for Hobsbawm, most proto-nationalism identifications have no necessary relation with a unit of territorial political organization (modern sovereign state), while the modern nation is constructed on it.

In the case of ancient China, Hobsbawm's judgment encountered some dysfunctions. Unlike the italic or germanic language branches, the spoken Chinese language is attached to the written system. Compared with Europe, the Chinese written system has maintained its stability since the invention of the small seal script. Thus the official spoken language (Mandarin) also maintains high stability. On the other hand, under the PCS, local intellectuals and officials had to learn and teach Mandarin to achieve a better position inside the bureaucratic system because, in many cases, they (or their students) needed to work in other provinces, a minimal but influential dominance of Mandarin in local communities was kept through this way (Su, 2013). Hence, even without a general primary education system, Mandarin as a national language should not be considered a semi-artificial construct, and the Chinese dialects were not the language boundary of its proto-nationalism.

As for the visible ethnicity, Hobsbawm himself admitted that China is one of the rare examples where "historic states composed of a population that is ethnically almost or entirely homogeneous... ethnicity and political loyalty are linked" (Hobsbawm, 2012, p. 66). Besides, under Confucianism's state-family structure, the emperor is naturally both head of state and the Confucianist church.

Now only one more condition to be met, the modern sovereign state. For Anthony Giddens, the state's evolution normally has a path from the traditional-agricultural state to an absolutist state and then the modern nation-state (1985). So, which level was ancient China at?

Politically, three elements are most iconic for the state evolution: the expansion of state administrators' influence ability over its people, the definition of territory boundary and its coincidence with the state administrative power, and the administrative unification of the state apparatus. As discussed before, after the foundation of PCS, ancient China already obtained the last two elements, and about the first element, two aspects can offer us a glance at it: taxation and folk cult.

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In ancient China, taxation was never just about revenue, the state had used it as an adjusting lever in all aspects of society. In 356 BC, a reform took place in the once kingdom Qin, that each household with more than two male adults must be divided, or the tax would be doubled (Li Lei, 2019, p.120); other parts of this reform include levy the tax against the fertility but not the area of the land, and different tax rates for different occupations (Zhou Shaoyan, 2017, p.17). This reform founded the basic idea of the future Chinese taxation system, and it was very close to what Giddens said, that the tax policies began to be used both to control the distribution of people and to regulate people's activities, and they also began to become part of the overall development of monitoring measures (Giddens, 1985, p.159).

On the other hand, the Confucianist bureaucrats were very obsessed with rooting out the folk cults. From the Confucianist point of view, any worship without official authorization and "non-beneficial" is a "debauchery cult," which brings not grace but disaster and should be forbidden. Due to various reasons, local folk cults emerged among peasants like a seasonal rainfall. Hence, governors and mayors tried their best to destroy the folk cult since the Han dynasty, and this continuous movement was recorded in history. For example, in the 9th century, a Tang dynasty governor destroyed about 1100 local cult temples. In the Ming dynasty, at least 18 governors and mayors had launched the "destroy the folk cult" movement. (Song, 2002, pp. 20-21; Li, 2011, p. 17 & Luo, 2006, pp. 136-137)

Apparently, in ancient China, Confucianist bureaucrats had shown a strong interest in shaping ordinary people's lifestyles, and with the help of PCS, they did make some achievements in certain periods. Therefore all three political elements of the state evolution can be verified in ancient China, although not perfectly.

The military element for the state evolution, according to Giddens, is the central civil government's monopoly on state violence (1985, pp.57, 105 & 245). In most traditional societies, the ruling class assumed both civil and military functions at the same time, while local military forces were more loyal to the local leaders than to the central regimen. Giddens believed that although ancient China was one of the few traditional societies where the military force was under the control of civil leaders, he argued there was no central government monopoly in China. However, if we look through the military system in Qin and Han dynasties, we may find a different conclusion. In the Qin dynasty, every household must offer one military service member, and the service will join annual drills or military operations, all under the control of the central regimen; on the other side, the military leaders were temporarily designated by the emperor. In the case of Han, military force was mainly deployed in the capital or border prefectures. Soldiers first should service one month in the prefecture, then one year in the capital, and then another year at the border. Under this system, the central government maintained a considerable influence on the soldiers. In fact, Qin's collapse was because of the rebellion of former independent kingdoms, while its force from Qin's core territory resisted till the last. The Han dynasty was replaced because of the chaos inside the central government, while both central and border troops mainly played a passive and instrumental role during the

process (Li Yujie, 1999). Thus, when the PCS went well in ancient China, the military force would not fall out of the central regimen's control.

For Giddens, the final and most important element of the state evolution is capitalism and industrialization, which were totally beyond ancient China's possibility. Then, what ancient China did achieve, was a traditional society closest to the modern state, or as Fukuyama said, by the founding of Qin, China was the first society to develop a modern state (2012, p.15). However, due to the technical limits, ancient China could not reach the level of a truly modern state.

Back to Hobsbawm's judgment, for all his reasons that proto-nationalism is not modern nationalism, ancient China has given a response out of expectation. The Chinese proto-nationalism should be considered as a rare – if not unique – one, and its power is much stronger than other cases mentioned by Hobsbawm. For Hobsbawm, a “normal” proto-nationalism already could make the task of nationalism easier and contributes to the “formation of serious state-aspiring national movements” (2012, pp. 77-78). Therefore it is reasonable to assume that the Chinese proto-nationalism will play a more fundamental role during the Chinese modern nationalistic movement, not only before the foundation of the PRC but also in today's China.

Besides what Hobsbawm has mentioned, based on what we have investigated, the strong proto-nationalism in China also had some other impacts on the Chinese nationalistic movement. The first is the creation of a stable, huge, and persistent group of proto-nationals. The Chinese proto-nationalism is closely linked with the PCS and Confucianism. Once these two systems were affecting China, literates will carry on the proto-nationalism and transmit it to the massive illiterates, and after more than 2000 years of coexistence, the proto-nationalism is deeply rooted in the Chinese society, and these proto-nationals would be a vital force when China faced challenges, especially challenges from outside land. For example, before the expedition against Goguryeo in 645, the Tang dynasty's emperor said: “Eastern Liao was once China's land. The Sui dynasty tried four times but could not reconquer it. The reason I want an eastern expedition is to revenge for China's brothers (died there).” Then thousands of soldiers voluntarily enlisted and responded: “we don't want money or title as rewards but just fight to the death in Eastern Liao.”²²

The second impact is the deep government influence on the nationalistic movement. Chinese proto-nationalism is a subproduct of the powerful central government from the very beginning. The central government determines its self-identification, political goal, and organization. Once the central government encounters dysfunction, the proto-nationalism's attraction and mobilization will also deteriorate, and the proto-nationals have to choose between saving the original system or establishing a new system.

The third impact is extremely homogeneous ethnicity. As the Han population is always the most dominant one in China, ethnic homogeneousness becomes a tradition among the Chinese proto-nationals. For the minorities, they were considered as uncivilized barbarians or civilizing/ sinicizing barbarians. On one side, it contributes to the clarifying of the border between them and us and consolidates the centripetal

²² 《资治通鉴》 Zizhi Tongjian, Volume 197th, 80. <https://ctext.org/wiki.pl?if=gb&chapter=257186>

force among the Han people; on the other side, it discriminates against the minorities and could lead to racism, hampers the assimilation ability of Han, especially when Han's regimen is not the most influential one.

2.2 Modern Nationalism's Awakening

The proto-national in ancient China was powerful, but without the industrialization exported from the outside world, it could never reach a modern nationalism. In this section, we will investigate how this evolution happened in China. It mainly occurred from 1840 to 1949, as two critical historical issues determined the beginning and end of this stage, the First Opium War (1840) and the establishment of the PRC(1949). As the heaviest period in China's modern history, it is called the "Century of Humiliation" (百年国耻) in China. During this period, we will see the failure of the traditional dynasty and the triumph of nationalism – although the victor of the year 1949 is called the Communist Party of China (CPC), one of the two its most important weapons is nationalism, which we will discuss in the second part of this section.

Since the middle of the 19th century, China has painfully transformed its society to embrace new risks that it has never encountered in the past two thousand years. If the traditional minority invasions were only military failures, the invasions of the Western imperialists were a complete failure, military, political, economic, and cultural, a failure that caused China's existence at risk, especially the Japanese invasion of 1931. For nationalism, on the one hand, new imported Western technologies and ideologies had increased China's internal power and promoted its administrative ability and industrialization level, which, according to the European experiences, were essential for the construction of a nation-state. On the other hand, we must notice that China's modern nationalism is not a product of its industrialization but of western industrialization. As Anthony stated, once the capitalists from industrialized countries came and exploited the colonies, the colonial elites had no guns, no treasuries, no technologies, nor any skills against such invasion. Their only weapon was the people, and they needed a mass movement to achieve their political goals (Smith, 2010 & Nairn, 2003). In the case of China, Anthony's colonial elite is Hobsbawm's proto-national, with already well-based popularity among the Chinese, China's elites did not need industrialization's advantages such as massive primary education or "Separation of Church and State" to develop the modern nationalistic movement, the existence of outside hegemonies and the crisis of China's existence were the critic motivations.

Therefore, our investigation at this stage will focus more on the interaction between China and the outside world, which determines the protocol of today's Chinese nationalists-foreign powers interaction. Two cases are selected as iconic examples: the Boxers Uprising in 1898-1901 and the Japanese invasion in 1931-1945.

2.2.1 “Boxers Uprising”: from ethnic loyalty to nationalism

The Boxers Uprising is widely considered to begin in November 1899 and ended on September 7, 1901. Unlike other uprisings before, the Chinese people were not against their own government but the foreign power, both its personnel and influence in China.

In 1899, 59 years after the first opium war, the Qing dynasty suffered many imperialist invasions and many failures. Several unequal treaties were signed with western powers and Japan, which resulted in the loss of territory and domestic sovereignty of the Qing dynasty, and also a large number of war reparations were paid. Those important ones were: Treaty of Nanking (1842), Treaty of Wanghia (1844), Treaty of Whampoa (1844), Treaty of Aigun (1858), Treaty of Tianjin (1858), Convention of Peking (1860), and Treaty of Shimonoseki (1895). Figure 7 shows how Chinese intellectuals at that time see outside powers. Its headline is “Current Situation,” the right column says “no need for elaboration,” and the left one says: “just watch it.” In the main part, we can find British, Russia, France, America, Japan, and German as the main intruders, with most Chinese territory under their influence, while many other European-style figures were waiting to join them.



Figure 7. Current Situation. Author: Tse Tsan-Tai. Date: July 1898

Source: Internet with public domain

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Bureaucrats were not satisfactory, mainly because of the imposed extraterritoriality and their powerlessness on the opium trade that was damaging the country. They felt their authority was weakened. The coastal merchants – both from sea and rivers – were bankrupting, and inland handicraftsmen were also at stake due to western ships and industrial products (Hart, 1903, pp. 121-122, pp. 157-162).

As for the vast Chinese peasants, although they already suffered a lot under Qing's minority regime, the imperialist invasions only had deteriorated their daily life to a lower level: economically, they had to pay extra taxes for war reparation, and from the political-cultural point of view, the western missionaries and recent Chinese converts had seized various privileges through the unequal treaties, and compelled Chinese citizens in ceding more economic interests and abandoning traditional spiritual lifestyle (Hart, 1903, p.162).

Then the vast unindustrialized Chinese population hated all western things, from church to kerosene lamps. A major risk in the last years of the 19th century was, many conflicts arose between the Christians and the peasants in North China, while generally, the winner of such conflicts was the Christian side, so a vicious circle was formed and grew stronger day after day (Tang & Wang, 2006, p. 72; Xu Tong, 1989, p. 29).

After one more Chinese-Christians conflict, the Boxer Uprising broke out in November 1899 in Shandong province. Using the slogan “Help Qing, Annihilate Foreigners,” the boxers began attacking Christians, burning western goods, and destroying the railway. In the beginning, the Qing dynasty maintained an ambiguous attitude about the uprising: on the one hand, it considered the boxers as “virtuous peasants” and saw no necessity in repressing them; on the other hand, the imperialists had exerted many pressures on the Qing dynasty to take measures. At the local level, bureaucrats and soldiers sympathized with boxers and many times participated in or helped the uprising. In the chaos, the uprising had expanded to the capital Beijing in June 1900. Due to the incoming foreign intervention, the Qing dynasty saw the uprising as an opportunity to “expel foreign influences” and officially endorsed it. Since June 20, 1900, official soldiers began to attack the foreign armies and diplomats stationed in Beijing.

The hegemonies formed the Eight-Nation Alliance (Italy, United States, France, Austria-Hungary, Japan, Germany, Russia, and United Kingdom) to protect their interest and personnel in China. On June 12, the Alliance had captured the Taku fort, Tianjin was also occupied by the Alliance on July 14, and the capital Beijing was occupied on August 14. The Qing dynasty found out that its strength was not enough to resist the foreign intervention even with the boxers' help, so it changed its stand, gave up the boxers, recognized the Alliance's military conduct as “help in suppressing the boxers' rebellion” and turned its guns into the repression. Attacked by both official and foreign forces, the boxers quickly lost any chance. On September 7, 1901, the Qing dynasty and eleven foreign countries (the alliances plus Spain, Belgium, and the Netherlands) signed the Boxer Protocol (辛丑条约), this treaty generally disabled Qing's defense ability, and the war reparation came to an unprecedented high number, including the interest, Qing had to pay 37,000 tons of silver as indemnity in 39 years²³(Spence, 1991, p. 211).

²³ Although Qing was overturned in 1912, its successor continued the payment till the WWII.

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Throughout the uprising, the boxers' behaviors were indeed barbaric and unreasonable. Even innocent Chinese were attacked only because of the possession of western products, and the uprising's result was not good, neither for the country nor for the individual boxer. But despite the superficial phenomena, what we should notice, is a transformation from proto-nationalism to modern nationalism.

The boxers originated from secret societies. In local communities, there was always a counter-minority movement dedicated to restoring the last Ming dynasty (1368-1644), which was established by a pure Han ethnic group and had saved China from the hand of the Mongols (Hobsbawm, 2012, p.62). Actually, the original slogan that the boxers used before the uprising was "Overthrow Qing, restore Ming" (Tang & Wang, 2006, p.73). Obviously, since the beginning of the uprising, the boxers had already turned the Qing dynasty in favor, which can also be verified through their shallow political demands: "Drive out the foreign evils and defend Qing"... "serve the dynasty and pacify the country, take care of the peasant and defend the homeland"... "Protect the country and save the people" (Ouyang Yuefeng, 1996, p.281).

The original slogan of the secret societies was a direct product of Chinese proto-nationalism, where the ethnic group played the fundamental factor in the self-awareness of the boxers – except the ruling group, Qing, had adopted almost every administrative idea of Ming. But compared with foreign intruders, the differences between the Han, Manchu, or any other minorities were now much more neglectable. From one side, the war reparation would not care about the ethnicities. For common people under Qing's rule, "Qing loses the war, we will suffer" became a solidified cognition, and their destiny/interests gradually became unified within Qing. Second, as Sir Robert Hart observed, the Chinese were conceited people. They already had a hierarchy system for more than 2000 years, an unequal hierarchy, but also an acceptable one. Western imperialism did not bring an equal system but just imposed another hierarchy over the current one. More importantly, Qing was a minority, but yet Confucianist regimen, while the imposed western Christianity was a total heresy, a heresy aggressively expanded itself through violence. Then, the Confucianist Chinese could easily feel that they were oppressed by the Christianist western. As a result, the direct cause of the Boxers Uprising was "the foreigners are rampaging in China for the recent forty years," and the imperial powers "deceive the Chinese government and intimidate the Chinese people" (Ouyang Yuefeng, 1996, p.280). Of course, the boxers' statements and behaviors had shown that they were not totally out of racism's influence, especially in the way of defining "them." However, one important progress is that the definition of "us" has become more civic. The boxers were trying to build a more reliable connection between the government and the people. An example from the French Revolution of 1789 was:

...a nation created by the political choice of its members who, in doing so, broke with or at least demoted their former loyalties. The 1,200 National Guards from Languedoc, Dauphine and Provence who met near Valence on 19 November 1789 took an oath of loyalty to Nation, Law and King, and declared that henceforth they were no longer Dauphinois, Provençaux or Languedociens, but only Frenchmen. (Hobsbawm, 2012, p.87)

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Same as the French, the boxers, mainly formed up of Han people, had to demote their proto-nationalism and ethnical loyalty and turned to the minority regimen only because the Qing dynasty was the only political entity that could represent China in front of the imperialist invasions.

Unfortunately, there was no National Constituent Assembly in China, and “Louis XVI” continued to rule the country and surrendered to foreign powers. But the Qing's betrayal did not mean the break up between the state and the people. After the failure of the boxers, the minority regimen and its supporters had lost the leadership in saving China, and the Han of the vast majority took over, which aimed to found a new republic. As the famous revolutionary figure Chen Tainhua wrote in his article “Turn head back” (猛回头), “if the Manchu government can protect the Han people and culture, we could accept their rule; but what I see is that the court is full of foreign's dogs, and if we Han continue to follow their order, we are marching towards our own firing squad” (1903). This was a choice consistent with the proto-nationalism, that once the central government encountered a total dysfunction, the proto-nationals would have to establish a new central government so to ensure their political goals. Only one decade after the Boxers Uprising, started by one battalion of soldiers and followed by 14 provinces in 41 days, the 1911 revolution broke out, and the Republic of China officially replaced the Qing dynasty on 2 February 1912 (Esherick & Wei, 2013).

The forming of Chinese nationalism's need for a new central government to stand its stance was the main reason for the quick victory of the 1911 revolution, and the new nationalism's civic nature was another reason. Many Manchu aristocrats participated in the Boxer Uprising and were executed after the signature of the Boxer Protocol. Thus, even the Manchu people were against the Qing dynasty. During the 1911 revolution, Manchu revolutionists in the north had formed some associations and launched several uprisings to strategically encircle the Qing government (Yuan Feng, 1991, p. 25), and the new republic immediately endorsed the “Five Ethnicities' Republic” idea.

Compared with other past resistances against the imperialist invasion or uprisings against the Qing dynasty, a fundamental difference in the Boxers Uprising is mass participation with a civic nationalist identification (Liu Xiaoqiu, 2010, p.42). If the traditional Chinese proto-nationals can still be categorized into Hobsbawm's *political nation* – which means a proto-national formed of privileged elite or the nobility and gentry (2012, p. 73) – then the boxers had indicated the formation of a proto-national with a broader scope or even a complete modern nationalist group. Therefore, although its slogans and behavior pattern were still full of the traditional agricultural society's features, Chinese scholars widely consider it the first major nationalistic movement in China (Ouyang Yuefeng, 1995; Tang & Wang, 2006; Liu Xiaoqiu, 2010).

Except for the effort in overcoming the proto-nationalism's racism, two more points also should be noticed during the Boxers Uprising: the detonator of this Chinese nationalistic movement was the outside pressure, and the nationalistic movement demanded a government that could support its position. Unlike the French Revolution, which started from domestic chaos and conflicts, the boxers' primary purpose was to defend their economic interests and cultural independence from foreign powers. Such purpose was the main topic for China during the Century of Humiliation and even after the foundation of the PRC; on the other

side, imperialism would use a weak government to neutralize nationalism. Besides the final betrayal of the central government, multiple provincial governments had early declared “neutral” during the Boxers Uprising and started the crackdown to avoid possible foreign intervention. Certainly, it was a symbol of the central government’s dysfunction, but it also revealed the “divide and rule” (Christopher, 1988) strategy’s application in China. As a result, the foreign powers and their Chinese cooperators were targeted by the Chinese nationalists. For example, since his early participation in politics, Mao Zedong had stated that imperialism and the compradors²⁴ were two of the three principal enemies of China’s revolution (Ji & Liu, 2008). Also, during the May Fourth Movement, the most famous slogan was “Struggle for the sovereignty externally, get rid of the national traitors domestically” (外争国权，内除国贼) (Schwarcz, 1986; Lee, 2009).

The Boxers Uprising was iconic for China’s nationalism, but its agricultural society nature was still significant. Thus, its potential mobilization level and achievements were very limited; Qing’s betrayal also interrupted its expansion to the whole of China. According to the French Revolution experience, for making a new nation, a possible solution – not voluntary but costly – is a total mobilized war. In the case of China, it was the Second Sino-Japanese War.

2.2.2 Second Sino-Japanese War: first massive mobilization with nationalism

Since the last decade of the 19th century, Japan began its expansion in China. In 1931, three northeast Chinese provinces were conquered, and a full invasion began in 1937. The Second Sino-Japanese War was a part of WWII. After “Eight Years of Resistance”²⁵ (八年抗战), China won the war as a member of the United Nations.

For the traditional imperialism invasion of China, territory expansion was not a priority. Most European hegemonies tended to conquer a small land or enclave inside the city as their operation base in China, which is called “concessional territory” or “foreign concession” (租界). For example, Hong Kong by British, Macau by Portugal, Kiautschou Bay by German, KwangChouWan by France, and the Shanghai International concession by multiple foreign hegemonies. As the Chinese sovereignty was damaged but not totally stripped off during this process, it was called “semi-colony” (半殖民地). Nevertheless, Japan was an exception, for it was eager to conquer more land. After the First Sino-Japanese War, the island of Taiwan was ceded to Japan as part of the Shimonoseki Treaty; China’s dependences Ryukyu and Korea were also annexed by Japan during the later years of the Qing dynasty. Therefore, from the Chinese elites’ view, the Japanese purpose of the Second Sino-Japanese War was to conquer all of China and convert the semi-colony jointly dominated by multiple imperialists into an exclusive colony (Mao, 1935). In other words, the existence of China was at the “last moment” (Chiang, 1937).

²⁴ Comprador means a person who acts as an agent for foreign organizations engaged in investment, trade, or economic or political exploitation. *Oxforddictionaries.com*, Oxford University Press. Retrieved 8 January 2019.

²⁵ In recent years, the Chinese official narrative tends to replace the “eight years resistance”(since 1937) with “fourteen years resistance”(since 1931).

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The Japanese invasion confirmed the concerns of the Chinese elite. Since the 1931 invasion, the Japanese government had directly formulated and implemented a large-scale population replacement. Until the end of WWII in 1945, nearly two million Japanese immigrants lived in mainland China (Xu Zhimin, 2015, p.10). In order to make room for Japanese immigrants, also due to the brutality of imperialism, the Japanese army had committed numerous genocides in China. At least 22 mass killings occurred only during the first year of the full invasion (Zuo, 1994), while the most notorious one was the Nanjing Massacre in 1937, where 300 thousand Chinese civilians and captives were killed (Chang, 2012, p.102).

For common Chinese people, the Japanese invasion was the ever worst because even their basic right to life was in danger, and the only way to survive was to unify and fight. On the other hand, the Japanese atrocities were not just targeting the Han people, but all ethnicities lived in China (Wan, 2010). Thus the concept of the China Nation was placed in the supreme position. Figure 8 is a Chinese war poster. The four white Chinese characters on the bottom left of each section were China mainland (中國內地), on the right column, it wrote: “the potential power of the China Nation, is finally excavated by the enemy.”



Figure 8. A Chinese War Poster
Source: Internet with public domain

Although most Chinese intellectuals had endorsed the China Nation and Gu Jiegang’s “China Nation is a whole one,” their opinions were still academic discussions and political statements. The Boxers Uprising had shown the Chinese that slogans alone could not defeat imperialism. In order to unify all Chinese with the China Nation truly, the mass awakening and mobilization were way more important. Despite the ideological differences on the future of China, both the rebelling CPC and ruling Kuomintang had tried the national mobilization in their own way. Given that the CPC has won the final victory and has been in power to this

day, and modern Chinese nationalism is mainly shaped under its governance, our investigation will focus on CPC's national mobilization.

According to Mao Zedong, Japan was a small but industrialized country, and China was a big but agricultural country; thus, the key factor of China's victory was to draw Japan into a protracted war, during which the China side could gradually mobilize the huge illiterate population in spirit, and to win the victory through ensuring people's fighting will (Mao, 1938). But not all Chinese were workers or peasants, and the national bourgeoisie, urban petty bourgeoisie, compradors, and traditional landlords were all doubting CPC's policies. Therefore, CPC had to transform its policy to establish a broad National United Front against Japan (抗日民族统一战线):

Why change the "workers' and peasants' republic" into a "people's republic"? Our government represents not only the workers and peasants but the whole nation.... The people's republic will definitely not represent the interests of the enemy classes. On the contrary, it will stand in direct opposition to the landlord and comprador classes, the lackeys of imperialism....throwing off imperialist oppression to make China free and independent and throwing off landlord oppression to free China from semi-feudalism.... The sum total of the interests of the workers, peasants, and the rest of the people constitutes the interests of the whole Chinese nation. The comprador and the landlord classes also live on Chinese soil, but as they have no regard for the national interests, their interests clash with those of the majority. This small minority group is the only one that we break with and are clashing with, and we therefore have the right to call ourselves the representatives of the whole nation²⁶. (Mao, 1935)

Facing the Japanese invasion, CPC had given clear definitions of "us" and "them": we are the vast majority of Chinese people, and they are Japanese imperialism and its lackeys; our purpose is the freedom and independence of China, and their purpose is the imperialism and feudalism oppression. In the beginning, the landlord was still targeted by CPC, but as the war continued, landlords who supported the anti-Japanese war were also accepted by CPC. It was a natural result because the traditional Confucianist bureaucrat was basically equivalent to landlords, then the common nationalist political goal bridged the discrepancy between the Confucianist and CPC.

The national mobilization required a certain period, the Japanese would have an advantage in the early to mid-term, and CPC could not afford decisive battles at the frontline; on the other hand, due to the extensiveness of China's territory and Japan's shortage of troops, Japan could only stabilize its occupation in the big cities and main transport lines. Therefore, CPC chose guerrilla warfare and established base areas behind enemy lines. In figure 9, we can see that Japan had occupied the prosperous regions and cities along the coastline, rivers, and railways, while CPC had built numerous bases in the rural area.

²⁶ All "nation" used in this quotation are the translation of the term 民族.

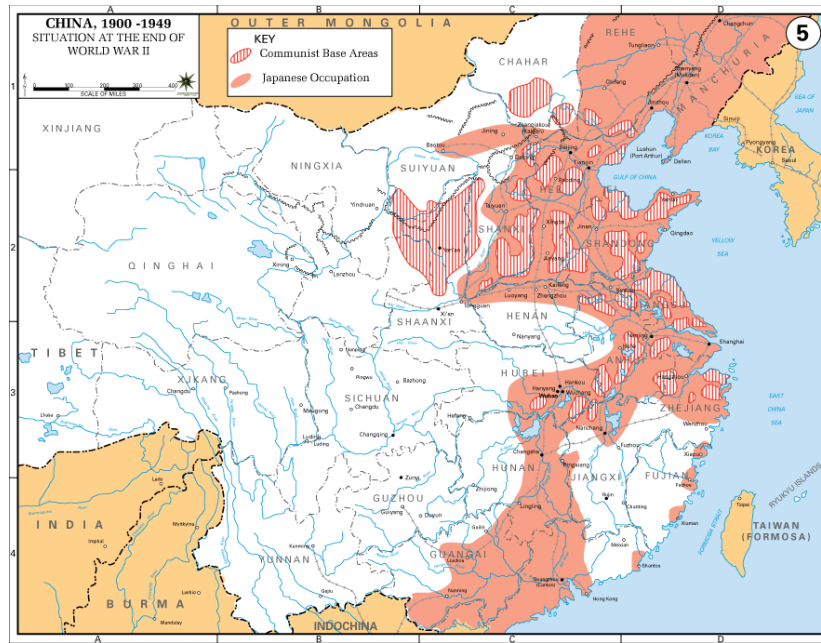


Figure 9. Situation at the End of World War Two

Source: Internet with public domain

The war situation determined that CPC's mobilization must focus on the peasants and landlords, and three fundamental features of that mobilization can be summarized:

Replace the traditional patriarchal society structure with new organizational forms. As we have discussed before, the traditional Chinese society was based on the patriarchal family structure, relation structure within the family was the model of the social structure, proactive political participation only occurred in the small group of patriarchs and landlords, the peasants' passion was very limited. For CPC, the first step to change this situation was the establishment of multiple new organizations, including the Peasant Association, Women's Federation, Youth Nation Salvation Council, Children Scouts, and many others (Weng, 1997, p. 67). Under the flag of national salvation, The people had shown great enthusiasm for participating in these organizations. In 1939, there were 1,162,523 members of the Peasant Association in Shanxi base areas alone; in some areas, more than 70% of the population had joined various anti-Japanese organizations (Liu Ying, 2006, p. 45).

CPC also had applied the "Three Third System" (三三制), that in all government or people's representative bodies, the CPC took one-third of the places, non-communist progressive groups took another one-third, and the last one-third was taken by any parties or groups who stand for resistance. This system ensured the dominance of resister/nationalists in local communities and also gave the marginal apolitical groups more opportunities for political participation without causing extreme opposition. After gaining enough political leverage with the Three Third System, CPC could ask the landlords to unfasten their economic exploitation and consolidate peasants' fight will (Weng, 1997, p. 68 & Liu, 2006, p. 45).

The second feature of CPC's mobilization was the **combination of military and politics**. The army usually guided the establishment of CPC's base areas; however, the army's main task was to cover the construction of new organizations but not a direct assault on the Japanese. Once the new organizations took over local communities, they began to support the army in various ways in addition to food and manpower. For example, the Women's Federation would offer wound care and sewing services, the Children Scouts was a part-time sentry/messenger on the watch of possible Japanese operations, and the militia of the Peasant Association could participate in road sabotage, logistics support, or directly engaged in the battle if necessary (Dou, 2017, pp. 34-36). During the war, CPC regarded politics as important as the military. Through politically organizing and mobilizing the people, CPC had transformed the conventional war into a Chinese people against the Japanese Army war, which not only had strengthened China's resistance power but also had promoted people's nationalistic awareness through their direct participation (Chen Yongfa, 2001).

Taking into account the level of literacy in the countryside, CPC had adopted a **diverse propaganda method**. For literate landlords, young students, and rural teachers, CPC used forms like newspapers and poems that suited their cultural habits to propagate the nationalism and recruit new members, and the effect was remarkable. During the war, the number of CPC members had increased from 40,000 to 1.2 million, while most newly recruited cadres were students and teachers (Weng, 1997, p. 69 & Wang Xinsheng, 2005, p. 34). For the majority of illiterate peasants, the mobile troupe was a convenient and effective propaganda apparatus because its dramas and songs were both entertaining and enlightening, and it was easy for the peasants to associate the plot with their own experiences. Besides, local CPC organizations also had offered night school education to the peasants, during which nationalism was easily preached. For example, in Shanxi, lesson 4 of the literacy class was "I'm Chinese, my home is *Province County Village*," and lesson 5 was "Shanghai, Tianjin, Beijing, Guangzhou, and Hankou are the five biggest cities in our country...they were all occupied by the enemy, we must take them back" (Xin, 2017, p. 73).

CPC's mobilization was proved to be an effective one. In the military, since 1941, the Japanese's main offensive target in north China became CPC's force, which had stalled about 250 thousand Japanese force (41% of total Japanese force in mainland China); in certain areas, the Japanese occupation only existed in strongholds like cities, while the countryside was totally under CPC's control (Fan, 2016). But a more important achievement of the mobilization was the politic. A crucial lesson from the Boxers Uprising was that the Chinese nationalistic movement heavily depended on the government's resolution. When the central Qing government chose to surrender and southern local governments chose to remain neutral, the boxers' failure became inevitable because no more political entity in China could be nationalists' shelter. Unlike Qing, CPC kept a firm stand on nationalism. It was so firm that after Wang Jingwei – the vice-president of Kuomintang – defected to the Japanese side in 1940, his political slogan was "Peace, Anti-Communist, Nation Building" (和平反共建国). Obviously, CPC was the biggest obstacle to the Japanese war goal. As figure 9 shows, CPC's base areas were mostly inside the Japanese occupation, its resistance was a close fight without rear, and local Chinese people's support was the only way to survive, which could only be achieved through the firm nationalist resolution. On the other hand, CPC also had gained huge benefits from such a

resolution: before the Japanese invasion, it was encircled in northern Shaanxi province by Kuomintang, with a small army and few party members; in 1945, it had 1.2 million party members, an army of 910 thousand soldiers, 2.2 million militias, and a total 95 million population under its control (Chen Yongfa, 2001, p. 331).

During CPC's mobilization, nationalism was both the ideological weapon and the result. Naturally, those new organizations introduced by CPC would erode the traditional patriarchal power structure. In fact, before WWII, during the first ten years of war against Kuomintang (1927-1937), CPC also had tried social reform in its control area, but in the end, CPC had to retreat strategically from the southern base area. Although the previous failure was not only because of local landlords' resistance, after the vigorous introduction of nationalism since 1937, CPC's social reform became quite popular in its newly established base areas. This was because the landlord and gentry were the dominators in the rural area. Most of them were Confucianism followers and were affected by proto-nationalism. Facing the Japanese invasion, they were not as confrontational in sharing economic interests and political rights with the peasants as before. A small number of landlords who insisted on the traditional power structure could not resist CPC's politically oriented army and had to cooperate with the Japanese, which gave CPC the excuse to "Beat traitors" (打汉奸), depriving and sharing their properties with the peasants (Chen Yongfa, 2001, pp. 340-343). Therefore, armed with nationalism, CPC's mobilization was politically undefeatable.

The mass mobilization also contributed to CPC's shift from classic communism to nationalism. Before the mid of 1940s, the Comintern's influence on CPC was powerful, and in many cases, CPC had to put Comintern/USSR's interests above China's (Shen, 2002). Nevertheless, since WWII, young students and rural teachers became the main force of party members and cadres, which were firstly mobilized by the Chinese nationalism; on the other hand, the establishment of base areas offered CPC a stable localized source of resources, its dependence on the Comintern was weakened. All this led to a rebalancing of ideology and power inside the CPC. Nationalism, or at least a sinicized communism, took over when Mao Zedong – according to Dr. Kissinger, has a "fierce nationalism" – consolidated his authority in 1942 (Kampen, 2000. & Kissinger, 2011, p.98).

2.2.3 Toward the modern nationalism

During the Century of Humiliation, China's proto-nationalism gradually became modern nationalism. As two iconic events during this transformation, the Boxers Uprising and the Second Sino-Japanese War's effect on modern nationalism was profound and critical. Compared with the Boxers Uprising, during the second Sino-Japanese war, the Chinese resistant force had grown steadily, Chinese nationalists had not been betrayed again, and China won a pivotal victory in a war against the imperialist invasion without signing any unequal treaty, thus for the Chinese nationalists, it was a commendable victory. One reason for this victory was Japan's ever most brutal behavior, and another crucial reason was organizational nationalism. Nevertheless, these new organizations were not spontaneously formed nor subproducts of any new-industrial productivity, a political entity guided them with governmental ambition, and the power structure still was a

pyramid-shaped – CPC members were the backbone of both local branches and headquarters of these new organizations, so did their Central Committee – branches relationship. This is a result of the path dependence on the traditional government-led social structure, but the boxers’ failure and the later WWII victory would only enhance that path dependence – one costly experience the Chinese gained from the Century of Humiliation is, victory comes from strong government leadership. Hence the Chinese nationalists would prefer a position of “being instructed” when dealing with the government, especially an effective one.

Another impact of the Century of Humiliation on China’s modern nationalism is the attitude toward the China-Foreign relationship. First, during this era, foreign forces had played the role of unilateral perpetrators, and the defense was the only position China had taken. Thus the Chinese nationalists have a strong impression of China’s suffering, and a “victimization narrative” has become quite popular ever since the ROC period (Gries, 2004, p. 48). For China, WWII was a defensive but not retaliatory victory, while shortly after WWII, the western powers turned against CPC and PRC. In short, given the historical reality, keeping alert to the western powers is not a groundless illusion for Chinese nationalists.

China also needs the west. In the proto-nationalism era, China’s concept of a foreign country was neglectable and uncivilized, while China could keep the splendid isolation with a full scale of pretensions (Kissinger, 2012, p. 23). Two thousand years of isolation and arrogance only allowed China to develop a superiority over the world it knew, which the western foreigners suddenly broke. As the boxers’ failure indicated the complete inability of traditional society, then the arrogance was abandoned, “western better than Chinese” became a tenet, and to learn from the west was no more a shame but survival must. The nationalist can not avoid being affected by this trend. However, the deep untrust – intensified by the total-westernization idea (Pye, 1993, p.103) – forces them to take a contradictory and varying position on the west. Given that the teacher is highly respected in Confucianism, the acknowledgment and encouragement are crucial for students’ self-confidence, and the Chinese nationalist’s feelings toward their western teachers can be even more complicated.

The biggest improvement China’s modern nationalism had achieved during the Century of Humiliation was nationalism’s expansion among common people. Compared with the traditional Confucianist-PCS structure, those newly established organizations had a much wider cover radius, and their effectiveness was elevated by the western imported technologies like radio and printing press. However, this was not a decisive breakthrough for China’s modern nationalism. As we have discussed before, the crucial defect between China’s proto-nationalism and modern nationalism is the industrialization that allows a national economy and individually industrialized working conditions. The peasants had gained more political participation through CPC's war mobilization, but they still worked like their ancestors 2000 years ago. Without industrialization, the economy would turn the society back to its traditional form.

Besides, as China fell from the central dominant position, the material support of the traditional Confucianist worldview also disappeared. Not only did China has to readjust its opinion on foreign/outside lands countries, but the relationship between Han and other ethnicities within China’s border also became a

challenge, of which no Chinese political figure had given a feasible solution during the Century of Humiliation. That is to say, to confront the external pressure, China had obtained a more apparent consciousness of the definition of “them” – imperialists and their lackeys, but with much less progress on who is “us.” In summary, even after the Century of Humiliation, China’s nationalism still had not achieved a complete modern appearance, and its already obtained progress was not foolproof.

2.3 Nationalism under “China Nation”

We have discussed the theoretical evolution of the China Nation concept in the introduction chapter. It quickly became popular after the Qing dynasty lost its legality, and a new political ceiling was needed among Chinese intellectuals. In the first decades of the 20th century, its influence was mainly among the upper elites and academic discussions, with limited political practice. During WWII, its academic-political combination peaked as Kuomintang and CPC needed it as the adhesive for the National United Front, even though both sides had a different explication of its content. After the foundation of the PRC, to overcome the racism feature of the proto-nationalism, the now ruling CPC tried to balance the soviet national autonomy and traditional centralization governance under the China Nation concept. As communism gradually faded out after the death of Mao Zedong, China Nation became the nuclear idea and ultimate solution to every nationalistic issue in the official narrative.

The development of the China Nation is actually the development of the official response to the definition of “us.” Due to proto-nationalism’s heavy dependence on the government, the official narrative obscured the popular opinion on that definition, especially before the Internet’s appearance. The dominance of the official narrative has attributed to the China Nation and Chinese nationalism more political concerns than academic theories, and different governments (Kuomintang/CPC) would underline different political orientations in different periods (Before/After Mao’s death). On the other hand, the powerful proto-nationalism also has limited the government’s political shaping ability. The power to define is in the hands of the government, but only a definition that corresponds with the invisible public opinion can last. The Chinese government can only direct nationalism into its preferred trend but cannot order it to happen. As no systematic research had been done on proto-nationalism, the government could only make attempts without theoretical guidance, while the outcome could be both positive and negative. However, for our investigation, it means through analyzing governments’ political practices with the China Nation concept, it is possible to summarize Chinese nationalism’s unchallengeable core frame, its political demand, and the political evolution of the China Nation concept.

2.3.1 Kuomintang’s nationalism and CPC’s disagreement

Kuomintang and its predecessor Tongmenghui (United League, 同盟会), was the most influential political faction during the first half of the 20th century. It was the leader of the 1911 revolution and China’s

ruling party from 1927 to 1949. After the triumph of the 1911 revolution, ROC replaced the Manchu dynasty, and revolutionary leaders, who preferred ethnicism before, now had to reconsider their definition of the nation. As Sun Yat-sen – the founder of Tongmenghui – stated at his presidential inauguration in 1912: “The base of a country lies on its people...unifying the Han, Manchu, Mongol, Muslim, Miao, and Tibetan into one people, that is the unification of the nation” (Yan, Li & Wu, 2012, p. 2). Compared with his ethnicistic comrades, Sun’s speech de facto endorsed civic nationalism, but Sun himself could not get rid of ethnicism’s influence and swung between two types of nationalism. For instance, in 1921, Sun emphasized to his followers – Kuomintang – that “our party must do more work on nationalism, we must absorb Manchu, Mongol, Muslim, Miao, and Tibetan into Han ethnicity, and make China a nationalistic state” (p. 2)

After Sun’s death, Chiang Kai-shek became the leader of Kuomintang and China in 1927. During the first decade of his ruling, the anti-communist was the priority, but the incoming Japanese invasion forced him to cooperate with CPC and turned to emphasize nationalism. In 1943, Chiang had published his famous book “China’s Destiny” (中国之命运). Although external imperialism was the key topic, Chiang elaborated his views on the history of the China Nation in a short length (11 out of 231 pages). According to Chiang, nations grow naturally, and the power of the people’s group creates the country. In the case of the China nation, it should be considered as a dynasty with numerous cadet branches, the internal solidarity is based on the same lineage and marriage, and the integration of these cadet branches is motivated by culture but not force (Chiang, 1945, pp. 8-9).

Both Sun and Chiang had shown the tendency to be affected by ethnicism. Sun admitted the existence of other ethnicities in China but wanted to “absorb” them, while Chiang emphasized the homology of all ethnicities living in China and tried to combine the traditional patrilocal social system and the nationalistic consciousness by denying the independent existence of other ethnicities. Academically, Chiang’s mistake was more serious, sociologists at the time already had confirmed the independent origin of many Chinese ethnicities, and historically these ethnicities were categorized as outside barbarians. However, the Japanese invasion forced many Chinese intellectuals to endorse Chiang’s definition unconditionally (Huang, 2016, pp. 20-25).

While keeping quiet on other parts of Chiang’s book, CPC had fiercely criticized Chiang’s definition of the Chinese Nation, labeling it the same as “German, Italy and Japan fascist” (Ibid, p. 23). In the commentary on Jiefang Daily, Chen Boda, Mao Zedong’s secretary, refuted Chiang’s “dynasty and cadet branches” by citing Stalin’s definition of the nation and declared that only the labor people of 90% population were the true representative of the nation (Chen Boda, 1943). Admitting the existence of independent ethnicities in China is one of CPC’s core policies. For example, in 1941, the book “Ethnic Question About Huihui” was published by CPC, in which the Hui – Chinese speaking Muslims – was recognized as an independent ethnicity (Hua & Zhai, 2012).

Nevertheless, admitting the independent ethnicities during a chaotic era could bring challenges, especially for a weak country like China, and even more complicated for a communist party, which is

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supposed to support national self-determination. In fact, during the first decade after its foundation (1922-1938), CPC's core opinion on China's minorities was the national self-determination and federalism, that Mongolia²⁷, Tibet, and Xinjiang should establish their democratic autonomous states, and together with the China proper to form a federal republic (Zi, 2013, p. 96). Obviously, CPC's nationalism was a Soviet Union's replica during this period.

However, Japan conquered China's northeast, Russia/Soviet had divided Mongolia and supported Xinjiang's separatism, and Tibet was contacting the British for further independence. The geopolitical challenges and the expansion of proto-nationals inside the party since 1937 forced the CPC to adopt a more localized and realistic nationalism. In the 6th Plenary Session of the 6th Central Committee of 1938, Mao's final report had listed 15 "emergent tasks for all the nation," in the 13th task of "Unite all ethnicities in China, together against Japan," Mao had expressed his plan for China's minorities: "(all minorities) have the same rights as the Han, within the common anti-Japanese principle, they have the right to rule their own affairs, meanwhile join with Han to establish a unified country."²⁸ Before Japan surrendered in 1945, Mao once again repeated that CPC would "recognize the right to self-determination of all the nationalities in China and that a free and united republic of China (a free union of all the nationalities) will be established when the anti-imperialist and anti-warlord revolution is victorious."²⁹

For CPC, "self-determination" was not synonymous with independence, and its real intention was the autonomous region. "The basic policy on Inner Mongolia is to implement regional autonomy" (Tang Jianbing, 2012, p. 76). In 1946, during the preparatory work of the Inner Mongolia autonomous region, CPC furtherly pointed out that the regional autonomy should be an "autonomy of ethnic equality" but not "independent autonomy," and "the Inner Mongolia Autonomy Government is not an independent government, but part of the democratic coalition government (of all China)" (Ibid, p. 76).

Kuomintang and CPC were two major Chinese political parties during the first half of the 20th century. They had fought with each other and also had fought together against the outsider, and many differences can be found in their nationalistic policies. Kuomintang emphasized Han's dominant position and tried to unify other ethnicities within the traditional Confucianist social-family structure, while CPC, on the contrary, tried to unify the minorities by recognizing their right to self-determination. We could say Kuomintang was of ethnic nationalism while CPC was of civic nationalism. Nevertheless, these two nationalisms had an outstanding common ground – China's unity. Before the 1911 Revolution, Sun's comrades did not hide their racism and hostility towards the Manchu people, but once they took over, the Five Ethnicities' Republic became the new political correctness. Similarly, since Mao Zedong became CPC's

²⁷ Both Outer and Inner Mongolia.

²⁸ 《论新阶段》 On the new phase. <https://www.marxists.org/chinese/maozedong/marxist.org-chinese-mao-19381012aa.htm>

²⁹ 《论联合政府》 On coalition government. https://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/mao/selected-works/volume-3/mswv3_25.htm#p26

leader, ethnic self-determination was gradually replaced by Ethnic Regional Autonomy (ERA), and “independence” became a taboo.

2.3.2 Minority identification and Ethnic Regional Autonomy

After the triumph in mainland China, CPC now needed to solve the ethnic problem on a much larger scale. The Inner Mongolia autonomous region was a good rehearsal, but its essence was still based on ROC’s five ethnicities theory – including Han, only four minorities were recognized in China, which was an inaccurate assumption. Therefore, the first national-ethnic task was the identification of minorities in China and explaining their relationship with the China Nation.

As we have seen, in its first decades, CPC had shown a gradual approach to nationalism (or proto-nationalism), mainly because its midterm expansion was due to the anti-Japanese nationalistic mobilization and local intellectuals deeply influenced by Confucianism became its backbone. However, CPC is essentially a Marxist-Leninist party, and traditional Confucianism did not offer a feasible answer to the minority issue. Thus the Soviet Union’s experience, and Stalin’s definition of the nation, became crucial.

In *Marxism and the National Question*, Stalin stated that the nation is “a historically constituted, stable community of people, formed on the basis of a common language, territory, economic life, and psychological make-up manifested in a common culture” (1913). Since the middle of the 1950s, guided by Stalin’s definition, the PRC launched a series of “Nation Identification Campaigns” (民族识别运动), and until the end of the 1980s, a total of 56 Minzu were identified (Ma Rong, 2012 Aug, p. 13).



Figure 10. A set of stamps on the 56 Minzu

Source: Internet

According to professor Mullaney of Stanford University, although it was a significant job with many successes, the classification campaign since 1954 was defective for three problems: it was more of “categorization” than “self-identification”; it emphasized too much in the language factor; and many small minority groups were incorporated into the big ones only to facilitate the founding and functioning of the newly established People’s Congress (人民代表大会) (Mullaney, 2011). Chinese academics also admitted the flaws of the campaign: “We started the identification of minorities, just to build a socialist state of poly-ethnicity like the Soviet Union” (Ma Rong, 2012 Aug, p. 13). “During the process of identification, there were several errors. For example, people from the same ethnic group but lived in different provinces were categorized into two different ethnic groups” (Qi, 2016, p. 26). “The Soviets politicized and institutionalized the concept of the nation, and we copied it without thinking carefully. We even allowed the Soviets to participate in the classification campaign directly” (Ma Rong, 2012 Aug, p. 21).

The flaws of the Nation Identification Campaign were rooted in both theory and practice. Judging by the quotation from his article, Stalin’s definition was based and focused on Europe and Russia’s reality, while in China, the situation is quite different. For example, the Hui, one of the 56 official Minzu, its population distribution is “Large dispersion, small concentration”(Nan, 1991, p.37) – Hui people live in almost every province of China, while their total population is few and prefer to live together in the small community. Most Hui works with other Chinese, speak the same language, and as they are descendants of immigrants hundreds of years ago, the common territory is also not an applicable condition. Thus Professor Dru Gladney questioned if the Hui people could really be considered a modern nation (1998); similarly, another Minzu Zhuang also was doubted by Dr. Katherine Kaup (2000). To make up for the theoretical flaw, in 2005, the Chinese government renewed its official definition of the nation with one supplement to Stalin’s: “the religion played a nuclear role during the formation of some Minzu” (Tang Jianbing, 2012, p. 33).

Furthermore, even Stalin’s definition was not appropriately implemented – if not distorted, that is to say, if some groups did not meet Stalin’s definition, CPC would deliberately make it happen. As many minorities only had a primary spoken language system, “The party led the invention of minorities’ writing script” (Wang Aiyun, 2013, pp. 71-72). From 1956 to 1991, the central government helped 13 minority groups to invent their own scripts and reformed seven groups’ idiomatic system. This work was carried out under the Soviet Union’s influence, as the Fellow Serbichenko of the Academy of Pedagogy of the Soviet Union directly participated in the inventions and reformations. Due to the western missionaries’ heritage and soviet suggestions, Latinization was a fundamental principle of these inventions/reformations, which affected more than 60% of minorities. Serbichenko furtherly suggested that the Latinization should be a process of Nation Integration, that similar spoken languages would be unified into one same language and contributed to the integration of primary tribals into one modern Minzu, which only resulted in some language-Frankensteins without any practicality (p. 81). As the Chinese script and the Latin alphabet are two completely different systems, the Latinization neither contributed to China’s integrity nor facilitated minorities’ daily life. In 1991, the central government stated that “the minority languages’ reformation should

respect the linguistic theory and minority’s voluntary...it should be allowed if a minority wants to use Han’s language as their mother tongue” (p. 80).

Generally speaking, the minority identification in PRC was a politicalized movement based on the Soviet Union template, where proto-nationalism’s influence was limited and insignificant. CPC’s purpose was to consolidate the politically categorized Minzu identification among the minorities, and researchers confirm that “standardized, homogenizing state education ... often increasing ethnic identity” (Kormondy, 2012, as cited in Makofsky, 2014, p. 1952), while the minority intellectuals, cadres, and college students cultivated by the party are more concerned about the ethnic affairs than ordinary minority (Kaup, 2000, pp. 137-139). CPC’s policy could not have been more attractive for minorities long repressed by Kuomintang’s ethnic nationalism. Nevertheless, the growing national consciousness among the minority also could be a challenge to CPC if it threatens China’s unity – the core interest of the proto-nationals. This is why a balance measure, the Ethnic Regional Autonomy system, was introduced.



Figure 11. Five provincial ethnic autonomous regions in China

Source: Own Elaboration

In figure 11, we can see five provincial-level ethnic autonomous regions: Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region, Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region, Xizang(Tibet) Autonomous Region, Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region, and Ningxia Hui Autonomous Region. All of them have a designated minority:

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Zhuang, Mongol, Tibetan, Uyghur, and Hui. As China has 55 minorities, ERA is also implemented at the municipality, county, and village levels across the country.

Compared with the Qing dynasty and ROC, PRC's ERA system has significantly promoted the minority's political influence and partly satisfied the minority's emerging self-determination demand. The minorities are no longer barbarians from the outside land but a member of China state. As various political positions – including members of the National People's Congress (NPC) and the president of each ERA – are guaranteed for each minority, their political influence is also secured to a certain degree.

However, even without considering whether the People's Congress is a rubber stamp, the ERA is not a simple minority-right protection project. According to Wu Zhe of Academia Sinica(中央研究院), the ERA is de facto a measure for Beijing's national goal of integration (2009). As we have mentioned before, the ERA is not just implemented at the provincial level but deep into more basic administrative units. Thus in a provincial-level ethnic autonomous region, there could be more ethnic autonomous municipalities/counties/villages, and these low-level administrative units are often of other minorities but not the provincial ones. For example, in Xinjiang in 1955, except for the Uyghur and Han, a considerable part of this region was the Yili Kazakh Autonomous Prefecture, while other minorities like Mogol, Hui, Kirgiz, Daur, and Sibe also had their autonomous units. During the establishment of other minorities' autonomous units, the Uyghur had made several protests but were eventually convinced by the CPC. For instance, CPC assigned some arable lands – which Uyghur also considered valuable – to the Kirgiz because the general principle of ethnic relationship is “the bigger must take care of the smaller,” and arable lands are important to elevate the “future development” (Wu Zhe, 2009, p. 109). Uyghur also claimed that the Kazakh population in Yili was less than 50%, and thus it should not be a Kazakh autonomous unit, but CPC argued that 85% of total Chinese Kazakh people lived in Yili, which justified the Kazakh Autonomous Prefecture just as the Uyghur Autonomous Region (p. 113).

Obviously, CPC is not too naïve to allow one ethnic group alone to dominate a whole autonomous region, “divide and rule” is also playing a crucial paper in the ERA when local autonomous units (of different levels and minorities) encounter disagreements and conflicts, rather than rely on the provincial ERA designated to one minority, the central government seems much neutral and fair. Besides, the ERA is not an administrative system independent from the PCS. Since the beginning, CPC has confirmed that the ERA is a part of the pyramidal centralized administrative system, and the provincial ERA unit is politically equal to any other provincial unit, just like the Municipality (or Prefecture)/County/Village. The confirmation of the leading and being led relationship reveals CPC's determination to defend the integrity of proto-nationalism's political-traditional boundary through the integration and actual provincialization of the traditional boundary regions.

In the first decades of PRC, its minority policy was much of a compromise design as it was facing Kuomintang's threat from Taiwan and the U.S. threat from the Korean Peninsula. CPC had to unify the Chinese people while also appeasing the boundary regions. Ideologically, the Communist ideals asked it to

protect minorities' rights, while the proto-nationalism as its fundamental base demanded the indivisibility of China. This unstable balance between the major population and the minorities could be broken easily "as long as minorities and the central government have different opinions on the sovereignty issue," and the ERA could be seen as a "bargaining chip with the current ruler and an intermediate step to ultimate independence" by minorities (Wu Zhe, 2009, p.129). To overcome this challenge, CPC first chose to establish the common political roof on the communist ideal, that not Minzu/nation but the political class identifications – the proletariat and the bourgeoisie – were more important and more used by the central government.

However, the communist ideal cannot smooth out the challenge, especially when neighboring another better developed communist country. In 1962, at least 60 thousand Xinjiang minorities escaped to the USSR. Furthermore, the situation has ever deteriorated since the 1980s. On the one hand, the communist fever was on a gradual downhill both domestic and international, and China even moved close to the western side, so the common political roof was at risk; on the other hand, the Kuomintang's ethnic nationalism and CPC's "political liberation" now was long past memory, while minorities' national consciousness cultivated by the party in decades cannot be satisfied by the ERA and required to move on from the intermediate step. There might be many possible responses to this new situation, but what we see is a more radical compromise, a whole set of preferential policies.

2.3.3 PRC's preferential policies

The essence of any preferential policy is to offer privileges to a particular group. In the Chinese nationalism case, it is the government privileging minorities. According to the famous Chinese Prime Minister Zhou Enlai, "the Han ethnic group mainly held the upper place throughout history, and minorities were always being exploited. As PRC is a socialist state, the Han people are obligatorily helping the minorities in all aspects. Because it is an act of paying back the debt made by ancestors of the Han, moreover, the feeling of carrying debts could contribute to the Unity of Minzu (民族团结) when a Han encounters a minority" (Deng & Valle de Frutos, 2019 June, p. 75). To better understand today's preferential policies, a key figure in the preferential policies is Hu Yaobang, who was in charge of the CPC from 1980 to 1987. In two conferences with Xizang cadres in 1980, Hu had elaborated his ideas on how the ERA should reform, which included the following aspects (Wang Haiyan, 2014):

1. Redefine the ERA as a self-determination system but not just an autonomous one.
2. Xizang can disobey the central government's order if local autonomous units believe it is not in line with local interests.
3. Tibetan and other minorities cadres should take full control of all Tibetan affairs, while most Han personnel in Xizang should be withdrawn.
4. Reduce and exempt tax while increasing central fiscal support.

Lately, in Xinjiang, Hu has repeated these ideas once again and shown his determination in ERA's reformation. According to another top CPC official's autobiography, Hu's bottom line was "national defense, diplomacy, and internal affairs veto right" (Deng, 2006). Thus Hu's reformation can be interpreted as the changing of a PCS-style centralized government to a western-style federation (Hari, 2008, p. 27). Hu's ideas had triggered a controversial reaction from the whole of China, especially his statement that "it is glorious for a Han to leave Xizang" (Wang Haiyan, 2014). Minority cadres from Inner Mongolia and Xinjiang demanded the same terms as Xizang, tried to expel their Han colleagues, and local Han cadres were all worried, which led to severe confrontation incidents, even the Xinjiang's regional Party Committee Enlarged Meeting was interrupted (Deng, 2006). Due to the escalating instability in minority areas and fierce opposition within the party, Hu had to abandon his federalization plan, but the highly encouraged minorities now must be appeased in other ways. Thus a set of preferential policies were carried out.

Criminal Policy: In 1984, CPC enacted a directive policy on handling minority crime: "In case of minority criminals, we must insist on the principle of fewer arrest, fewer death sentence, and more leniency" (Zhang, Zhang, & Sun, 1991; Zheng, 2009, p.53). This is the famous policy "Two fewers, One leniency" (两少一宽), which officially categorizes criminals in China into two groups: Han and minority. Directed by this policy, police and law departments tend to ignore minority criminals or accuse them with maximum tolerance. For instance, in minority regions, the rape of an immature girl³⁰ will not be prosecuted, and only some severe cases could be sentenced to imprisonment (varies from 6 months to 3 years) (Zhang, Zhang, & Sun, 1991, p. 83); while in a murder case, the killer only has to pay some compensation (p. 85). Thus among the inland provinces of China, the urban legend has already emerged that all minorities have three annual homicide quotas (杀人名额)³¹. The Uyghur sociologist Abudu Hade (阿布都哈德) also wrote an article that verified "inland provinces' police dare not stop Uyghur thieves, for fear of causing an ethnic conflict" (Hade, 2018, p.17).

The allegation of "causing an ethnic conflict" could be quite severe, both for the individual law enforcement officers and their unit. 2000 in Shandong province, two Muslims killed a pork shop owner because he sold pork and beef simultaneously. Before the escape, the murders deliberately threw a pig head in front of the local mosque, so other Muslims were enraged and had gathered more than 1000 to "bloodbath" the County town, where only 26 policemen were at service. The police officers set up a roadblock and fired warning shots but still were attacked by sticks and shovels. During the chaos, one policeman – according to the late investigation – inadvertently pulled the trigger again, and other officers thought the firing order was given and started shooting, resulting in four Muslim deaths. After the conflict, the central government declared that "Muslim people are innocent, the police side takes full responsibility." Thus, plenty of

³⁰ In China, immature girl refers to a female under 14 years old.

³¹ Wang Chong, 2017. A Mongolia boy silenced the pride Shanghai people in one sentence.

<https://web.archive.org/web/20171023025833/http://wemedia.ifeng.com/32774289/wemedia.shtml>, retrieved on April 21 of 2018

compensation was paid to the Muslim deceased, and all chief of local authorities – from party secretary to police captain – were dismissed and prosecuted criminally (Ye, 2007, pp. 243-246).

Reproductive Policy: Since the foundation of the National Population and Family Planning Commission in 1980, the Chinese government implemented the famous “One Child Policy,” that each family is only allowed to have one child. However, the Chinese government does not obligate but only “encourages” the minority families to have no more than “2 children”, while each autonomous region can modify this quota according to the local needs. After 15 years after the implementation, the Chinese government proudly declared that the minority population grew 35.81% within eight years while Han grew by 15.77 %.³² According to the 2010 population census, the minority population rose from 5.8% (1964) to 8.5% (2010), while among the population under age 14, the minority occupied 11.3%.³³ A Han family may face forfeit and political pressure on violation of the “One Child” policy. For example, Zhang Yimou, a famous film director, was fined 7.48 million yuan (about 1.2 million dollars) due to this policy,³⁴ and party cadres and state officials were dismissed and prosecuted for having extra children (Dong Danbo, 2014, p. 18). Nevertheless, minority families are immune to the violation’s consequences and even were subsidized by the state to relieve the pressure of raising children. In the Ningxia Hui Autonomous Region, a Muslim family had reproduced six children within six years, but in the official narrative, they are “the model family among their neighbors” and called on social donations to help them.³⁵

Economic Policy: The central government heavily subsidizes all ERA units. According to James Millward, “From 1950 to 2001, the state has invested over 500 billion yuan in fixed assets in Xinjiang, transferred hundreds of thousands of educated personnel into the region, and furnished huge annual budget subsidies” (2007, p. 296). The annual budget subsidy is not a fixed number but a floating one, which would automatically increase 10% each year, even when the annual growth rate of central fiscal revenue is only 4% – 6% (Liu Keguo, 2009, p. 12). Research in 2010 found that all ERA units’ total fiscal revenue was 210 billion yuan, while the expenditure was 661 billion yuan; the fiscal revenue per capita was 1162 yuan, and the expenditure per capita was 3659 (Liu Mei, 2010, p. 191). Thus the central government has assumed two-thirds of ERA’s fiscal expenses.

The minority companies also are economically favored by the Chinese government, especially those Muslim ones. For example, as Muslim minorities only consume halal food, a series of specialized products and sales lines are required, and the government will usually offer various economic supports and subsidies. According to the research of Professor Yang Qiong and her cooperator Yang Zhongjian in 2015, the preferential policy is carried out in 4 different forms:

³² The State Council Information Office of the PRC. China’s Family Planning Policy, 2000.
<http://www.scio.gov.cn/zfbps/ndhf/1995/Document/307993/307993.htm>

³³ 2010 Population Census of PRC. <http://www.stats.gov.cn/tjsj/pcsj/rkpc/6rp/indexch.htm>

³⁴ Financial Times, 2014. Zhang Yimou was fined more than 7.48 million yuan for have more than one child.
<http://www.ftchinese.com/story/001054348?archive>

³⁵ People.cn, 2014. A Couple from Ningxia Having Three Pairs of Twins in Six Years.
<http://politics.people.com.cn/n/2014/0801/c70731-25384996.html>

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1. Discount in obtaining the land for industrial/commercial usage. Halal food companies automatically enjoy a 50% discount on the price for obtaining industrial/commercial land.
2. Tax preference, Halal food companies automatically enjoy a 15% discount on business tax; furtherly, for the first five years, a 100% tax refund will be given to the company and another 50% tax refund in the second five years.
3. Business subsidy. Between 1 to 3 years, the government annually subsidizes 10% of the total investment back to the halal company, and the companies which obtain an international Halal food certification will receive extra subsidies.
4. Financial discount. It is a typical Chinese policy, which means the government will assume Halal companies' loan interest.

The impact of these economic subsidies on the market is unclear, but non-minority/Muslim food companies are in a disadvantaged position without considering other conditions. As a tendency to expand the term Halal into other non-food consumption areas – the Pan-Halalizing (泛清真化 or 清真泛化), which will be discussed in the late chapter – emerged and products like Halal toilet paper, Halal cloth, Halal television came to the market, the fair competition of the whole market would face the same challenge like non-Muslim food companies.

The same thing happens in the individual daily life. On the one hand, governments will lightly subsidize their Muslim citizen for beef and lamb consumption according to the local economic level (Ma Dongmei, 2016, p.93). On the other hand, it could be hard for non-Muslims to run some specific businesses that Muslims consider exclusive. For instance, the Muslim community has established a “Noodle Regulation” that prohibits opening a second noodle restaurant within a radius of 400 meters from the first one. Such regulation has already provoked violent conflicts in many cities, including Shanghai³⁶.

Cultural-Historical Policy: Although we can simply conclude this policy's main idea as securing the superior position of minority culture, none official document nor research article with full details can be found publicly, however, still we can reveal part of it through a series of incidents: A Han Chinese was imprisoned for one year after he insulted the portrait of Genghis Khan, for provoking the ethnic hatred³⁷; while a Muslim warlord Ma Bufang's – who committed many war crimes against citizens and CPC during the revolution era – mansion in Gansu province was converted into a memorial museum (Stewart & Sheng, 2017); A Taoist, Liang Xingyang, questioned the rationality of that museum, but immediately Xi'an – the capital of Shaanxi province – police department invited him to an interview and warned him “not to express political opinions”³⁸; During the Muslim Rebellion of 1862, Xi'an was besieged and resisted 15 months alone

³⁶ New beef noodle restaurant in Shanghai harassed by competitors after violating unwritten code: http://shanghaiist.com/2016/07/27/noodle_gang.php, retrieved on April 21 of 2018

³⁷ <https://www.thehindu.com/news/international/chinese-man-jailed-for-insulting-genghis-khans-portrait/article21704561.ece>, retrieved on April 21 of 2018

³⁸ https://web.archive.org/web/20160426073720/http://news.ifeng.com/a/20160426/48583049_0.shtml, retrieved on April 21 of 2018

against Muslim Rebellion without surrendering, but since the 2000s, Chinese government continually invites the descendants of the escaped rebellion – whom already has a new name, the Dungan people and live in Central Asia now (Hong, 2005) – to knock on the gate of Xi’an, as the symbol of their “coming home”³⁹, while the Donguan people consider the gate knocking as a symbol of “victorious reconquest” (Feng & Zhan, 1991, p.18).



Figure 12. Dungan People are knocking on the gate of Xi’an

Source: Internet

In the case of a specific term, the pig, we may also find out how the Cultural-Historical policy privileges the minority. The Chinese Zodiac is a tradition of China, which is a classification scheme that assigns an animal and its reputed attributes to each year in a repeating 12-year cycle. For example, the years 2019, 2007, and 1995 are years of the pig. Another tradition of modern China is the China Central Television’s Spring Festival Gala, which will be watched by millions of Chinese families through TV or the Internet. In the pig year 1995, Ye Xiaowen, the State Administration for Religious Affairs (SARA) director, attended the annual gala rehearsal the day before the performance. According to his own description, he called off the rehearsal from the very beginning because he saw a huge lamp with the Chinese character “pig” above the hall, and about one hundred children danced with the pig decoration lamps. He told the gala director to “Remove all pig things now because the Muslims dislike it,” the gala director argued about the incoming deadline but finally obeyed (Ye, 2007, p. 250). Since then, the pig has become a taboo for every pig year’s gala. The 2007 gala director reconfirmed the reason for the pig’s absence – because the Muslim minorities dislike it⁴⁰, and once again, during the whole of 2019’s gala, only a Peppa Pig’s key ring was allowed⁴¹.

³⁹ Dungan People Come Back to Their Home [Video file]. (2014, June 12). https://www.iqiyi.com/w_19rtghlexx.html

⁴⁰ Sina Interview with Spring Festival Gala’s Director. <http://ent.sina.com.cn/v/m/2007-02-18/ba1455345.shtml>, retrieved on May 21 of 2019

⁴¹ <https://www.bbc.com/zhongwen/simp/chinese-news-47143578>, retrieved on May 21 of 2019

Educational Policy. Education is seen as the best option for social mobility, and Chinese proto-nationalism's deep obsession with education only has strengthened this conception. No wonder the National College Entrance Examination (NCEE) is one of China's most important events. As a modern proverb says: "A life's destiny is determined by one examination" (Zhang Hesheng, 2013). However, during such a decisive moment, minorities are once again favored by preferential policies like all aspects mentioned before. According to the Notice of the Enrollment of University by the Ministry of Education (2016)⁴², each province can implement a different preferential policy for minorities, and it is usually carried out in bonus points. For example, in Hunan province, minority students can get 20 bonus points in NCEE⁴³. Taking notice that in Hunan province, there were more than 400 thousand participants of NCEE in 2016, and NCEE's full score was 750, so 20 bonus points meant the overcoming of more than 10000 students⁴⁴. The Chinese educational preferential policy is very similar to USA's Affirmative Action, and the only difference is that the Chinese one is practicing in a way much more blatant than in the 1978's Bakke case (Ball, 2000, p.153).

Bureaucratic policy. Although already privileged in many aspects, a common complaint among Chinese minorities is, "All of these privileges are just for effect. We still have no power" (Singer, 1997). However, the allegation does not match reality. Besides the guaranteed quota for minorities in the NPC, during the recruitment of the PCS's basic cellular – the bureaucrats, minority applicants are often preferred by the government. The recruitment procedure is also a de facto examination, including a written test and an interview, named the Civil Service Recruitment Examination (CSRE), which requires at least a bachelor's degree. The minority applicants, whose degree is already the result of NCEE's preferential policy, receive bonus points again during the CSRE. For example, in the Ningxia Autonomous Region, according to the official confirmation of the Provincial Human Resource Department, the Muslim minority Hui will receive ten bonus points with the purpose of "balancing the ethnical composition in the administrative system."⁴⁵ Another official document shows that in Ningxia, the ethnic bonus points are not even for all 55 minorities but only the Hui minority⁴⁶.

In 2011, Ningxia local government had offered 816 positions in the CSRE and received 27683 applications⁴⁷. We also have acquired a list of the final result⁴⁸, which contains the highest scored 5208 candidates' ethnic identification, the status of bonus points, and written test results. According to the original data: the highest score was a minority candidate with 232.6; among the top 50 candidates, 9 were Han and 41 were minorities; among the top 100 candidates, 23 were Han and 77 were minorities; Among the top 200

⁴² Ministry of Education, 2016. Notice of the Enrollment of University of 2016.

http://www.moe.gov.cn/srcsite/A15/moe_776/s3258/201603/t20160307_232202.html

⁴³ Educational Department of Hunan, 2016. Planning of 2016 University Enrollment.

http://jyt.hunan.gov.cn/sjyt/xxgk/zcfg/gfxwj/201702/t20170214_3990781.html

⁴⁴ Participant Statistics of Hunan NCEE, 2016: http://gaokao.eol.cn/hu_nan/dongtai/201606/t20160625_1421427.shtml

⁴⁵ The Person in Charge of the Human Resource Department Answered Questions on the Bonus Points of the Hui Candidates in the Civil Service Recruitment Examination, 2017. <http://www.chinagwyw.org/ningxia/363020.html>

⁴⁶ http://hrss.nx.gov.cn/zwgk/gsgg/201604/t20160406_587901.html

⁴⁷ Numbers of recruitment and applicant of Civil Service in Ningxia since 2009.

<http://www.offcn.com/nxgwy/2018/0320/15822.html>

⁴⁸ <http://dl.offcn.com/2012dl/file/p/2011/05/09/e70be541f868060f923798b890585d2b.xls>

candidates, 62 were Han and 138 were minorities; among the top 500 candidates, 197 were Han and 303 were minorities; Among the first 1000 candidates, 473 were Han and 527 were minorities.

If we exclude the ethnic bonus point's influence, the result will become: the highest score was a Han candidate with 224.4 points; among the top 50 candidates, 37 were Han and 13 were minorities; Among the top 100 candidates, 74 were Han, and 26 were minorities; among the top 200 candidates, 148 were Han, and 52 were minorities; among the top 500 candidates, 364 were Han and 136 were minorities; among the first 1000 candidates, 747 were Han and 253 were minorities.

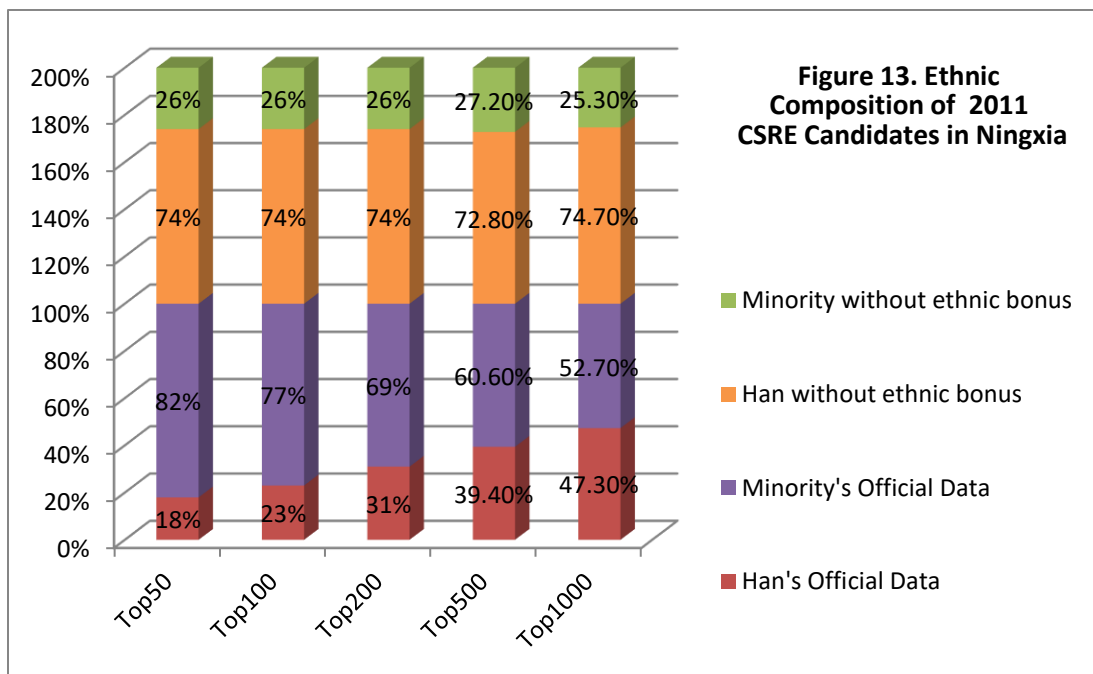


Figure 13: Ethnic Composition of 2011 CSRE Candidates in Ningxia

Source: Own Elaboration

As figure 13 shows, in each series of data, the influences of the ethnic bonus point respectively are 28 (56%), 51 (51%), 86 (43%), 167 (33.4%), and 273 (27.3%). It means 28 Han candidates were downgraded from the top 50, 51 were downgraded from the top 100, 86 from the top 200, 167 from the top 500, and 273 from the top 1000. On the other hand, the result that excludes the influence of the ethnic bonus points corresponds to the ethnic composition of the total Ningxia population with more accuracy, where 64% are Han and 34.4% are minorities. Apparently, the ten ethnic bonus points are not a balancing factor but a disruptive one, and its implementation could lead to an administrative system contrary to the demographic distribution.

The preferential policies are Top-Down Design. At first, there is a will that the government and CPC want to maintain minorities' satisfaction within the current political frame, then the detailed policies come out. Although the central government's purpose could be interpreted as defending China's unity – which corresponds with Chinese nationalists' core demand, the implementation of these preferential policies still

could be a risk to the government's attraction among the nationalists, not just because preferential policies' appeasement nature, but its feasibility is totally based on the concession by the main population.

As a modern state with almost 100% control of the traditional news media, PRC could easily dismiss the dispersed and ununited dissent from the nationalists on the preferential policies, some top officials – like those who opposed Hu's federalization plan – may privately express their disapproval, but they still have to publicly stand with the party's general policy and their mobilization ability among the mass nationalists is doubtful.

However, the contradiction between the preferential policies and the nationalists was just covered up. In the U.S., Affirmative Action has already caused numerous debates and judicial confrontations in the last decades (Ball, 2000; Noel, 2001; Stephens, 2018), and the same thing could happen in China once nationalists obtain an instrument that they can freely – even if only partly freely – express their concerns and requirements.

2.4 Chapter Conclusion

In chapter 2, we have reviewed the origin of Chinese nationalism from a historical perspective. Before the European concept of nationalism was imported to China, a proto-nationalism with a strong proto-national base did exist in Chinese society. The proto-nationalism was mainly the joint result of the Prefecture-County System, the Confucianist ideology, and the geographic condition around China. Due to the technical limitation, proto-nationalism cannot upgrade itself to modern nationalism, but its impact on Chinese society is profound, and its long-standing nature has consolidated its influence.

The western invasions had brought both pain and innovation to Chinese nationalists. On the one hand, the Chinese found themselves at a most low-end. The pride in the civilization forged through thousands of years of history was broken, the nation's existence was at risk, and no political entity could commit to the nationalistic demands and hold it. On the other hand, the reality of being invaded had contributed to nationalism's support base. The expanding appearance of foreign powers in China had stimulated the clarification between them and us, while the imported western technologies and ideologies made the massive mobilization possible.

Nevertheless, there is still one choice to make: cultivating the racial/ethnic nationalism hidden in the proto-nationalism and traditional homogenized society long before, or choosing civic nationalism, which is more compatible with the PCS and Confucianist's cultural distinction criterion? The victor of 1949 opted for the later one. However, during the construction of a modern civic nationalistic state, the Chinese, especially the Chinese leaders, found it challenging to maintain China's unification and the civic minority policy. Thus the preferential policies were implemented, but also potential nationalistic dissidents were also planted.

Hence, before the mass popularization of the Internet, Chinese nationalism's status seemed like: deeply affected by the proto-nationalism and highly agreed with the central government, hated and admired

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the West simultaneously, approved the civic nationalism while possibly opposing the preferential policies. Without other changes, this status may last for many years longer, but the Internet comes, and many things, including nationalism, has to change. Therefore, before investigating nationalism in the Internet era, we should first examine how the Internet is in China.

3. CHAPTER THREE: INTERNET AND ITS IMPACT ON NATIONALISM

For any country, the popularization of the Internet is an unprecedented social communication reform, “some welcome it as a panacea while others fear it as a curse, all would agree that it is quite capable of transforming society” (Bargh & McKenna, 2004, p.574). in the case of Chinese nationalism, such a social communication reform is embodied in the **fading of traditional interpersonal relationships and the consolidation of national identity**.

As we have mentioned before, the civilizational and traditional Chinese social structure was a Confucianist hierarchy that emphasized the family value and treated it as a guidance model for society and the state. Under such circumstances, the consanguinity bond was the most crucial factor for the interpersonal relationship. As Kwang-Kuo Hwang has found, Confucianists tend to “conceptualize the family by analogy to the human body” (1999, p. 170) and put the family/collective identity above the individual identity. While the elder/patriarchal male member is the center of the family’s identity circle, other members’ social identity becomes the patriarch or family’s subjection. For example, Zhao’s second son, Zhao’s younger brother, and Zhao’s wife are all typical Chinese social identities. On the other hand, the agricultural society’s low population mobility had limited Chinese people from interacting with strangers. They lived in a highly stable community where most villagers were neighbored for decades or even generations, which, according to Fei Xiaotong, is an “acquaintance society” (Fei, 1992).

The acquaintance society should not be a particular case for China but a common phenomenon for most agricultural societies with low mobility. China society’s uniqueness is that the most usual solution to the low population mobility – industrialization, is happening simultaneously with informatization. Indeed, the industrialization of PRC’s first 30 years (1949-1978) had made significant progress, as agricultural employment fell from 1952’s 83.5% to 1990s 60.1% (Hu, 2014, p. 31). Nevertheless, this change took almost 40 years, while the industrialized population was concentrated in the state-owned enterprise and the acquaintance society was still on its high (Wang, Zhang & Xie, 2019). The real breakthrough of low population mobility occurs after the 1990s. From 1990 to 2018, agricultural employment fell to 26.56%, and private sector employment grew to 68.6%⁴⁹.

When the drastic production-style change is happening, a brand-new interpersonal relationship – a result of both industrialization and informatization – is also rising. The Internet has freed the Chinese from the family-center environment and cultivated a decentralized individual identity. On the Internet, one’s identity is not limited by his/her social condition, a breakthrough from the acquaintance society. However, it also indicates a possible danger that the individual becomes isolated from others and society (Zhang & Hao, 1999, p. 22), disorientation in self-identification. Hence, since the new millennium, China’s quick fading of

⁴⁹ <http://www.stats.gov.cn/tjsj/ndsj/2019/indexch.htm>

traditional interpersonal relationships is ongoing rather than just possible. A spiritual, also cognitive vacuum appears, and such a situation is more pronounced among internet users.

Many things try to fulfill the Chinese vacuum. For instance, religions have become more popular (Inglehart, 2000, p. 40), as religious believers' total number has grown to more than 100 million (Lu, 2014). However, nationalism has its special advantage in conquering the Chinese people, not just because the government sees it as an ideological tool, but its profound link within the Confucianist family-state analogy. As the smaller family relationship is at risk, the bigger state relationship is an intuitive substitute, especially for the highly educated population who are natural nationalism receivers. A 2012 research shows that nationalism is the fundamental identifying origin among Chinese college students, and the more the Internet is used, the more stable the nationalistic identification is (Ran & Deng, 2012, p. 118).

Except for the identical impact, some other instrumental impacts brought by the Internet also should be noted. First, as a highly homogeneous society with a billion population, the Internet offers a relatively open space for expression while the government dominates all mass media. Of course, the level of openness and the reliability of the Internet in China is frequently questioned by foreign researchers (King, Pan, & Roberts, 2017; Bolsover & Howard, 2019), but as the investigation continues, we will try to verify such concerns in the latter part of this chapter.

Second, traditionally for the nationalists or the third-party observer, it is hard to judge which level a nationalistic movement could achieve. This is because, in traditional Chinese society, the people were geographically isolated, and their living radius was within their hometown, which, compared to big China, was a small part. This comparison between big and small had prevented direct communication between local communities with the same concerns and further prevented their inter-cooperation over their concerns. Only when the concerns had become an uncontrollable conflict – like the Boxers Uprising – then the massive participation appears, and the potential was recognized. However, the Internet makes massive long-distance group communication possible. On the one hand, it may catalyze the contradiction if a considerable amount of internet users shared the same concern; on the other hand, during the catalysis, through the investigation of virtual communication, the potential of a nationalistic movement can be revealed with more accuracy.

Third, as we have found, even during the nationalistic movements after 1840, the grassroots Chinese nationalist's role was mainly passive. They were mobilized and organized by state officials, party intellectuals, and local gentry. Once no political entity continued endorsing their demands, they would quickly fall into dissolution. But with the popularization of the Internet, self-organization becomes possible for nationalists, although it just is virtual self-organization. Furthermore, the self-organization also implies the formation of a deviation, even challenging the official narrative on nationalism.

3.1 Stages of the China's Internet history

The beginning of the Internet in China was later than in other countries. While Ray Tomlinson wrote the first email in 1972 (Leiner et al., 2009, p.24), it was 15 years later when Dr. Wang Yunfeng sent China's

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first email, and the government began developing the national Internet (Hauben, 2013). However, only after 30 years China now has made significant progress on the Internet. Comparing CNNIC's first (1997 October) and 43rd (2019 February) statistical reports on Internet development, we find that during 1997-2019, Chinese internauts grew from 620 thousand to 85.4 million, at a rate of 13,774.19%; the domain name registered under "CN." grow from 4066 to 37.9 million; in 1997, the International Internet Bandwidth for China was only 25.408Mbps, while in 2019 it grows to 8,946,570Mbps. The website World Internet Stats also confirms that in 2020, 19.4% of worldwide internet users are Chinese speaking⁵⁰. During these 30 years of explosive growth, China's Internet history can be divided into three stages.

First stage: From 1986, the beginning of the Chinese Academic Network (CANET) program, until 1996, when the Chinese government issued the first two decrees on the Internet administration. This is the stage of the preliminary experiment and exploration.

```
(Message # 50: 1532 bytes, KEEP, Forwarded)
Received: from unika1 by irau11.germany.csnet id aa21216; 20 Sep 87 17:36 MET
Received: from Peking by unika1; Sun, 20 Sep 87 16:55 (MET dst)
Date: Mon, 14 Sep 87 21:07 China Time
From: Mail Administration for China <MAIL@ze1>
To: Zorn@germany, Rotert@germany, Wacker@germany, Finken@unika1
CC: lhl@parmesan.wisc.edu, farber@udel.edu,
    jennings%airlean.bitnet@germany, cic%relay.cs.net@germany, Wang@ze1,
    RZLI@ze1
Subject: First Electronic Mail from China to Germany

"Ueber die Grosse Mauer erreichen wie alle Ecken der Welt"
"Across the Great Wall we can reach every corner in the world"
Dies ist die erste ELECTRONIC MAIL, die von China aus ueber Rechnerkopplung
in die internationalen Wissenschaftsnetze geschickt wird.
This is the first ELECTRONIC MAIL supposed to be sent from China into the
international scientific networks via computer interconnection between
Beijing and Karlsruhe, West Germany (using CSNET/PMDF BS2000 Version).
University of Karlsruhe Institute for Computer Application of
-Informatik Rechnerabteilung- State Commission of Machine Industry
(IRA) (ICA)
Prof. Werner Zorn Prof. Wang Yuen Fung
Michael Finken Dr. Li Cheng Chiung
Stefan Paulisch Qiu Lei Nan
Michael Rotert Ruan Ren Cheng
Gerhard Wacker Wei Bao Xian
```

Figure 14. China's first email

Source: Hauben, 2013.

In 1986, the Institute of Computer Application and Technology Research in Beijing started the CANET program and established the first email node in September 1987. On the 14th of this month, with help from German scientist Werner Zorn and many others, Dr. Wang Yunfeng and his colleagues sent the first email from China to the program's cooperator – the University of Karlsruhe – and many other computer scientists at CSNET (Computer Science Network). A famous sentence of the email was:

“Across the Great Wall we can reach every corner in the world.”

⁵⁰ <https://www.internetworldstats.com/stats7.htm>

However, as figure 14 shows, due to technical difficulty, the email was not received until day 20. After that, China decided to expand and optimize its Internet connection with the world. In October 1989, with investment from the World Bank, the NCFC (National Computing and Networking Facility of China) program was started, and the Chinese tried to connect the NCFC with the global Internet. In 1993, a special line was established between NCFC and the US Internet network. At first, the US government only allowed the line to connect to the US Energy Information and Administration website (www.eia.gov), for scientific information and other resources on the Internet should not be accessible to a socialist country. But quickly, in 1994, the US government accepted the connection between the global Internet and China's small virtual network. Since then, China has been regarded by the international community as a country with the Internet.

The Chinese government first considered the Internet an academic communication tool for public institutions. Therefore, according to the Interim Provisions on the Management of International Networking of Computer Information Networks issued by the State Council on 1 February 1994, the National Education Commission and the Chinese Academy of Sciences are two of the four direct administrators of China's global network connection, and these two institutions have assumed the first two Chinese backbone network (ISP for international network connection). Two months later, another decree enacted by the Ministry of Posts and Telecommunications also emphasized that "only enterprise, institution, official department, or organization" can access the Internet. Besides, these regulations and decrees focused more on technical concerns like hackers or computer viruses.

The academically institutionalized Internet reflected the reality that among the 620 thousand Chinese internauts of 1997, half of them (54.7%) were researchers and students, while the other 28.2% of internauts were of various social institutions and enterprises (CNNIC, 1997). However, the academic period did not last very long, and the Chinese Internet soon entered its first rapid development stage.

Second stage: From 1997 to the midterm of 2008, is the "adolescent" of China's Internet. The number of internauts grew steadily, future Internet giants laid down their first cornerstone, and the government began to establish a more detailed Internet administration system.

In the first years of this period, CNNIC's reports were still using the concept "computer connected with the Internet," and its number was often much lower than internauts. In 2004, the most used equipment was the desktop computer (97.5%); home (67%), workplace (42.7%), Internet café (22%), and school (20.6%) were the most frequent connection sites (CNNIC, 2004). This data indicates that although the number of internauts was growing, the Internet's penetration into daily life was still at a low level. Thus internauts had to share the connection terminal, and each internaut's weekly average Internet use time was only 12.3 hours. In 2008, the desktop computer continued its domination (87.3%), but the Internet café (39.2%) became the second most popular place, which resulted in a slight growth of the Internet use time to 14 hours (CNNIC, 2008). Generally speaking, during this stage, the Chinese internaut's Internet usage was at an incoherent and inconvenient state.

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In 2019, except for the state-owned enterprises, there are four China mainland Internet companies on the list of Forbes's top 50 digital: Alibaba (11th), Tencent (15th), JD.com (45th), and Baidu (50th)⁵¹, all founded between 1998-1999. By 2008, the online shopping website Taobao of Alibaba achieved over 10 billion yuan of transactions in a single month⁵², while 100 million accounts were registered on Alibaba's third-party payment tool – Alipay⁵³. Besides, Tencent's 2008 annual revenue was 7.15 billion yuan⁵⁴, JD had finished its full coverage on 3C products (Computer, Communication, and Consumer Electronics)⁵⁵, and Baidu's search engine was the preference among 76.9% of Chinese internauts⁵⁶. After ten years of development, Chinese e-commerce was just about to take off.

The government, facing the vast amount of new joining internauts and emerging virtual communities, has to admit the disillusionment of an academically institutionalized Internet. After the first round of shock, official departments intensified their effort on the Internet administration. One iconic piece of evidence is that only a “practical explanation of the provisional regulation” on the Internet was proclaimed from 1998 to 2000, while from 2000 to 2008, at least 20 new regulations and decrees were announced (Guo & Chen, 2017). Due to internauts' limited Internet usage, the Chinese government focused more on the administration of e-commerce and Internet access service providers – for instance, the Regulations on the Administration of Business Sites of Internet Access Services of 2002 is mainly designed for the Internet café.

Third stage: Since 2008, the smartphone has become the most crucial factor of the Internet in all countries, including China. The smartphone converts the Internet from a connection between the real and virtual worlds to a connection with the virtual world for the individual, which is an evolution from a plane-plane connection to a point-plane connection.

By the end of 2018, the number of Chinese internauts grew to 829 million. Among them, 98.6% have used the mobile phone as a connection terminal, while only 72.25 million internauts connected to the Internet through a mobile phone in 2008 (CNNIC, 2019 & 2008). The mobilized terminal ensures the Internet's accessibility, resulting in significant weekly average Internet usage growth – 27.6 hours, higher than the US's 22.5 hours (Cole et al., 2018).

A critical impact of the smartphone is the true incoming of a UGC (User Generated Content) era. In the west, the user's role in production over the role in consumption was an already noted phenomenon (Leadbeater, 2007; Tapscott and Williams, 2006), but the once limited accessibility to the Internet had prevented the bloom of UGC in China. After the popularization of the mobile terminal began in 2008, the individual or a small group of internauts gradually became the major content producer, while the companies focused more on technical support and platform maintenance. For example, We media (自媒体) refers to a

⁵¹ <https://www.forbes.com/top-digital-companies/list/#tab:rank>

⁵² <http://www.techweb.com.cn/tech/2008-10-14/370220.shtml>

⁵³ http://www.globalhha.com/doclib/data/upload/doc_con/5c22fbb248197.pdf

⁵⁴ <https://tech.qq.com/zt/2009/tencent08q4/>

⁵⁵ <https://about.jd.com/memorabilia/>

⁵⁶ https://www.cas.cn/jzd/jys/200903/t20090306_1934447.shtml

media where the internauts independently publish information and news they know. It was proposed by some American researchers in 2003 (Gillmor, 2003; Bowman & Willis, 2003). The comprehensive discussion and application of “we media” in China did not begin before the year 2015 (Li & Yuan, 2017, p. 6), but by the end of 2017, there were 20 million “we media” on the Wechat platform along (Topklout, 2018, p. 10).

The deeper Internet penetration into daily life brings a bigger but more competitive market. Of course, a big market with numerous content providers could offer a more personalized experience for the internaut. However, these personalized experiences, especially news and other information, could lead to the formation of Information Cocoons (Sunstein, 2006), that the internaut only receives information from specific opinion leaders or platforms. On the other hand, competition among Internet companies is so fierce that they must seize any opportunity to consolidate their consumers, which results in radical measures like clickbait and “emotions override facts” (Blom & Hansen, 2015, p. 97; Li & Yuan, 2017, p. 5).

As the real individual Internet era came, the past focus only on Internet access service providers became less meaningful. Also, as the country with the largest number of internauts and the deepest Internet penetration, the Chinese government has to consider the Internet as a strategic factor, both domestically and internationally. Therefore, the government cannot only act as a regulator but must be a proactive participator, and the Internet administration becomes an issue as much ideological as technical. According to the recently issued Cybersecurity Law of PRC (2016), the governmental and party institution – Cyberspace Administration of China/Office of the (CPC) Central Cyberspace Affairs Commission (CAC)⁵⁷ officially replaced the early technical and educational departments as the director of all Internet affairs, while all CAC’s former and current directors – Wang Chen, Lu Wei, Xu Lin, and Zhuang Rongwen – have a direct link with CPC’s Publicity Department or PRC’s State Council Information Office.

The government also made a great effort to participate in the fashion of mobile Internet. In 2012, there were only 60064 governmental accounts on the Weibo platform (Liu & Dai, 2014). After the General Office of the State Council publicly encouraged the governmental New Media that “all regions and departments should actively explore the use of government Weibo account, WeChat and other new media to release various authoritative government affairs information on time.”⁵⁸ By the end of 2018, the number grew to 138253, and the most followed account (30 million followers) was the “China Police Online” of the Public Security Ministry (CNNIC, 2019).

Internationally, in the 2015 World Internet Conference, Chinese president Xi Jinping promoted the concept of Cyber Sovereignty for the first time, which emphasized “equality and mutual respect.”⁵⁹ In response to his appeal, Article 37 of the Cybersecurity Law demands a general localization of Internet data on both Chinese and foreign companies operating in China.

⁵⁷ CAC is a typical “One institution with Two title”, one for the government, another for the party.

⁵⁸ http://www.gov.cn/zhengce/content/2013-10/18/content_1219.htm

⁵⁹ http://www.xinhuanet.com/politics/2015-12/16/c_1117481089.htm

3.2 Internaut, influential websites/apps, and the censorship

At the end of 2018, the Internet penetration rate in China reached 60%, which indicates the internauts began to occupy the relative majority of the total population. Considering the penetration rate is higher in the urban regions (74.6%) than in rural regions (38.4%) (CNNIC, 2019), and the urbanization rate was 59.58% in China (NBS, 2019), the urban internaut's discourse power is gradually dominating the virtual space.

The income conditions of internauts are slightly better than the average level. According to the NBS, in 2018, 40% of the total China population's monthly income was less than 1196 Yuan (2019), while only 29.7% of internauts' income was less than 1000 Yuan (CNNIC, 2019). On the upper side, 40% of the total population's income was higher than 3039 Yuan, but 45.1% of internauts' income was higher than 3000 Yuan. Among the internaut monthly income structure, the largest group was the 3001-5000 Yuan (21%), then came the 2001-3000 Yuan (15.7%) and 5001-8000 Yuan (13.4%). We also should notice that 25.4% of the internauts were no-income or low-income students. In other words, the relatively richer middle class forms the backbone of the Chinese internaut.

Internauts also are better educated. Comparing between internauts and the overall national situation, the educated population of different levels were: primary education or less (18.2% - 30.67%), lower secondary education (38.7% - 37.76%), secondary education (24.5% - 17.55%), and higher education (18.6% - 14.01%) (CNNIC, 2019 & NBS, 2019).

In terms of employment/profession, except for the students, another two major groups of the internaut were freelancers (20%) and the company's ordinary employees (10.1%). In fact, only 3.9% of internauts were from the agricultural sector, 12.9% were retired or unemployed, while the national census shows 26.11% employment in the agricultural sector (CNNIC, 2019 & NBS, 2019). Hence the Chinese virtual society is much more industrialized than the real society.

Generally speaking, the Chinese internaut's basic characteristics can be summarized as rich middle-class residing in urban, adequately educated, and working in the non-agricultural sector. Obviously, based on Hobsbawm's (2012) and Gellner's (1983) theories, such characteristics enable – or even favor – the emergence and rising of nationalism. On the other hand, although Ronald Inglehart considers the national pride and nationalistic outlook as a typical feature of the pre-industrialized/traditional value society, he admits that crisis and pressure can revive nationalism in post-industrialized society (Inglehart & Baker, 2000). For this reason, it is necessary to devote a whole chapter to analyzing the crisis and pressures that nationalists will face in the digital era, as we will do in chapter 4.

In terms of Internet products, the latest trend in China is “platformization” (Helmond, 2015; Chen & Yu, 2013) and “communitization” (or community-building). The first word means introducing non-core services of one's own company or a third-party company to the core service's clients and eventually forms an integrated platform. For example, WeChat is Tencent's pillar instant messaging product with hundreds of millions of active users. Since version 5.0 of 2013, WeChat began its transformation into an integrated

platform that offers services including payment, gaming, shopping, and media platform. The communitization's core mechanism is encouraging user participation and the UGC. One most intuitive form is the ubiquitous "share and comment." For instance, as a fitness and sports app, "Keep" allows its user to share text, photos, and video, while other users can like and comment on the content. As a result, certain social network features are endowed to Keep.

Hence, the comparison of influence should not be made between websites of different categories but all at once. Amazon Group's Alexa provides web traffic data based on the individual's browser extension and websites' script cooperation. According to Alexa's ranking data by the end of 2018⁶⁰, the 20 most visited websites for Chinese internauts are:

Alexa Traffic Rank	Owner	Core service
1. <i>Baidu.com</i>	Baidu	Search Engine
2. <i>QQ.com</i>	Tencent	Instant Messaging
3. <i>Taobao.com</i>	Alibaba	Online Shopping
4. <i>Tmall.com</i>	Alibaba	Online Shopping
5. <i>Sohu.com</i>	Sohu	Web Portal
6. <i>Jd.com</i>	Jingdong	Online Shopping
7. <i>Sina.com.cn</i>	Sina	Web Portal
8. <i>Weibo.com</i>	Sina	Microblog
9. <i>360.cn</i>	Qihoo	Computer Security
10. <i>Login.tmall.com</i>	Alibaba	Online Shopping
11. <i>Youtube</i>	Google	Video
12. <i>Google.com</i>	Google	Search Engine
13. <i>Google.com.hk</i>	Google	Search Engine
14. <i>Pages.tmall.com</i>	Alibaba	Online Shopping
15. <i>Csdn.net</i>	Csdn	Programming Community
16. <i>Alipay.com</i>	Alibaba	Online Payment
17. <i>Detail.tmall.com</i>	Alibaba	Online Shopping
18. <i>Bilibili.com</i>	Bilibili	Video and Content Community
19. <i>Xinhuanet.com</i>	Xinhua	News Media
20. <i>Tianya.cn</i>	Tianya	Content Community

Table 1. 20 Most Visited Website

Obviously, online shopping and search engine are the two main converging points of Internet traffic. It is commendable for other websites dedicated to social networking/content sharing to be one of the general traffic Top 20 while facing competition from domestic and foreign companies – especially Weibo.com, which ranked eighth as a specialized microblog website. As the only Chinese website with the video feature on the list, we also should pay attention to Bilibili.com. Csdn.net and Tianya.cn prove that the most traditional

⁶⁰ <https://web.archive.org/web/20181125003602/https://www.alexa.com/topsites/countries/CN>, retrieved on November 25 of 2018.

virtual community, the Internet forum/Bulletin Board System, still maintains a certain degree of influence in the web 2.0 era.

On the other hand, precisely because of web 2.0, studying the influence of websites alone is no longer enough for understanding the internaut’s interests and concerns. Attention must be paid to mobile apps. However, due to the isolation between Android and iOS, and among various app stores, there is no general ranking list like Alexa’s. Based on the iiMedia Research’s 2019 China mobile social industry special report⁶¹, and verified by the “App ranking by sectors in the first half of 2019” published on CIweek, we have classified those most “social networking featured” apps into nine groups, as figure 15 shows.

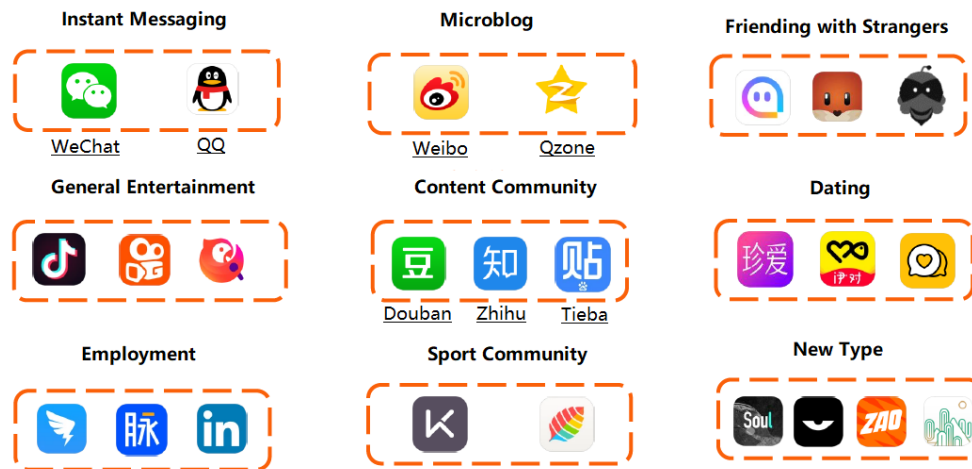


Figure 15. Influential apps by sectors.

Source: iiMedia Research with own elaboration

Among the nine groups, the Instant Messaging, the Microblog, and the Content Community are the three groups with their core services based on social networking. Among the seven apps mentioned in figure 15, QQ and Weibo are the most influential as they are also on Alexa’s list. Nevertheless, the focus on individual communication has limited WeChat and QQ (also its ancillary product Qzone) influence public affairs, and this is why the government’s digitalization efforts mainly occur on the Weibo platform.

Therefore, for our investigation of nationalism, the most crucial Internet product is Weibo. The Internet forum and its variant content community are also important in the web 2.0 era, while the Instant Messaging product, as we will investigate later, may play a unique role in some cases.

⁶¹ <https://www.iimedia.cn/c400/63737.html>

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Except for the internaut and Internet products, another element that profoundly impacts China's Internet is cybercensorship. According to the Internet's history mentioned previously, government intervention on the Internet did not begin before the first stage. The comprehensive intervention's key point is the 20 March of 2005, when the Ministry of Information Industry promulgated two new laws. The first one is the Internet IP Address Filing Administrative Regulation (互联网 IP 地址备案管理办法), which demands the ISP to record the applicant's information when dealing with IP applications. Although the applicants – the internauts – can still use alias or anonymity when surfing, their personal information is transparent to the government.



Figure 16. Top: Screenshot of Apple's Chinese official website (2014)

Bottom: Screenshot of the Wall Street Journal's Chinese website (2020)

Turn the “virtual” into “real” is applied both for the internauts and Internet Content Provider (ICP). The huge number of internauts determines that the government cannot review every information one by one, and cooperation from the ICPs is essential. Thus comes the second regulation, the Non-commercial Internet Information Services Filing Administrative Regulation (非经营性互联网信息服务备案管理办法), as a complement and improvement of the 2000's Internet Information Services Administrative Regulation (互联网信息服务管理办法), it expands the obligatory filing to every website operating in China, including those of foreign companies (as figure 16 shows). Once the comprehensive filing progress is made, the government will come to the ICP first when sensitive information is posted. Hence every ICP in China cannot resist but

has to cooperate with the government's censorship in various forms, including "Community's self-regulation" that sets guidelines for internet on the limit of free speech. The ICPs, especially the social network companies, have to hire censors to do the heavy information monitoring job, which results in many professional censorship factories⁶² (King, Pan, & Roberts, 2014). Those ICPs unwilling to accept the Chinese government's filing demand or localize their Chinese users' data in China (Cybersecurity Law of 2016) – like the Wall Street Journal's Chinese service shown in figure 16 – will be blocked by the Great Firewall (GFW).

On specific censorship mechanisms, there are three forms: Pre-filter, Post-censor, and Campaign-against-burst. The pre-filter means the ICP would establish a sensitive words list, that any submission including these sensitive words will be automatically prevented or held for further human review. The post-censor means the ICP's administrators do human patrol over the posted information and manually delete those sensitive ones. The campaign-against-burst means that when sensitive events happen, and a burst of discussion occurs online or is forming, the censors, with or without a direct command from the CAC, will temporarily intensify the two mentioned mechanisms. For example, the ICP could only permit senior users' posts, and the punishment for posting sensitive information will be increased. (Li Yonggang, 2007; King, Pan, & Roberts, 2014; Deng, 2015)

Clearly, there are two fundamental factors for implementing censorship: The administrator/censor's initiative and the definition of sensitive information. As the primary executor of the censorship, the administrator determines how strict the censor code is. In many cases, when the administrators had a strong link with the community members or were deeply engaged in the UGC creation, the censorship could be as small as disappeared, and the usage of black words/argots to overcome the filter system is an open acquiescence. The code could be much stricter when the administrators were full-time professionals – like employees from the censorship factories. Nevertheless, only big companies/virtual communities could offer full-time censors, and their number is still very limited. According to Voice of America, a news media funded by the United States government and heavily criticizes China's censorship, the total number of professional censors on the Weibo platform is only 120⁶³. Considering the hundred millions of active users and billions of microblogs posted every day, Weibo, and many other big communities, are caught in the same situation as China's general censorship mechanism. Even if they want to maximize the censorship, it could be too hard to achieve a perfect result.

As full-scale censorship seems impossible, Chinese censors have to focus on sensitive information. For which the keywords filter facilitates the censorship, while the argots could prevent its massive viral dissemination. However, the Chinese government never clarifies the definition of sensitive information. Article 12 of the Cybersecurity Law has stated some principles but offers no elaboration. Based on professor Gary King's research (2013) and the author's empirical-scientific experience (2015), we suggest there are

⁶² <https://www.nytimes.com/2019/01/02/business/china-internet-censor.html>, retrieved on August 25 of 2020.

⁶³ <https://www.voachinese.com/a/internet-censorship-20200812/5540475.html>, retrieved on April 2 of 2021.

five types of sensitive information: political attack on the socialist system (usually linked with Tian'anmen square and Falungong); Chinese leaders' negative news; call for offline collective action; criticism of censors; and pornography. Meanwhile, the comment and criticism of specific policies have not been prevented. To professor King, "that allowing criticism, as we found the Chinese leadership does, may legitimize the state and help the regime maintain power" (2013, p. 15), and the government does consider internaut's supervision of the bureaucrats and policies as one crucial measure to wipe out corruption (Xiong, 2014).

3.3 Public sphere for Chinese nationalism

The Internet's intrinsic nature is a new communication tool, and that is where the critical impact occurs on nationalism. Although the Internet was never used in any former nationalistic movement, it does not mean researchers have no idea of how communication innovation can affect nationalism. Karl Deutsch, a famous sociologist, has profoundly investigated the relationship between nationalism and communication. In the book "Nationalism and Social Communication" (1966), a definition of nationality based on communication is proposed by him: "Membership in a people essentially consists in wide complementarity of social communication. It consists in the ability to communicate more effectively, and over a wider range of subjects, with members of one large group than with outsiders" (p. 97). As both a standard and a guideline for developing the complementarity level, Deutsch stated that velocity, accuracy, and complexity are the three fundamental factors of communication (p. 96). Although his theory, especially those three factors, was proposed more than 60 years ago but is still inspirational for studying the relationship between group identification and communication forms.

However, social communication does not happen in a vacuum, and a substantive space or platform is required, while the medium and communication's form determines the level of complementarity. For example, in ancient China, the Confucian officials undertook nationwide social communication under the PCS, and communication between geographically separated communities was an inefficient point-to-point type. This is why, without industrialization, ancient China could never be a truly modern state.

Jurgen Habermas and his public sphere theory can be one further theoretical guidelines option for investigating the medium and communication's form, particularly in the digital era. This is because of:

(the public sphere) means first of all a realm of our social life in which something approaching public opinion can be formed. Access is guaranteed to all citizens. A portion of the public sphere comes into being in every conversation in which private individuals assemble to form a public body. They then behave neither like business or professional people transacting private affairs, nor like members of a constitutional order subject to the legal constraints of a state bureaucracy. Citizens behave as a public body when they confer in an unrestricted fashion—that is, with the guarantee of freedom of assembly and association and the freedom to express and publish their opinions—about matters of general interest. In a large public body this kind of communication requires specific means for transmitting information and influencing those who receive it. Today newspapers and magazines,

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radio and television are the media of the public sphere. We speak of the political public sphere in contrast, for instance, to the literary one, when public discussion deals with objects connected to the activity of the state. (Habermas, J., Lennox, S., & Lennox, F., 1974, p. 49)

The logic connection can be found among Deutsch's and Habermas's theories. In terms of nationalism, Habermas's general interests and the subsequent public opinion can be seamlessly integrated into Deutsch's membership and social communication, and only the two effect relationships are converse. Effective social communication can lead to a consolidated nationalistic identification, while the existence of general interest – in our case, it could be a nationalistic political demand – can eventually cultivate a public opinion.

There are indeed several difficulties and obstacles in applying the public sphere theory in the Chinese context. First, the full subtitle of Habermas's work on the public sphere is "*The structural transformation of the public sphere: An inquiry into a category of bourgeois society*," his research is based on the bourgeois society, his investigated public sphere is the bourgeois public sphere; second, there is a strong liberalism academic background behind the conception. The fundamental theory of Habermas's idea is the conception of a "civil society." (Habermas, 1991) Nevertheless, according to the Chinese researcher Wang Jun's explanation, these two obstacles are not decisive. Wang analyzed Habermas's theory from philosophical and sociological perspectives. From Wang's point of view, the public sphere's most essential feature is a network of information exchange and communication, where a public judgment can form. (Wang Jun, 2010a, p. 143) In correspondence with Chinese researchers, Habermas himself also had stated that "any broader, more informed and more active participation...relies on sound public communication...to observe and explain 'people's needs.'" (Habermas, 1999) Furthermore, according to Mary Rakin (1993):

Even if the details of the bourgeois public sphere do not fit Chinese history, the idea of intermediate arenas in which open, public initiatives are undertaken by both officials and the populace seems useful in understanding relationships between the two. Such spheres require a state presence, a degree of autonomous or voluntary social involvement, some social impact on policy, and a legitimizing idea of the common good. (p. 160)

Like Wang Jun, Rakin focuses more on the public sphere's structural function. Meanwhile, as a heritage of the thousands of years of PCS implementation, the state presence should be considered a fundamental uniqueness of China but not a decisive negative factor, nor to mention that nationalism is already tightly linked with the state.

The applicability of the public sphere in China does not guarantee any public sphere in the bourgeois society – like newspaper or television – is also a public sphere in China or they are of the same level. To define a public sphere, Habermas had proposed nine normative features: inclusiveness, accessibility, autonomy, rationality, interactivity, criticalness, commonness, privacy, and social integration. However, these features are of a "discursive" model (Benhabib, 1992), an ideal model that should be used to criticize current public spheres' defects but not for practical judgment.

Therefore, Habermas's nine features should be combined with those three factors from Deutsch's theory: velocity, accuracy, and complexity – while China as the general background also should be considered. In relation to our investigation of cybernationalism in China, not only do we need to explain how the public sphere can promote the complementarity of social communication but also the academic reliability of the opinions that occur in such a public sphere should be verified. Thus five fundamental standards of evaluation for the Chinese public sphere, particularly the virtual ones, are proposed:

- (1) Complexity — This can be understood as the general informative capacity of each virtual publication. The quality and quantity are equally important as some virtual communities limit the publication's length. The available forms of publication also matter because multimedia content is much more efficient in communication.
- (2) Accessibility — “The issues discussed became ‘general’ not merely in their significance, but also in their accessibility. Everyone had to be able to participate” (Habermas, 1991, p.37). If only social communication's effectiveness was sought for the nationalism-social communication issue, but the sovereign border was ignored, the nationalistic membership is groundless. In the case of virtual communities, their accessibility is embodied in their openness to new joiners and limitations to new joiners' participation.
- (3) Interactivity — For Habermas, the “existence of shared social space” is much more important than the “physical co-presence of others” (Saco, 2002); besides, interactivity is the most remarkable symbol of the Internet (Kioussis, 2002). Hence we should focus on the interactivity frequency inside the virtual community and between different communities and how the platform/ICP facilitates such interactivity.
- (4) Autonomy — The censorship, the state interference, and the overloaded economic power are trying to shape the public sphere into a distorted one, resulting in the loss of real general interest and public opinion. Therefore, the ability to confront outside influence, including censorship from the government and ICP, to preserve its independence financially and technologically is crucial for the public sphere.
- (5) Agenda-setting — How has the daily social communication topic been built for Chinese internauts' Internet usage? How can an issue be noted by the internaut? The essence of these two questions exists in the agenda-setting, which is highly dependent on the autonomy level. The agenda-setting not only leads to the very first motivation/drive of the public opinion, in the case of Chinese nationalism, it can also be understood as a choice of narrative, especially when the official one is challenged.

We can start our specific analysis of virtual communities with the five standards clarified. Based on the most influential websites and applications, three typical cases will be investigated in relation to

cybernationalism: Internet Forum as an example of the content community, Group of Instant Messaging (GIM) for the Instant Messaging, and Weibo for the most comprehensive platform.

3.3.1 Internet Forum

The Internet forum, which originated from the Bulletin Boards System (BBS), is a virtual content community where internauts communicate in the form of a series of posted messages (帖子). Compared with other websites and applications, the Internet forum is gradually losing its past dominant influence in recent years (CNNIC, 2019, p.19), but due to its some advantages in offering the public sphere, it can not be ignored for researching Chinese cybernationalism.

Technologically, the Internet forum can be built up independently by its founders, but such a project requires high programming skills. Hence a pre-designed template is usually preferred. In China, the Comsenz Technology Company (康胜创想) has developed one most welcomed template, the *Discuz! Board*; our investigation example, the Northdy Forum (北朝论坛), is one forum based on this template.

Till the middle of 2019, Northdy (<https://bbs.northdy.com/>) has operated for six years, with six boards and 26 sections, and 125359 accounts had registered, and 11590400 posts had been published. The daily average number of newly posted messages is around 3800-5000, while the most popular section possesses 3000-4200.

It began as a refuge when another Internet forum Sonicbbs (<http://www.sonicbbs.com.cn/>), encountered dysfunction. According to its founder Dangrenbei (党人碑), Northdy is a sanctuary of chitchat for his Sonicbbs friends. Nevertheless, Northdy gradually becomes – based on the description of the co-founder and senior administrator Sikaoderen (思考得人)⁶⁴– an alliance to oppose imbecile, pro-western intellectual, reverse nationalism, and fanatic environmentalist, a hodgepodge that contains everything from leftist to rightist. (一个为了反对脑残、公知、逆向民族主义和环保厨的联盟 这个从左到右无所不包的大杂烩)

Clearly, Northdy has named its enemies. The confrontational stance makes the forum limit its accessibility. Only three of six boards and 10 of 26 sections are visible to passersby. The registration is by invitation code is only doable for senior users, while the rare open registration is only available during some national celebration days. Moreover, different authorization levels are set up for formal users. Except for the administrator level, the authorizations can be unlocked by “scores” through daily participation. To experience the normal navigation, including searching with the website, a new registered has to accumulate 401 scores – about daily login for 200 days or 400 times of post.

⁶⁴ <https://bbs.northdy.com/home.php?mod=space&uid=128&do=profile>, pre-login may requested.

One advantage of the limited accessibility is mild censorship. Although the Discuz! template offers a preset list of 1600 sensitive words that can automatically prevent any publication containing them,⁶⁵ Northdy's pre-filter censorship would only turn the sensitive words into asterisks (*), and the post-censor by administrators –formed by founders, senior users, and volunteers – are mainly introduced after a formal complaint. The campaign-against-burst still affects Northdy. Not only a sticky public warning will be issued in every section, but a temporal curfew that prohibits any post could also be applied during late night when most administrators are off duty.

However, the limited accessibility also means limited advertisement attraction, which is a crucial financial solution for the independent Internet forum's technical maintenance and Internet server fee. For Northdy, some users with programming skills solve the first problem and voluntarily assume the maintenance job; on the other hand, thanks to the rapid digitalization and well-developed network infrastructure, one donation mobilized by the administrators is enough for years of server fees.

Northdy, like many other Internet forums, is formed by many discussion threads and posts under them. Users can open a new discussion with the “starter posting” that requires a headline and content (Holtz, Kronberger & Wagner, 2012, p. 55). The headlines with pagination of every 30 form the main body of each section/subsection, and users must click the headlines to view and participate in the discussion thread.

Inside the thread, there is a minimum and maximum length requirement for each post, which often varies from 10 bytes to 10000 bytes. Northdy extends the maximum limit to 50000 bytes. Considering a Chinese character occupies 2 bytes, clearly long and rich content is encouraged in Northdy. Discuz! also offers a Microsoft Word-like editor system. The font and the format of content are changeable for stressing key points, while multimedia content like images and videos can also be attached. Nevertheless, the support for the multimedia content is not very effective. Images can be introduced through an external link (directly shown in the post) or uploaded to the forum's database, in neither means the user can directly post a local image – for example, a screenshot. The video support is worse, as the forum does not allow its upload, while the external link video's format may not fit with the Discuz! and cannot be played. Hence users prefer leaving the video's original link.

The forum's interaction is mainly in the form of a reply to the threads and other replies. As arranged in time sequence, every post occupies a unique “floor” with a pagination of every 30. Such a system contributes to understanding the ongoing discussion process and reducing later joiners' participation desire, as their posts are placed in later pages with less visibility. On the other hand, the reply to other replies will result in a new floor with a citation to the original reply. The cited user can easily note and make further replies; users who are not directly involved in the discussion could find it problematic to catch up with the interaction between these bilateral replies because their attention may be distracted by other irrelevant floors. Thus for Northdy users, to ensure their visibility and fully satisfy their vocal desire, opening a new thread

⁶⁵ <https://help.fireinter.com/m/view.php?aid=382>, retrieved on March 11 of 2017.

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and focusing on discussion with some particular users could be the best communicative strategy. However, under such a strategy, except for the starter posting, other high-quality content (if it existed) inside the thread is hard to be reorganized and redistributed to other social networks.

In order to understand the agenda-setting mechanism of Northdy, we have done a thread analysis with the keyword “trade war” (贸易战) on Northdy. Samples were collected on 15 July 2019, with 314 threads with the keyword detected. The data includes the starter posting’s user ID, the number of comments on each thread, and the starter posting’s information origin classification (Official source or UGC).

	<u>Thread Posted</u>	<u>Comments Posted</u>	<u>Average Comments</u>	<u>Starter User</u>	<u>Median of Comment per Starter User</u>	<u>Sample Standard Derivation of Comment per Starter User</u>
Total	314	11004	35	179*	29	127
Official Source	151	5236	34.6	78	42	87
UGC Content	163	5768	35.3	123	25	134
Scale Factor**	107.95%	110.16%	102.02%	157.69%	59.52%	154.02%

*: One user can publish both types.
 **: UGC/Official Source

Table 2. “Trade War” Issue Threads Analysis on Northdy

The first finding is that Internet forum users’ awareness is heavily dependent on the official information source. Out of the 314 threads, 305 (97.13%) were posted after the 5 of April 2018, when the United States Trade Representative announced the first \$50 billion tariffs on Chinese goods. Also, 151 (48.09%) threads were based on or were a direct repost of traditional institution news media’s reports. The reason for this dependence could be the political nature of the trade war, that China and the USA were competing at the state level. Thus the common personal experience sharing became relatively neglectable.

Although the information source was still very institutional, forum users had not given up independent interpretation attempts. As table 2 shows, the 151 official source threads had received a total of 5236 comments with an average of 34.6 comments for each; the 163 UGC threads had received 5768 comments with an average of 35.3. The UGC content was equally important as the official information on both terms of thread (initiative) and comment (impact). Besides, only 78 users had reposted official information, but 123 users had tried to share their personal opinion. The most influential thread also confirms the personal interpretation tendency – a UGC content titled “Talk about my opinions on the trade war and roughly estimate the domestic economic situation in the next few years” (谈谈我对贸易战的看法, 大致推算国内未来几年经济状况), posted by the user Gougoudetuba2 (狗狗的兔爸 2), had received 1053 comments.

On the one hand, another tendency of decentralization and diversification of informative channels is quite obvious. Among the 151 official source threads, Chinese internauts were not limited by just Chinese official news media like Xinhua News and People Daily. Besides, many foreign agencies were also cited, including Radio France Internationale, New York Times, Associated Press, Bloomberg News, and British Broadcasting Corporation. The traditional state monopoly on informative channels no longer exists, at least for the trade war issue. On the other hand, a clear converging tendency is also forming among the UGC threads. Even internauts prefer posting UGC content, but the lower median number (25) and higher Sample Standard Derivation (134) reveal that many UGC threads receive few or even no reactions from other internauts. Meanwhile, grassroots opinion leaders dominate the unofficial public expression. Similar research on another virtual forum also finds that the tiny hyperactive internauts (less than 0.1% of total internauts) and their threads are the primary drive/space for 60% of total interactions (Rong & Xia, 2009). In our case, user Gougoudetuba2 is a typical example. He/She had posted four threads, all of UGC, and were respectively commented by 1053, 206, 175, and 32 times. That is to say, Gougoudetuba2 alone had assumed 25.41% of UGC's total comments and 13.32% of overall comments.

3.3.2 Group of Instant Messaging

Two popular Instant messaging applications were mentioned before, QQ and WeChat, both developed by the Tencent Company. QQ is designated for the PC user, and WeChat is for the mobile user, but they are both trans-platform programs/applications nowadays.

Although they were designed for personal communication, QQ and WeChat offer group chatting services (GIM), with a slight difference. QQ's GIM service offers a stable discussion place. Each group has a formal name and a unique group ID, and QQ users can search both the name and ID to send a join request. The request may be automatically accepted – for those public GIMs, but the most usual scene is that some identification check will be implemented. Including a simple question of intention, a series of questions linked with the GIM's theme, or even a 100% exact answer. GIM on the WeChat platform is more like a temporal chatting group, with no ID, no formal name, and the invitation is the only access.

Thanks to Tencent's technical support, every QQ/WeChat user can easily establish a GIM for free. Nevertheless, it also means the company has supreme authority over the GIM; in a sense, the government also does. Therefore, GIM's censorship chain is from the government through the tech company and to the local administrators, a triple-structure censorship. Under this circumstance, the practical GIM censorship divide into two groups: for the newly established GIM, which has a lower cohesion among its members, administrators prefer a stricter censorship code so the group can survive; for the mature GIM, where members are quite familiar with each other, because that the reconstruction cost of a banned GIM is close to zero – except the loss of chat record, then administrators tend to apply a softer censorship code. Obviously, this anti-censorship ability can be considered as part of the public sphere's autonomy level. On the QQ/WeChat platform, compared with the money or technical ability, the closeness of the interconnection between internauts is more crucial for autonomy.

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As an expansion of the instant messaging program, simultaneously chatting is also the essence of GIM. The better (or the worse) side is that it is not just two but many more people involved in it. As the messages are automatically updated, and every user can speak at the same time, the information flow inside a GIM can easily become a disordered flood. No stable discussion thread can be established, and the topic could change in less than ten seconds. A long and well-prepared post on the Internet forum could attract attention even if placed on later pages, but on the GIM, any non-instant attraction is not a real attraction. Hence to catch up with the current discussion and gain more attraction, short sentences – including cutting a paragraph into several sentences – and memes are the most welcomed expression forms on GIM because they can output an immense amount of information in a very short time.

GIM has a very sound support mechanism in the introduction of multimedia content. Most formats of images and videos can be directly pasted into the group. If some content formats could not be directly viewed on GIM, a small cloud storage service (usually 2GB) facilitates the temporal upload/download and contributes to the interactions among the GIM members. For interaction between different GIMs, a simple select and repost can complete the sharing. The GIM's screenshot service on PC has promoted its interactivity with other social networks and websites. Not just because of the instantness and authenticity in sharing other sources of information but also because users can make some preliminary edits before finishing the screenshot, like stressing the keypoint with an arrow, blurring private information, inserting a textbox to leave personal opinions. However, the export of content that originated from a GIM to other virtual spaces could be tricky. The most valuable content of a GIM, the chat record, can only be exported into the “.mht” format⁶⁶, which is not loadable in many social networks. Although a screenshot of the GIM chat could export the most crucial information, the risk of an out-of-context quotation and selective editing could cause more distrust than sharing.

Due to the communicative form, GIM's agenda-setting is hard to confirm. Thus high-quality content with enthusiastic responses barely exists, but the timeliness feature of GIM enables a particular function – a coordination tool for both online and offline activities. Many examples can be noted during the online nationalistic movement, and one salient is the 2016 Facebook “Holy War”/Expedition. After Tsai Ing-wen, a pro-independence candidate won the 2016 general election of the Republic of China, the mainland nationalists believed it was necessary to show her their determination to the China unification, and thus an expedition to Tsai's Facebook was launched. However, the massive cybernationalists were not organized before the expedition, not to mention Facebook is blocked in mainland China. Thus GIM (of QQ) has been used widely to overcome organizational and technical difficulties.

⁶⁶ Format “.bak” is also feasible but uneditable for non-Tencent technician.

GIM ID (Number on QQ)	The task of each GIM
Headquarters (80149962)	Expedition's command office. Responsible for coordination between different GIMs and with other virtual communities
Frontline (292280956)	Expedition's main force. Responsible for commenting and reposting on Facebook, also "like" the friendly post and "dislike" the rival one.
1 st Route (364207102)	The documentation group. Assumes responsibility for collecting information about Tsai and her party's secessionism.
2 nd Route (136070807)	The recruitment and publicity group. Focuses on attracting more volunteers and the general visibility of the expedition, especially over Chinese communities.
3 rd Route (367082592)	Group of editors, responsible for frontline group's "ammunition," including the slogan, poster, and meme.
4 th Route (339864386)	The foreign affairs group. Coordinates overseas Chinese volunteers and translates the 3 rd route's content into foreign languages.
5 th Route (434253247)	Supportive group, dedicated to "like" and "dislike" action, also tries to "Report Abuse" over rival posts.
Cantonese Group (369704483)	Dialect group, focus on Cantonese content and persuasion of Hong Kong/Macau internauts.

Table 3. Task Distribution on GIM during the 2016 Expedition

Based on multiple Chinese researchers' investigations of the 2016 Facebook Expedition (Bi & Yang, 2016; Tang Jingtai, 2016; Lin Suzhen, 2017), the task distribution during the Facebook expedition is concluded as table 3 shows. Chinese nationalists were well organized with the help of GIM. The clear task distribution contributes to the operation's general effectiveness, as internauts may have different interests and skills. QQ GIM's "temporal discussion group" (临时讨论组) allows a further detailed task distribution. For example, in the 4th route, members were divided into each subgroup according to different languages/regions. Besides, the timeliness feature of GIM ensures a quick response to any incident.

Unquestionably, these GIM groups were a result of a cyber movement's centralization necessity, but inside them, an apparent decentralization tendency also existed. Although a headquarter GIM exists, the organizational structure of the 2016 expedition was not a pyramid but a circle instead. The headquarter group did have connections with all other groups, but the vertical connections between different groups were not uncommon. The frontline group directly exchanged information with the 3rd route for ammunition supply, while the 3rd group directly received raw materials from the 1st route. The formation of a circle information flow is because most participants were temporal volunteers, so the headquarters group did not have the same authority as a traditional governmental organization. The lack of traditional authority also reveals that, as a collective cyberactivism, the first motivation of the 2016 expedition was based on a collective consensus, and that consensus was nationalism.

3.3.3 Weibo

Weibo is a Twitter-like virtual community operated by the Sina company. Its name, Weibo, is the direct translation of Microblog (微博) in Chinese. Sina officially claimed that Weibo's daily active user number had passed 200 million in 2018 (Sina, 2019, p.5), the CNNIC's data shows a 37.1% usage of Weibo among Chinese internauts in 2016 (CNNIC, 2017, p.6), and our prior investigation (table 1 and figure 15) also confirms the strong influence of Weibo in both websites and mobile applications.

Same as Twitter, Weibo has three basic mechanisms: the microblog content, the following/followed, and the trending. Although the main interactions over a microblog are just like Twitter, comment, repost, and Like, some differences can be found in posting content. The microblog used to copy Twitter's 140 words limit, and that limit was removed in 2016, while Twitter keeps a 280 words limit⁶⁷. In terms of picture usage, Weibo allows nine pictures for ordinary users and 18 for paying users, and Twitter only allows four pictures. In a word, Weibo has better complexity support than Twitter.

Weibo would automatically recommend some accounts for new starters and push some microblogs to their homepage; however, a more effective way to receive information is to independently follow some accounts by users' interests, including friends, celebrities, news agencies, and state departments' accounts. In this way, a customized information channel is established, and through mutual followership, this customized channel can be expanded into a small virtual community. Moreover, if this small community continue its expansion, its core speakers will eventually become opinion leader.

Nevertheless, people prefer to stay with others of the same opinion, and then the information cocoon forms (Sunstein, 2006). In efforts to break the closed circle, an exploring system is used by both Weibo and Twitter. On Twitter's trending system, the hashtags and keywords are the main body, indicating an issue-oriented tendency, while on the Weibo platform, two exploring systems are implemented. The hottest search list/hottest hashtags offer an issue-oriented experience to the users, and the hottest microblog list shows those with the most enthusiastic response, usually posted by accounts with a large number of followers, an opinion leader-oriented result. Therefore, opinion leaders on the Weibo platform are more potentially influential compared with Twitter.

On the one hand, one opinion leader (with enough followers) alone can create a tendency which visible to millions of Weibo users. On the other hand, the opinion leader-oriented list may strengthen an overwhelming narrative that the better-prepared (or simply more popular) opinion leader's microblog keeps occupying the hottest microblog list, while its opponents and dissidents are excluded from it and invisible to bystanders. This opinion leaders encouraged mechanism has promoted their devotion to the Weibo career, especially for those full-time virtual opinion leaders, as the devotion could bring followers, and more followers mean more visibility on the platform. Also, opinion leaders tend to establish a relationship kind of

⁶⁷ <https://developer.twitter.com/en/docs/counting-characters>, retrieved on November 1 of 2020.

alliance and friendship, as the reaction from other opinion leaders will directly foster a microblog's dissemination and visibility. Once the bond deepens among some particular opinion leaders, a more inclusive and looser virtual community could form. If the nature of the bond between opinion leaders highly corresponds with the cause, the loose community's potential mobilization could be powerful enough to create an information storm that sweeps the exploring system and makes a subgroup's concern national. In the following chapter, several cases of this protocol will be analyzed.

As a private company's product, Weibo is controlled by Sina and heavily influenced by the Chinese government, just like the GIM. But the difference in the participation form between GIM and Weibo determines these two products show different characteristics in maintaining autonomy. On the GIM platform, censorship mainly comes to the group but not the individual member, and its executor is a local administrator who has a deep connection with GIM members. On the contrary, Weibo's main content is published by the individual account, whose registration requires a mobile phone number under Chinese telecom companies' real-name system. That is to say, censorship on Weibo focuses on the individual user, both online and offline. Indeed, an individualized, real-name applied social network does strengthen the government's censorship ability; on the other hand, when an incident comes to the view of millions of Weibo users, the cost of censorship also skyrockets. Besides, except for the five types of sensitive information mentioned before, the government, especially the central government, whose interest is not always the same as local governments (Zhong, 2015), is not against criticism from Weibo but views it as an additional public opinion radar. Therefore, the fundamental factor of Weibo's autonomy is its large number of users. Therefore, in the general term of Weibo, the naturally gathered attention is the best lever for maintaining autonomy. However, less attention means weaker autonomy in particular cases, and this is a crucial reason for the opinion leader-oriented is sought after on Weibo.

Compared with Internet Forum and GIM, Weibo is more like a public plaza where everyone can speak, and theoretically, everyone can be heard. Nevertheless, user numbers' growth contributes to the complete formation of a communication pyramid, where the new opinion leaders have replaced the traditional news media. For public affairs, an ordinary Weibo user's visibility is merely zero if not intervened by opinion leaders, while the opinion leaders, of a small number, can easily be affected by their own interest or external pressure and then privatize/distort a public affair. Under such circumstances, the agenda-setting ability on Weibo tends to be concentrated in a small elite group. To overcome this potential elite manipulation as much as possible, case studies on Weibo should highlight two factors: the unexpected outburst and the new rising opinion leader. An unexpected outburst could minify elites/opinion leaders' manipulation energy, especially in the early stage; through analyzing the rising process of a new opinion leader, it could be easier for researchers to observe the consensus behind his/her success and even could furtherly contribute to an authentic understanding of public opinion if the success was big enough.

3.3.4 Three Internet communities' comparison and their link with nationalism

As a public sphere, all three communities have their advantages and disadvantages. Internet forum supports a full-scale complexity. The multimedia support on the Discuz! template is not ideal, but it should be considered a solvable technical problem, not a structural one. Weibo has a mediocre performance. Complexity could be found in it, while its "micro" blog origin determines a short content preference. GIM does not seek – if not oppose – the complexity though multimedia content is encouraged.

In terms of interactivity, both GIM and Weibo are designed for users' interaction. Interactivity is their core attraction. Of course, due to the communicative form, the internal interaction on GIM seems more active than on Weibo, while Weibo plays a better role in exporting information and influencing other social networks. Internet forum users' interaction level is not as high as in the other two examples. Its structure and the thread-post model have limited its ability to allow a mass participated discussion.

An inverse proportionality is found between virtual communities' accessibility and autonomy in the investigation. Internet forum has a very sound autonomy but is quite closed to the public; Weibo, particularly its exploring system, is totally open, but it also faces the heaviest external pressure; GIM keeps a relative balance between autonomy and accessibility, but both at a mediocre level.

The Internet has shaken news media's past dominance, but discourse power's egalitarianism did not come. That is to say, the communication on the Internet does show a trend of decentralization, but this decentralization is more like a decentralization from the traditional informative nodes – for example, the government or the press – to grassroots informative nodes. On both the Internet forum and Weibo, opinion leaders gradually expand and consolidate their influence, assuming the agenda-setting responsibility. However, the decentralization is not equal to a total victory of grassroots opinion leaders. Because the tools and channels of communication among the public are unprecedented enriched, the informative nodes are now more like an acceptable choice rather than an essential cornerstone for the communication process. Therefore, we would like to suggest the communication model in the Internet age as a flashlight-mirror type, individual attention as the flashlight, and opinion leader as the mirror. The flashlight can freely choose a mirror to irradiate, and as a mirror already receives more light, the more possible it is to be noticed and irradiated. The mirror's fundamental motivation is setting up the cause for being irradiated, especially when it tries to stay bright as long as possible.

On the one hand, although the opinion leaders' agenda-setting is still profoundly affected by the traditional news media, a UGC tendency is too obvious to ignore; on the other hand, grassroots opinion leader is not the insurance of authenticity, both political censorship, and economic interest could lead to misinformation by opinion leaders. The case of GIM is very different from the other two communities. Agenda-setting barely exists, but its cyber Walkie-Talkie is also irreplaceable for any cyberactivism.

Generally speaking, none of the three Internet products is close to Habermas's ideal public sphere model, but their usage is not exclusive either. Internauts can freely use all three products simultaneously, and

complementarily, each product's defects can be overcome. Therefore, from the overall perspective, the Internet's performance as a public sphere is good enough to research Chinese public opinion – once the investigation has covered various virtual communities and has collected enough examples.

In terms of the link with nationalism, the social networks' qualification as a public sphere has proved its ability to offer a social communication of high effectiveness. However, its contribution to Chinese nationalism is more than just its effectiveness. At least two more advantages should be noticed: a better consensus and a better collective action.

No matter Gellner's high culture or Benedict's imagined community, nationalism relies on a consensus among its members. The individual first has to exclusively choose one consensus and then become a member of the nation. In ancient China, that consensus existed, but only firmly among the Confucianists, and the economic/educational obstacle kept ordinary people from being entirely converted to that consensus. The massive mobilization during the war against Japan had expanded and deepened the consensus, but the war was a special and temporal event. Indeed, the public education progress after the foundation of the PRC is crucial for the popularization of consensus, but the official narrative is mainly based on the historical event and focuses on external pressure, with few discussions about the self-definition of the Chinese nation. For its high accessibility, the social network enables massive participation in the self-definition process with unprecedented individual volition, while its autonomy permits a challenge to the defective official nationalistic theory.

Internet space also helps nationalists to take collective actions. Yes, the Chinese government is very concerned about collective action, but collective action refers to offline movements, like protests. The collective action online – the cyberactivism, is not included in the sensitive information by Chinese censorship. Due to the proto-nationalism's dependence on the government, Chinese cybernationalists prefer cooperation with the government and an official reform on nationalistic issues. As the government increasingly pays more attention to online public opinion, nationalistic cyberactivism becomes a feasible solution for nationalists to push the government to respond to their demands. As the subsequent chapter on cyberactivism will show, such a solution is simply impossible without the virtual community's accessibility and interactivity.

3.4 Chapter Conclusion

The Internet is a disruptive phenomenon for Chinese society. Mostly for its “public and open” property. Indeed, the government's effort is a key factor in Internet's development in China, and the government never gives up on taming it. Nevertheless, the Internet's communication form and internauts' volume determine that it can never be the same as traditional new media, so the government – especially after the Web 2.0 era – focuses more on recessive cooperation but not direct control.

The relatively tolerant environment is the origin of our investigation's feasibility. Before the Internet era, it was not a surprise to find dissident and applause of the official narrative, but ideas both partly concur

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and differ from the official narrative were rarely seen. Chinese nationalism, which originated from proto-nationalism, is one of them based on our previous investigation. The bloom of virtual community allows Chinese nationalists to develop an independent narrative stably, disseminating such a narrative to a broader audience and taking an online collective action for its implementation

4. CHAPTER FOUR: SHAPING THE CHINESE CYBERNATIONALISM

In chapter 2, we have investigated how proto-nationalism gradually moved close to modern nationalism in China, and several of Chinese nationalism's features have been concluded. After the drastic industrialization and informatization, an investigation of these features' preservation and development will contribute to our understanding of what Chinese cybernationalism is and why it is like this. On the other hand, compared with the later official nationalism narrative, these features manifested before or in the early period of the CPC's governance are more "natural" and "sincere" and can better represent and reflect a grassroots nationalism. Thus the similarity and coherence between these features and cybernationalism can also reveal the government's role in the Internet era's nationalistic movements.

Generally speaking, the mentioned features can be summarized into two aspects: the external pressure that draws the figure of "them" and the internal dynamic that identifies the boundary of "us." Before 1840, traditional proto-nationalism was more about the self-identification of what Chinese/China means, while the later imperialist invasion forced the Chinese to recognize and learn what "them" are. However, the foundation of the PRC does not result in the convergence of these two aspects. On the contrary, the semi-colonial era's scars are still the most critical factor of cybernationalism due to geopolitical reasons. As we will examine in chapters 4 and 5, a great part of cybernationalists' concerns and cyberactivism is concentrated at the crossroads of the nationalistic consensus on China and remnants from the Century of Humiliation, both sovereignly and spiritually. Thus a third special section is created, an intermediate part that involves both external pressure and internal dynamic.

However, to study nationalism in the Internet era, we must also pay attention to the difference between cybernationalism and classic nationalism. In the material selection of Chapter 2, the research focuses on official-collective narratives and examples. Although its original intention is to explore the formation of China's proto-nationalism and modern nationalism, according to Hobsbawm's paradigm, it belongs to the government perspective rather than popular opinion. Of course, the fundamental reason is that when Hobsbawm wrote the book *Nations and nationalism since 1780*, he was limited to historical materials and research tools. The popular opinion involved in the book was essentially a microscopic discussion of the non-governmental group. That in his paradigm, the concept "popular" stands for "non-governmental." Nevertheless, with the advent of the Internet, researchers now have the opportunity to gain a more individual concretization of nationalism and nationalists. Prior to digitalization, the intellectuals and petite bourgeoisie, as backbones of nationalism, were subject to the traditional communication pyramid. That is to say, the classic nationalist movements are with strong indoctrinated colors. In the case of China, both traditional Confucian bureaucrats and Communist Party cadres have their own system, while ordinary nationalists were merely extensions and affiliations of this system. With the continuous downward penetration of the communication measure, the information flow in the horizontal direction inside the vertical communication

is also continuously strengthened. Hence naturally, inside the classic indoctrinated nationalistic movement, the importance of individual experience begins to rise, which is the most significant innovation of cybernationalism. Therefore, in this chapter on the formation of cybernationalism in China, we should focus on those cases where individual experimentation is more typical and salient.

Guided by the above categorization and definition, Chapter 4's investigation of cybernationalism's evolution will be divided into external, internal, and intermediate.

4.1. External pressure as the principal motivation for cybernationalism

Psychologists commonly agree that experiencing psychological and physical health problems in childhood would cause severe and long-term, including low self-esteem, sensitivity, and stress-related arrogance impacts (Goodman, Joyce, & Smith, 2011; Hryshko, Luengo-Prado, & Sørensen, 2011). Before 1840, only proto-nationalism existed in China, and modern nationalism barely began to form since the Century of Humiliation. Therefore we can call this period the “childhood” of modern Chinese nationalism, and obviously, there is a childhood shadow over it that was brought by western powers. During the first decades of the PRC, a connection or communication with the western was not accessible to most Chinese people, and the impact of childhood shadow was not noticeable enough. The Internet offers a direct, expanding channel for the Chinese to communicate with the international community while also possibly overcoming the past trauma calmly. However, since the first touch with the Internet, Chinese cybernationalists' childhood problems are mainly escalated in an intense way.

4.1.1. Military threat as the beginning of cybernationalism

The beginning of the Century of Humiliation started with the British military invasion. Thus no wonder the Chinese cybernationalists kept a close eye on any foreign military action targeting China. After the USSR's dissolution, China became the biggest communist country, and western powers, chiefly the U.S., started to exert pressure on it. In the next decade, a series of escalating incidents broke out between China and the U.S. Among them, there are four iconic: the Yinhe Incident (1993), the third Taiwan Strait Crisis (1995-1996), the bombing of the Chinese embassy in Belgrade (1999), and the Hainan Island incident (2001), which eventually established a military distrust against the U.S. among the Chinese cybernationalists.

The Yinhe incident was a claim by the US government that the Chinese container ship Yinhe (银河号) was transporting chemical weapons materials to Iran when Yinhe was in the middle of the Indian Ocean, bound for Kuwait but detained by the U.S. military force. After an inspection, the Chinese government confirmed that there was no material for a chemical weapon on the container ship on August 9, 1993. However, the U.S. rejected the statement and threatened a forced inspection. On August 28, the Chinese government agreed to an open inspection at the Saudi Arabian port, carried out by a joint group of the U.S., Saudi Arabia, and China. According to a statement by the Chinese government sent to the OPCW⁶⁸, on

⁶⁸ <https://web.archive.org/web/20021114163952/http://www.nti.org/db/china/engdocs/ynhe0993.htm>

September 4, 1993, the inspection team signed a report that the Chinese container ship was clean. In the same statement, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of China also criticized the U.S. for its rude behavior under the “self-styled world cop” title and the violation of Chinese companies and the government’s legal rights. On the other hand, the U.S. government rejected an apology because it believed that it had acted in good faith on intelligence from various sources (Tyler, 1993), nor was any compensation paid.

To the U.S., the Yinhe Incident is just one neglectable operation, but to Chinese first Internet users who mainly emerged after the incident, it was the “prenatal education” on how the western powers will treat China and the delusion of a selfless U.S. in helping China began to broke only four years after the Tiananmen protest. A sense of humiliation is widely shared, as Sha Zukang, the Chinese official who participated in the inspection team, said: “Cowardice, 100% cowardice.”⁶⁹ The U.S. politicians also noted that the Chinese repeatedly cited Yinhe Incident as a case of the U.S.’s bullying against China (U.S.Cong., 2001, p.45).

Two years later, a much worse military confrontation occurred between China and the U.S. – the third Taiwan Strait Crisis. The crisis began when the U.S. permitted the ROC president, Teng-hui Lee’s visa and allowed his “Taiwan’s Democratization Experience” speech at Cornell University. As 1996 was ROC’s election year and Lee’s enthusiasm for Taiwan’s independence and China’s disintegration (Lee, 1999), PRC saw it as a U.S. betrayal of its One China Policy commitment and the encouragement of Taiwan’s independence. Military countermeasures, including missile tests and amphibious assault exercises, were carried out by the People’s Liberation Army during the next year. However, the U.S. quickly sent two aircraft carrier battle groups into nearby seas, forcing the PRC leadership to acknowledge that the prevention of secessionism would be too risky and costly to achieve. Although Lee did not declare Taiwan independence after his victory in 1996, the openly U.S. military intervention in China’s unification and the PRC military’s concession remind the Chinese nationalists that the foreign military power is as mighty as it used to be, and China’s sovereignty and interest are still at risk, just like the Century of Humiliation.

In 1999, the continuous U.S. oppression eventually resulted in innocent deaths. During the Kosovo war, the Chinese embassy in Belgrade was bombed by the U.S. aircraft on May 7, causing the death of 3 Chinese journalists and 27 injuries (Dumbaugh, Foreign Affairs, Defense, & Trade Division, 2000, p.1). As we all know, according to the 1st clause of Article 22 of the Vienna Convention on Diplomatic Relations, the premises of the mission are inviolable. Thus the US act was a direct violation of the international convention. After the bombing, the US official quickly declared that the incident was accidental due to an outdated map (Dumbaugh, Foreign Affairs, Defense, & Trade Division, 2000, p.3), while the CIA director – George Tente – admitted that the CIA did have the correct map (Schmitt, 1999).

The bombing and Americans’ shirking attitude irritated the Chinese, and protests against the U.S. erupted in multiple cities, especially where the embassy and consulates were located. As figure 17 shows, the U.S. flag was not even halved before the protest, and the U.S. ambassador to China admitted that he did

⁶⁹ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ncUR5MJ7cb0&t=79s>, retrieved on June 9 of 2016.

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not consider it a major problem at the beginning⁷⁰. Although the Chinese government demanded an open and thorough investigation which should be made public to China⁷¹, the final solution was President Clinton's "regret" message and a "voluntary humanitarian payment" to the victims (Dumbaugh, Foreign Affairs, Defense, & Trade Division, 2000). On the other hand, ignoring some other signals of possible war crime (Rozen, 2000), the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia concluded the case as accidental based on the U.S. Secretary of State's sole explanation and waived its authority in applying the "Office of the Prosecutor" (2000, p. 33). At the same time, the American presses criticized that the protests were controlled and guided by the Chinese government, which were the best example of the "communist threat" (Gries, 2001, pp. 25-26).



Figure 17. Left: Student Protest Outside the U.S. embassy. Right: The Aftermath

Source: <http://mil.eastday.com/>

The bombing incident did not stop the U.S.'s pressure approach. Another three years later, an American spy plane collided with a Chinese interceptor inside the PRC's exclusive economic zone, caused the Chinese pilot's death, and then made an emergency landing on China's Hainan island without permission. The U.S. side has rejected any allegation of possible fault⁷², "forcing China to accept the letter of regret in lieu of a letter of apology" sent by the U.S. ambassador (Zhang, 2001, p. 391). A few months later, the U.S. turned its interest to the middle east due to the 911 incident, and since then, the visible fierce confrontation came to a break.

From the perspective of geopolitics alone, those incidents were typical pressure tests and power shows. The Soviet or Russian could accept them much more calmly, as they would do the same thing. Nevertheless, to the Chinese nationalists' views, these incidents are replays of what the western power had done to China and even a rehearsal of another Century of Humiliation. As Peter Gries noted, famous slogans

⁷⁰ <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-48134881>, retrieved on June 20 of 2019.

⁷¹ <https://www.chicagotribune.com/news/ct-xpm-1999-05-15-9905150119-story.html>, retrieved on June 20 of 2019

⁷² <http://transcripts.cnn.com/TRANSCRIPTS/0104/11/bn.24.html>, retrieved on June 20 of 2019

of the Mao era, like “The imperialists never give up on annihilating us” (帝国主义亡我之心不死), regained and consolidated their position (Gries, 2001). According to another research that contains four surveys on Chinese nationalism, Chinese people born after 1978 – reached 17 years old the 1995 – are more nationalistic than the old generation, and the general Chinese society has become more nationalistic since 2001, with a particular interest in the U.S. and military power (Weiss, 2019). On the other hand, the concessions – or soft attitude – taken by the Chinese government also remind the nationalists of the bitter outcome of nationalism without a political entity’s endorsement and cultivates the idea that “the Chinese governmental and intellectual elite are selling out China’s interests for their own personal interests” inside their minds (U.S.Cong., 2001, p.46). Under such a circumstance, the modern Chinese nationalists quickly establish a direct psychological resonance with their ancestors, the distrust of the western is reconfirmed and reinforced, and the seed of a future call for tougher foreign policy is also planted.

4.1.2. The influence of Western cultural elites in the development of Chinese nationalism

Cultural exchange and communication are meant to help the mutual understanding between two groups. However, the beneficial result requires a context of mutual respect and equality. If one side keeps a high and skeptical attitude, the outcome would be negative or even destructive due to bad faith. Unfortunately, the western cultural elites are too accustomed to the dominant and judging position, which Edward Said had made precise criticism in his *Orientalism* (1978). As Said quoted Carl Marx on the first page of his book, “They cannot represent themselves, they must be represented.” Under Orientalism’s discipline for hundreds of years, any oriental thing’s final evaluation must be done in the occidental paradigm, while the Western judgment does not need an Eastern response.

The Chinese, though with a very long history, also cannot escape the orientalist path. Mixed with the Teacher-worship originated from Confucianism, their eagerness to be accepted and praised by the western world was as high as possible. Yes, the U.S.’s pressure approach did cause a distrust tendency of the western countries, especially their military power, but the exposed weakness of the Chinese government had strengthened the dark side of the childhood trauma – the foreign is better than China. Hence, joining the west becomes a possible solution in front of the invincible western power. One clear evidence is the “studying abroad fever” and the low rate of return.

Since the 1980s, China began to expand its abroad student program. From 1978 to 2014, more than three million students chose or were sent to study in foreign countries (Yue, 2015, p. 242). Among all destinations, the U.S. is the most preferred one. For example, 274439 students went to America in 2013 alone, much higher than Australia’s 150016 and Japan’s 81900 (p. 107). On the other hand, abroad students’ low desire to return to China is also evident, even during the U.S.’s resolve test. In the 1990s, 50%-60% of the official program’s students chose to stay abroad; in the most intensive 2001, only 12234 students had returned to China (pp. 241-242). Naturally, after the U.S. turned to Afghanistan and Iraq to vent its energy, the tendency of fever and no return only enlarged.

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The real change point is the year 2008, when a series of events occurred one after another, and nationalism, which was seemingly quiet for the past seven years, ushered in a big explosion. As the Summer Olympic year, the already existing boycott call⁷³ had grown more loudly. At the beginning of 2008, due to the last year's Noble prize to Dalai Lama, pro-independence Tibetans, long-founded by the U.S. official and private institutions (Topgyal, 2011, pp. 246-247; Norbu, 1994), prepared to launch "The Tibetan People's Uprising Movement," which marked the Olympic Games as its one primary cause⁷⁴. Since the day of March 10, monks around the Tibetan Autonomous Region started to protest and eventually caused civilian deaths on day 14⁷⁵. The Chinese official stated that 18 civilians were killed, among them 12 were burned to death, including a newborn baby⁷⁶, and military weapons were also confiscated in temples⁷⁷. The pro-independence Tibetan source declared at least 101 Tibetan were killed by the authority, as they had obtained four gunshot autopsy reports, and the last one's serial number is 101⁷⁸.

The western news media groups, especially the English ones, quickly sided with the pro-independence party. After reviewing 95 reports from *The New York Times*, Chinese researchers found that 61% of their direct citations were from pro-independence Tibetans and their supporters, while negative connotation words like "crackdown, tighten, terrorize, harsh, bloody suppression" were frequently used on Chinese authority (Zhou & Lu, 2008, p. 14). Other western countries' news media were the same or slightly better. In Germany, the media shifted their focus from violent events to the security force's deployment and suggested an independent Tibet (Becker, 2011, p. 497). In Spain, most reports had used a neutral (50%) or negative (33%) tone (Wang, 2014, p. 96).

To Chinese nationalists, what is worse than bias is dishonest reports, including maliciously editing photos, using fake/wrong photos, and distorting the photo's real meaning. Unfortunately, as figure 18 illustrates, the English-language news media's photo usage had undermined their credibility. CNN had modified the original photo to decrease the rioters' violent impression while strengthening the authority's "brutal suppression" connotation. By using a photo of (Nepalese) "police beats monk," Washington Post had distorted a peaceful confrontation in Lanzhou into a violent conflict between the authority and Tibetans. BBC's interpretation of the ambulance – just as the above Chinese annotation says, reverses black and white (颠倒黑白).

⁷³ <https://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2006/12/13/AR2006121302008.html>, retrieved on July 6 of 2019

⁷⁴ <https://intercontinentalcry.org/the-tibetan-people%E2%80%99s-uprising-movement/>, retrieved on July 6 of 2019

⁷⁵ <http://en.people.cn/90001/90776/6378824.html>, retrieved on July 6 of 2019

⁷⁶ <http://www.scio.gov.cn/xwfbh/gbwxwfbh/xwfbh/gab/Document/313672/313672.htm>, retrieved on July 6 of 2019

⁷⁷ <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-china-tibet/china-says-firearms-found-in-tibetan-temple-idUSPEK20364920080414>, retrieved on July 6 of 2019

⁷⁸ <https://web.archive.org/web/20150702114344/http://www.tchrd.org/2014/08/leaked-internal-document-shows-china-used-machine-guns-to-kill-tibetans-in-march-2008-protest/>, retrieved on July 6 of 2019



Figure 18. English News Media's Inappropriate Photo Usage.

Source: Internet with Own Elaboration.

News media ignored or defended their behaviors in response to Chinese cybernationalists' accusation of inappropriate photo usage⁷⁹; HKU's journalism investigator David Bandurski also indicated

⁷⁹ <https://edition.cnn.com/2008/US/03/28/tibet.statement/index.html#cnmSTCPhoto>

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that the western presses' errors were minor, and the most important was the nationalist trick used by the Chinese government (Bristow. 2008). However, the heat continued its gathering and was finally triggered by CNN commentator Jack Cafferty. On the *SITUATION ROOM* program, after other guests compared the 2008 “Chinese communists” Olympic Games with the 1936 Nazi, Mr. Cafferty complained about the trade deficits caused by Chinese exports, insisted on a hawkish military pressure on China, and defined “they’re basically the same bunch of goons and thugs they’ve been for the last 50 years.”⁸⁰ Such comment had provoked several protests and a formal diplomatic protest⁸¹, but CNN only clarified that Cafferty’s remark referred to the Chinese government but not the Chinese people⁸².



Figure 19. A Tibetan protester tried to grab the torch from Jin Jing.

Source: <http://bbs.xineurope.com/forum.php?mod=viewthread&tid=454852> Autor: Yang Zhendong

While the Tibet riot issue was still a hot topic, the Olympics torch relay began the 24 March, and a new battleground was opened for the China critics. Though the Chinese government had planned a “Journey of Harmony,” from the beginning of the torch-lighting ceremony in Olympia, pro-independence demonstrators tried to politicize the relay, and the intensive confrontation occurred since the torch’s leg in west Europe – London and Paris.

On the one hand, the pro-independence Tibetans and their supporters, together with other participants, had organized several protests against the torch’s arrival in London, and quickly, “the dramatic attempts by protesters to grab the torch, obstruct its path, and even put it out with a fire extinguisher became the major headline around the world” (Edney, 2008, p. 113). In Paris, the relay faced the same fate as London. Except for more times the flame was put out, the most disturbing scene occurred when Jin Jing (金晶), a disabled torchbearer, was attacked by a Tibetan protester, and a Chinese abroad student had filmed the scene (Figure 19). For those Chinese people who consider the whole Olympic event as proof and demonstration of China’s development and nationalistic pride (Wan, 2009, p. 696; Law, 2010, p. 362), while enduring the

⁸⁰ <http://transcripts.cnn.com/TRANSCRIPTS/0804/09/sitroom.03.html>

⁸¹ <https://www.latimes.com/archives/la-xpm-2008-apr-20-me-cnn20-story.html>

⁸² <https://edition.cnn.com/2008/WORLD/asiapcf/04/15/cnn.china/>

western narrative of “victim Tibet and predator China” for a long time (Becker, 2011, p. 495), the photo that showed a Chinese disabled girl assaulted by a strong man with Tibetan independence flag on his head, not only pushed their anger to a new level but also consolidated their belief in Chinese official narrative on these protests – Tibetan secessionist is the evil source.

On the other hand, the western cultural elites, even some politicians, joined the side of the pro-Tibetan independence protest. News media continued their effort to set up an evil China agenda, directly linking the Tibet unrest with the torch relay. For instance, “New clashes in Tibet on eve of Torch’s arrival in UK” and “The real embarrassment is that the International Olympic Committee seems to have no moral compass in deciding who gets the Games” (Horne & Whannel, 2010). “Almost all the background reporting by German mass media on the Olympic Games was marked by bias and a tendency to groundless criticism” (Digel, 2008, p. 68, as cited in Becker, 2011, p. 498). In Paris, including the French president Sarkozy, many politicians declared a boycott of the 2008 Olympic Games (Grant, 2014), and the Paris mayor allowed a protest banner to be hung on the planned ending location, which forced an early close of the relay. Also, as western news media had shifted their focus from the rioter’s violence in Tibet, the Chinese attendant became their new shifted focus during the relay. Both British and French Olympic leaders had labeled Chinese attendants as thugs or robots, and the worst accusation was the disguised People’s Armed Police, which was already eye-catching due to the Lhasa riot reports (Edney, 2008, p. 118).

The 2008 Sichuan Earthquake (12 of May) put a pause on all former agendas. Western cultural elites – at least most of them – now abandoned the ideological hostility and turned to humanitarian affairs in front of a natural disaster. BBC reported the earthquake in a neutral tone while noting the Chinese government was praised as “swift and efficient.”⁸³ The Spanish presses, *La Vanguardia* and ABC, had reported the earthquake without any negative opinion (Wang, 2014, p. 93). However, the celebrity Sharon Stone’s speech had discredited the hard-earned calm situation. Two weeks after the earthquake, when interviewed by a Hong Kong journalist at the Cannes Film Festival and spoken as a good friend of the 14th Dalai Lama, Ms.Stone suggested that the earthquake “is karma,” that was due to China’s treatment of the Tibetan⁸⁴.

After 2008, the Uyghur/Muslim affair become the new instrument for western cultural elites’ evil China agenda. In both the 2009 Ürümqi riot and the 2014 Kuming terrorist attack, not only the same Lhasa riot media coverage style was reused, but now even some western academics have joined the agenda-setting. One most famous is professor Jame Millward of Georgetown University. Dr. Millward is an expert on the Xinjiang issue, went on various field trips to Xinjiang, and has written the book *Eurasian crossroads: a history of Xinjiang*. However, even with enough knowledge of Xinjiang-Uyghur and China’s minority affairs, after the 2009 Ürümqi riot, he strongly suggested that the Chinese government should take the blame for 197 civilians’ death (Millward, 2009, 355). While elaborated on Han’s violence against Uyghur based on the unconfirmed, against-China source – for example, the Radio Free Asia (RFA), a successor of CIA’s

⁸³ <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/asia-pacific/7397489.stm>

⁸⁴ <https://web.archive.org/web/20120425055800/http://today.msnbc.msn.com/id/24847807/ns/today-entertainment/t/sharon-stone-suggests-china-quake-was-karma>

Committee for Free Asia. He believed the Uyghur rioters had expressed “their desire to work within the system” (p.355), without explanation on how a “cooperable” demonstration turned into a kill hunt for non-Uyghur residents. In his recent work, “*China’s system of oppression in Xinjiang: how it developed and how to curb it,*” he furtherly described Xinjiang as a Chinese colony that was newly conquered after 1758, that the Han immigration program failed, and Han farmers had returned to the east (Millward & Peterson, 2020). In the same pattern as the Tibet issue, Dr. Millward is establishing a victim-aborigines against predator-colonist narrative in Xinjiang from a historical perspective. Nevertheless, in his *Eurasian crossroads*, he used one chapter alone to describe Xinjiang’s history from “earliest time to 8th century,” during which the Han/Chinese people played a critical factor along with other Xinjiang natives, while the name “Uyghur” only appeared in Xinjiang after the first millennium. Also, in the same book, he had admitted that the “Han population (in Xinjiang) dropped precipitously in the mid-nineteenth-century wars” (2007, p. 306), which refers to the 1862 Muslim Rebellion that caused at least 20 million deaths (75% were of Han) (Lu Weidong, 2014, p. 356).

As the investigation presented above shows, the western cultural elites have expressed a strong interest in protecting the cultural rights of China’s minorities. However, an evidential double standard can be observed when it comes to protecting the Chinese culture. Since the 1840 Opium War, Chinese artifacts have been pouring out of China legally, coercively, or illicitly. According to Chinese researchers, there are at least 1.67 million Chinese artifacts under the control of 47 foreign countries’ museums, and ten times more are controlled by foreign private collectors (Zhang Lei, 2012, p. 73). Although the lost artifacts and their repatriation are a common challenge for many countries, UNESCO admitted that “nowhere has this issue attracted such a heightened attention than in China” (Lee KG, 2012, p. 10). Relic repatriation means a lot for both the Chinese government and ordinary Chinese people. At least from our investigation’s perspective, it can be considered a “Clean of Humiliation.”

The once cultural protection enthusiasts now have built up another narrative. In the UK – the country that launched the Opium War, one of the four imperialists invaded China the most and controlled numerous Chinese artifacts – media try to describe the lost process most neutrally and legally, using words such as “left China⁸⁵, taken⁸⁶, acquired by⁸⁷.” Its intellectuals also do their best to convince people that the repatriation is not feasible, too-politicized, or unethical. In 2019, the UK’s cultural secretary had denied any possibility of returning looted artifacts and said that displaying relics of different origins in one place would be more beneficial⁸⁸. A similar response can be heard on BBC. After a Chinese water vessel of more than 2200 years of history was illegally sold despite official protest, in a Radio 4’s interview, professor Mary Beard argued that preserving looted relics in the UK could contribute the “cultural diversity,” and “we ought to be much happier about seeing art go somewhere else.”⁸⁹ Though professor Beard’s remark was quickly removed from

⁸⁵ <https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-england-london-11739781>

⁸⁶ <https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-england-kent-43726526>

⁸⁷ <https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-england-london-11739781>

⁸⁸ <https://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/minister-rules-out-return-of-treasures-2jlf3qh63>

⁸⁹ <https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/p064716p>

the website and never recovered, the UK intellectuals' possible defense paradigm can be verified in an Oxford Union Society debate on whether *We Should Repatriate Artefacts or NOT*. Three speakers of the opposition side had used arguments such as: the UK protects better than other countries; the original country (Iraq, for example) may politicalize these relics; the culture should not be bound to sovereignty, and we should overcome the nationalism limitation; artifacts preserved in foreign countries are the common heritage that contributes to a shared identity (OxfordUnion, 2017).

Of course, those arguments were only for a competitive debate, and many western scholars welcome repatriation, but when the Chinese began their project on the recovery of artifacts, the actual western holders became vigilant and resistant. Liu Yang (刘洋), a Chinese lawyer who dedicate to the repatriation – more specifically, to catalog the lost treasures – had faced many “odd circumstances” when trying to locate the artifacts in foreign museums, including being called by a lawyer or the objects being asked were temporarily removed from the display list during his visit (Palmer, 2018). On the other hand, except for the water vessel mentioned above, many other auctions were also accomplished despite the Chinese government and activists' protest for a stop, and sometimes by Chinese collectors with a skyrocketing price. The unhidden interest from the Chinese wealthy has led to art crime, and thieves particularly targeted the lost Chinese relics. However, after the crime, the western cultural elites quickly turned their suspicion upon Chinese activists like Liu Yang or even the Chinese government⁹⁰, suggesting that their efforts in locating Chinese lost relics have helped the crime (Ibid).

All the western cultural elites' actions mentioned above are the best catalysts of Chinese nationalism, especially among the highly educated group. This is because modern Chinese people still need recognition from the western-developed world to be respected and accepted by the west, even setting aside historical factors. Both Charles Taylor and Francis Fukuyama have noted that the demand for public recognition is one critical drive behind nationalism (Taylor & Gutmann, 1997; Fukuyama, 2018). As Fukuyama said: “A nationalist feels that he or she is a member of a national group that's not getting adequate recognition.”⁹¹ Chinese nationalists, who expected the Olympic Games as a golden opportunity to manifest China's development and progress, and that China is no longer a “pariah state” (Li Meiting, 2012), found that the western cultural elites cared more about maximizing the criticism in a biased way. Hence they became irritated, especially those well-educated abroad students who directly faced the hostility. As the initiator of “Call for Defending China's Olympic Demonstration,” an abroad student in Pairs stated, their purpose is “Let the world hear our voice! Let the world understand the real and comprehensive China!” (让世界听到我们的声音! 让世界了解真实而全面的中国!) (Liujiyei, 2008) which was entirely in line with the recognition politic theory.

⁹⁰ <https://www.nytimes.com/2015/06/21/opinion/the-chinese-want-their-art-back.html>

⁹¹ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DEGiAdWUnG8>

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On the other side, the western cultural elites have started very early to establish an evil narrative system for China and continue to add bricks to it for self-hypnosis. As Felix Greene explained in his book *A Curtain of Ignorance* (1964):

So solidly built into our consciousness is the concept that China is conducting a rapacious and belligerent foreign policy that whenever a dispute arises in which China is involved, she is instantly assumed to have provoked it. All commentaries, "news reports," and scholarly interpretations are written on the basis of this assumption. The cumulative effect of this only further reinforces the original hypothesis so that it is used again next time with even greater effect. (p.223)

More than half a century later, the Chinese came up with a much simpler summary, as the veteran Hong Kong journalist Alexo Lo said: "Only bad news is good news about China."⁹² Under this cumulative effect, the understanding of western cultural elites becomes less likely, that any Chinese nationalistic movement could be seen as a "red threat," "yellow peril," and "governmental manipulation" (Becker, 2011; Gries, 2004; Wu Xu, 2005).

Except for the stereotype, the western favor of the Chinese minority issue could be seen as a threat beyond the human rights critics. In fact, even those nationalists who are firmly against the western news media would agree that the current Chinese situation has much to be improved. As the photographer who filmed Jin Jing – Yang Zhendong (杨振东) – said to his fellow students: "Although the legal system and socialist democracy still need to be improved, these issues are only issues that need to be improved (but not permanent)."⁹³ However, the Chinese most accepted political roof, or the national identity, is the China Nation, which contains 56 Minzu, including Tibetan and Uyghur. Western cultural elites' actions are de facto sabotages to China Nation's maintainability and China state's possibility of democracy progress – "to maintain a democracy, you need to have the sense of an integrative national identity,"⁹¹ Fukuyama stated. If Tibetan and Uyghur were two independent nations, then how about the Korean? The Mongolian? The Manchu? In the most extreme nightmare, cracks can even be created among the Han people, just like what the Japanese and Wang Jingwei had done. Naturally, the question of western elites' purpose comes to the table, is a human rights China they want, or a divided China that poses no threat to western interest? From Yang's point of view, the answer is also the second one, undoubtedly.⁹³ Some western scholars, like John Mearsheimer, had repeatedly and openly indicated that the US's goal is to stop China from being a threat to its global and regional hegemony (Mearsheimer, 2001; 2006; 2010).

In the following paragraphs, based on data collected from recent news reports done by western media on the China issue, we will inquire if an against-China mechanism, or agenda-setting paradigm, can be located inside their work. The result would be a contribution to both our second and fourth hypothesis, that whether the government's manipulation is behind the cybernationalism movement and whether the geopolitical situation China is facing would particularly shape its nationalism.

⁹² <https://www.scmp.com/comment/opinion/article/3117271/only-bad-news-good-news-about-china>

⁹³ <http://bbs.xineurope.com/forum.php?mod=viewthread&tid=454852>

4.1.3. Case study of western journalism practice on China issue over agenda-setting paradigm

As a holistic study of Western media coverage of China, this section is methodologically formed of natural language processing analysis and critical discourse analysis, with both analyses guided by Van Dijk's macrostructure-superstructure-microstructure model.

Van Dijk believes that the macrostructure of news is the high-level semantic structure of the text, and the process of condensing and refining language information can be shown in the form of a tree diagram. At the bottom of the tree diagram, the proposition is "the smallest, independent meaning constructs of language and thought" (Van Dijk, 2013, p. 31), usually a simple sentence containing only one set of subject-predicate-argument, while the complex sentence could contain several single or complex proposition and hence become a macro proposition. Also, due to the condensing and refining effect, a macro proposition is not necessarily composed of sentences but can be of other sub macro propositions. At the treetop, there is the overall theme of the article, a supreme macro proposition. On the one hand, it means a general consistency must be established inside this hierarchical order of propositions; on the other hand, it also indicates that once an article's macrostructure is located and analyzed, its overall theme is also identified. In an actual investigation, the macrostructure is usually evident, as the headline dominates the main theme while the rest of the top structure of themes is expressed in the lead of the news item (Van Dijk, 1985).

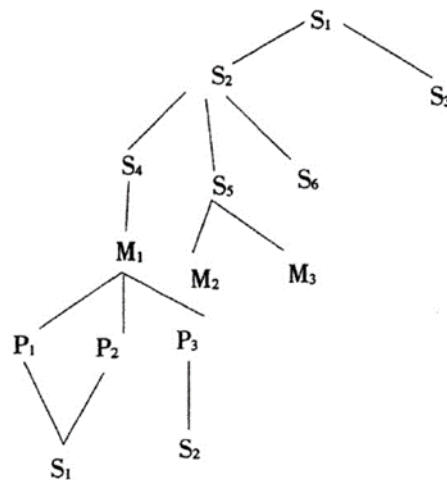


Figure 20. The Link Between Schematic Superstructures and Macrostructure.

Source: Van Dijk, 2013, p. 52. With own elaboration

The superstructure is about the order between the macro propositions, as the macrostructure requires a global syntax that provides an order for how the macropropositions should be organized within the text (Van Dijk, 2013, p. 49). This global syntax can be stated in the form of news schemata. Schemata is usually interpreted as a knowledge cluster or knowledge structure. In the case of news discourse analysis, it can also be understood as the story grammar. Like the macrostructure, the news schemata also have a hierarchical order to show the macro form and content of news discourse, to reflect the overall organizational structure

of the macropropositions included. As figure 20 illustrates, this global syntax includes both superstructure components and the macrostructure component. The S1, S2,... stand for superstructure categories, the M1, M2,... represent macro propositions, and the P1, P2,...represent propositions. This schema is simplified as “we have assumed that each superstructure category is filled with only one macroproposition” (Van Dijk, 2013, p. 51). It has two main parts: summary and story. The summary includes the headline and lead, while the story includes the situation and comments. The headline and the lead reflect the central topic of the text, the situation is the detailed description that supports the central topic, and the comment is the reporter’s views and opinions. Furthermore, the situation can be divided into episode and background. The former describes the main event and its consequences, and the latter reviews the context history.

The concept of microstructure was first invented to inquire about the compound and blend in the word-formation process. Lately, its usage has expanded into the apposition relationship between adjacent sentences. Nowadays, in the new discourse analysis, the microstructure is mainly concerned with the semantic relation between propositions, the discourse style, and the rhetoric. The semantic relation can be divided into a direct but local coherence relation and an unspoken but universal common knowledge. Syntactically, the discourse style is about the usage of different types of sentences – simple or complex, and lexically it is about the deliberate choice of words. The rhetoric is meant to make the content more persuasive, for which multiple strategies include selective usage of information sources, impression enhancement with figures and numbers, and an ideological-attitudinal-emotional perspective of description (Van Dijk, 2013, p. 94).

4.1.3.1 Data collection

The main working field of this case study is the foreign news agencies and their reports, and four news media of three different languages are selected: the New York Times (NYT) and British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) are chosen for their great influence on both native English speakers and other readers who receive their reports through translation; El País (EP) from Spain in Spanish is selected due to its high daily reader recorded as a daily newspaper, while the huge population of Spanish speakers is also within our concern; and the Deutsche Welle Chinese (DWC) is chosen for its “dual-nationality,” that it is a state-owned German newspaper’s Chinese edition, with significant involvement of Chinese employees, but censored by the Chinese government, which indicates its target readers are non-mainland Chinese residents. Due to the different languages involved, the data collection and analysis will be done similarly to those case studies in chapter 5 but with different programming measures, for which we believe a specific introduction is needed here.

First, we will conduct an NLP analysis. Due to limited investigation resources in data collection, the investigation will not cover all aspects involving China shown on all four news media. On the contrary, we will dedicate to a certain period and specific issue, one must be overwhelmingly influential, for which the Covid-19 reports during the first three months of the pandemic from NYT, EP, and DWC are selected. Furthermore, the population is also limited to the macrostructure as it determines the general domination

behind each news report. As all three news agencies' websites offer an internal search engine for a preliminary search, we have used the free web-crawler program Octoparse to conduct further data collection on the preliminary search result. Because the official name COVID 19 was created weeks after the first report, we have used the terms "China" and "Wuhan" as search keywords for NYT and EP, respectively, 中国 and 武汉 were used for DWC. On the NYT website, a filter of section and date period is available and is set to only reports of "Health, Opinion, Science, U.S., and World" from January 1 to March 31 of 2020 were collected, which leaves us 374 original data for analysis. The DWC also offers a date filter, and the same period was applied, with 334 original data collected. There is no filter for the EP search engine, but we manually intercepted all necessary data for the target period, which contains 305 reports. When the data collection job was done on October 1, 2021, all these 1013 reports' crucial information – like headline, lead, and author/s – were recorded.

Due to the internal search engine's algorithm setting, not all of the 1013 original data are closely related to our subject. For example, one NYT's February 6 report with the title "China's Lavish Funds Lured U.S. Scientists. What Did It Get in Return?" mentioned nothing about Wuhan's pandemic. Therefore, the researchers conducted an exclusion process, during which the first step was to exclude all data that did not contain the keywords "China, Chinese, or Wuhan" in their headline or lead, then a manual review was processed, and 165 pieces of data from NYT, 110 from EP, 287 from DWC were finally confirmed.

Both quantitative and qualitative methods will be applied to the 562 confirmed data. The first method to be used is sentiment analysis with the TextBlob library. The result contains polarity and subjectivity. The polarity varies from -1 to 1, as 1 stands for an utmost positive attitude and -1 stands for a very negative attitude. The subjectivity floats within 0 and 1, and the higher the number is, the more subjective the text is. Next, with the help of Skytech Engine, a statistical keyword extraction will be conducted as part of the agenda-setting identification. The simple math algorithm is calculated on the base of the focus corpus and reference corpus. In our case, the focus corpus is the summarization of all headlines and leads of one specific language; the reference corpus is usually a preset document with huge amounts of text content. For example, the reference corpus for the DWC's Chinese keyword extraction is the "zhTenTen11" by Stanford tagger, which contains more than one billion Chinese characters.

Due to the reference corpus difference caused by language, the final score of three media's keywords extraction may vary at different levels, but the sequence of keywords in each specific language still can reveal to us the relative importance ranking of the keywords, which would vitally facilitate our understanding of the media agenda set by each news agency.

In the second part of this case study section, we will conduct a complete critical discourse analysis. This is because the dataset of the NLP analysis is an overview of hundreds of reports' overall themes, of which the global public health crisis is the absolute key factor, and the science should come first in every report. In that case, a bare summary overview would result in possible neglect of how Western news media

frames China. Therefore, the other two news discourse structures of Van Dijk must also be discussed to improve the case study's comprehensiveness.

During the critical discourse analysis, followed by a review of the different microstructural components that include semantic relation, the discourse style, and rhetoric, a classification of the text's superstructure should be done first to draw an intuitive picture of its schemata. The super/micro-structure analysis will be conducted with three news reports selected from NYT, EP, and BBC, which are: NYT – *China Spins Coronavirus Crisis, Hailing Itself as a Global Leader*; EP - *China impone la censura frente a la ira ciudadana por la epidemia* (China imposes censorship in the face of public anger over the epidemic); and BBC – *China's "tainted" cotton*, which has a Chinese translation version: 新疆棉: 新证据揭露时尚产业背后的强迫劳动 (literally: Xinjiang cotton: New evidence exposes forced labor behind the fashion industry). The former two news reports will be analyzed with the standard three structures model, while in the BBC's report, we will furtherly examine if there exists deliberate tailoring between the information they have and the information they provide to the public or a selective reporting.

4.1.3.2 *Natural Language Processing of the macrostructure*

The sentiment analysis is conducted with the python NLP library TextBlob, an open-source Application Programming Interfaces available on the Github platform. As the two variables of the sentiment analysis result are located in the same interval for any language's task, the authors have built a coordinate system to demonstrate the results of three designated languages, as figure 21 shows.

The result covers all 564 confirmed data. The variable polarity varies from -1 to 0.6, and the subjectivity varies from 0 to 1. In figure 2, we can clearly observe a slight leaning toward a positive attitude with considerable objectivity. The 165 NYT reports have shown a 0.028 average for their polarity result, with a 0.22 standard deviation. The EP results in a 0.048 average of 0.13 standard deviation. And the DWC's result is 0.083 on average and 0.11 on standard deviation. Regarding subjectivity, in DWC's reports, the highest median of 0.37 is recorded, closely followed by the NYT's 0.34, while the EP shows the best objectivity with a median of 0.25. In terms of the three agencies' stable degree of objectivity, the DWC has shown a minimal dispersion with a standard deviation of 0.14, while the EP's and NYT's values are spread out over a wider range, respectively 0.20 and 0.23. An overview of all three agencies' subjectivity reveals that 35.46% of the 564 data scored between 0.32-0.48, which indicates a dangerous trend to close to the 0.5 – the parameter defines one sentence as more subjective than objective or not.

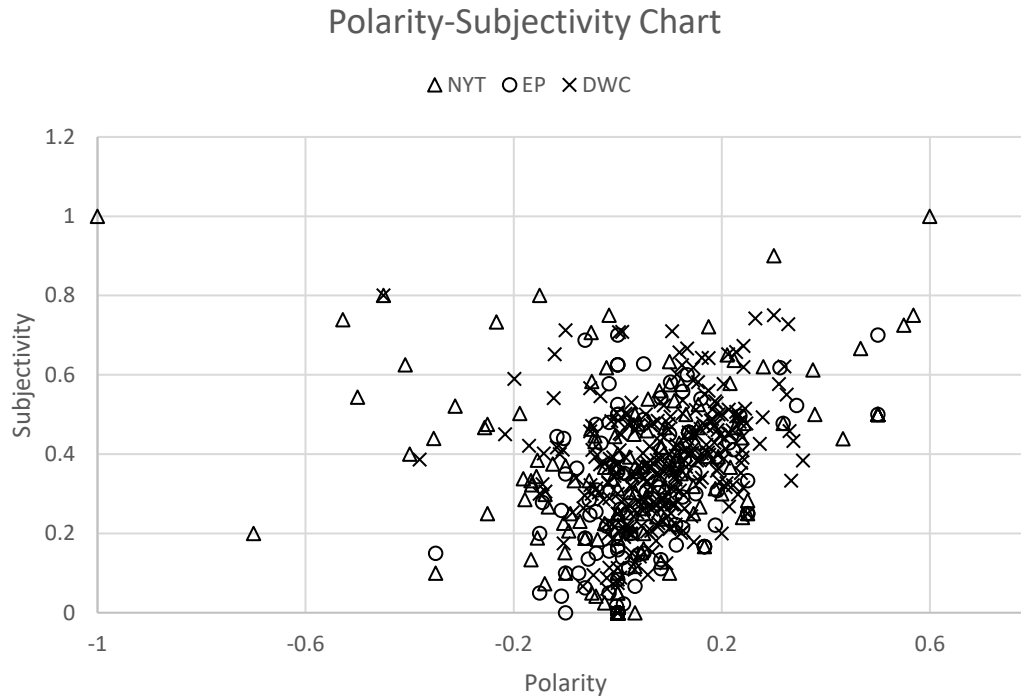


Figure 21. Polarity-Subjectivity of Three News Agencies

Source: Own Elaboration

Due to the different linguistic nature between English/Spanish and Chinese, English/Spanish require a lemmatization of words while Chinese require segmentation during the NLP task. Thus the English/Spanish text is usually analyzed in the form of a term (combination of words) and the Chinese in words (combination of Chinese characters). The keywords extraction is done with the 165 NYT, 110 EP, and 287 DWC reports. The focus corpus is the summarization of each media's headlines and leads, while different reference corpus is selected for different languages. Generally speaking, the data is: 5291 words from the NYT are calculated with the *Covid-19* corpus of a total of 224061570 words; 3749 words from the EP are calculated with the *Spanish Web Sample* corpus of 177257648 words; the DWC's 14,999 words are calculated with the *zhTenTen11 Stanford tagger* corpus of 1729867455 words, with an extra exclusion word list of Germany newspapers' names and journalistic terms applied.

Each media's first 50 key terms/words are listed in table 4. As we have mentioned before, the specific score is not shown due to the difference in the reference corpus. Furthermore, because of the shared agenda subject, many key terms/words of the same/similar meaning are repeatedly detected in different languages, such as: *pneumonia* (NYT, 4) – *neumonía* (EP, 19) – 肺炎 (DWC, 7); *death toll* (NYT, 7) – *cifra/número de muerto* (EP, 9/12); *OMS* (EP, 20) – 世卫(WHO) (DWC, 2). Also, according to the first ten key terms/words – for instance, *illness*, *outbreak*, *emergency*, *epidemic* of the NYT, *alerta internacional* (international alert), *epicentro* (epicenter), *crisis* (crisis), *expansión* (expansion) of the EP, and 疫情

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(epidemic), *抗疫* (fight the epidemic), *无症状* (asymptomatic) of the DWC – all three media has shown a common intensive concern on the pandemic issue from the public health perspective. Therefore, the foreign news agencies did not neglect the pandemic as the object of the agenda-setting but put it at the center of the report with no vagueness. Nevertheless, the three media had shown different approaches to establishing the context of the agenda-setting's attributes description.

Rank	NYT Key Terms	EP Key Terms	DWC Keywords
1	Chinese city	coronavirus de Wuhan	李文亮
2	coronavirus outbreak	ciudad china	世卫
3	year holiday	autoridad china	冠状
4	pneumonia-like illness	alerta internacional	封城
5	Chinese official	virus de wuhan	撤侨
6	Chinese doctor	epicentro del coronavirus	疫情
7	death toll	crisis del coronavirus	肺炎
8	mysterious illness	expansión del coronavirus	确诊
9	global emergency	cifra de muerto	习近平
10	coronavirus epidemic	presidente chino	无症状
11	virus outbreak	víctima mortal	陈秋实
12	risking public alarm	número de muerto	抗疫
13	outbreak of racist sentiment	hospital del coronavirus	失联
14	chaotic dragnet	día el coronavirus	阴谋论
15	potent symbol	muerte del doctor li	墙外
16	top Chinese government-appointed expert	zhou xianwang	袁国勇
17	seeking truth	avance del coronavirus	官媒
18	virus fail	país el coronavirus	病例
19	humanitarian aid blitz	neumonía china	解封
20	huge national response	china la oms	微信
21	reviving political dissent	virus de china	病毒
22	scant supply of protective equipment	alcalde de Wuhan	推特
23	deadly mystery	brote de coronavirus	谭德塞
24	house-to-house temperature	doctor li	火神山
25	steady traffic	epicentro del brote	健委
26	industrial powerhouse	emergencia internacional	沈凌
27	official sign	cifra de afectado	复工
28	all-out war	muerte del doctor	感染者
29	pandemic panic	región china	方斌
30	political calendar	medio chino	特朗普
31	political dissent	restricción de movimiento	口罩
32	losing track	caso de contagio	逆行者
33	prominent Chinese legal activist	crisis sanitaria	口水战
34	fail-safe system	provincia china	MERS
35	top chinese government-appointed	xi jinping	单日
36	dictatorship xi	gobierno chino	钟南山
37	debate health	animal salvaje	角力
38	sow division	ee uu	防疫
39	shutdown of major rail passenger	tiempo récord	许章润
40	propaganda push	elemento clave xi	接回
41	Chinese government-appointed expert	desaparición de activista crítico	武汉
42	senior chinese official	vacío de autoridad sanitaria	威权
43	limiting bus	síntoma el nuevo hospital	专访
44	anti-China message	wuhan el coronavirus	侨民
45	overall death toll	control informativo vertical	例数
46	suspending production	ciento de afectado wuhan	肆虐
47	mainland chinese city	escalada del coronavirus	邮轮
48	dirty history	alerta internacional origen	SARS
49	top party	potencia asiática la empresa	极权
50	reviving stigma	observación crónica	染病

Table 4. Keyword Extraction Result of Three News Agencies

On the one hand, the NYT paid attention to the measures taken by the Chinese government, for instance, *humanitarian aid blitz* (19), *house-to-house temperature* (24), *shutdown of major rail passenger* (39), *limiting bus* (43), and gave no moral judgment. On the other hand, it tried to remind its reader that China

is a country with a bad record (*dirty history*, 48; *reviving stigma*, 50), its system is incompetent (*fail-safe system*, 34), its reaction has caused a mess (*chaotic dragnet*, 14). The NYT has encouraged an impression that the origin of the mentioned consequences is rooted in China's top leadership's political arrangement (*political calendar*, 30; *senior Chinese official*, 39; *top party*, 49), even the Chinese president Xi Jinping himself (*dictatorship xi*, 36). Furthermore, the NYT suggested that the anticipated readers' anger with the Chinese government is also shared by the Chinese people (*reviving political dissent*, 21; *prominent Chinese legal activist*, 33), but the government's response is to lie to its people and the whole world (*seeking truth*, 17; *propaganda push*, 40).

The EP's framing of Covid-19 is quite different from the NYT. One most apparent strategy difference is the usage of adjectives. When the NYT's key terms list is full of nouns modified by adjectives with intense emotion and direct moral judgment, EP's terms are usually composed of pure nouns. Compared with the other two media, it gave the most attention to the pandemic. Its first concern was whether the regional epidemic would spread into a global pandemic (*alerta internacional-international alert*, 4; *expansión del coronavirus-coronavirus expansion*, 8; *avance del coronavirus-coronavirus advance*, 17; *emergencia internacional-international emergency*, 26; *escalada del coronavirus- coronavirus escalation*, 47). Though the Chinese president was mentioned in a neutral tone (*presidente chino-Chinese president*, 10; *xi jinpings*, 35; *elemento clave xi-key element xi*, 40), EP paid more attention to local figures, such as the whistleblower doctor Li Wenliang and Wuhan's mayor Zhou Xianwang (*muerte del doctor li-doctor li's death*, 15; *zhou xianwang*, 16; *alcade de Wuhan- Wuhan's mayor*, 22; *doctor li*, 24). The EP has laid down a balanced media agenda on the Chinese government's response to the coronavirus. It would appreciate what the government had achieved – for example, the makeshift hospital (*tiempo récord-record time*, 39), while also pointing out things that are against its ideology (*desaparición de activista crítico-disappearance of critical activist*, 41; *control informativo vertical-vertical information control*, 45).

Due to its nature as a subordinate institution, a considerable part of the DWC's reports are reproductions of its superior Deutsche Welle and other allied news media's reports. However, it is also one of the advantages it preached, a direct channel of foreign news reports with reliable sources for Chinese readers. The word 墙外 (*outside the wall*, 15) is frequently quoted to imply DWC is a more authentic news agency than those inside the Great Fire Wall. DWC's dual-nationality determines that those with deep links in both China and Germany are its best audience, such as the Chinese in Germany or the Germans in China. Hence one distinctive media agenda it set was the evacuation of foreign citizens from Wuhan (*撤侨- evacuation*, 5; *接回-take back*, 40; *侨民-expatriate*, 44). The DWC kept a close look at China's quarantine policy, not just because the word *lockdown* (封城, 4) is among its first ten keywords, but it was the only media that had highlighted the end of months-long quarantine (*解封-unblock*, 19). The DWC also had explicitly shown a high interest in professional medical concepts through the usage of keywords like *asymptomatic* (无症状, 10), *MERS* (34), and *SARS* (48). Besides, one preventive measure that later proved

effective, the *mask* (口罩, 31), was incorporated into the coronavirus context by the DWC in the first few months of the pandemic.

Similar to the NYT, DWC encouraged a negative impression on the Chinese government. The whistleblower Li Wenliang (李文亮, 1) was so emphasized that it is the most influential word, together with the direct negative judgment (威权-authoritarian, 42; 极权-totalitarian, 49), the DWC implied that the Chinese government did more evil than good. To consolidate the negative impression, a particularity media agenda strategy used by the DWC is a high quotation and lots of interviews (专访-Interview, 43) with Chinese figures, which range from local citizen journalists (陈秋实-Chen Qiushi, 11; 方斌-Fang Bin, 29) to high educated intellectuals (袁国勇-Yuan Guoyong, 16; 沈凌-Shen Ling, 26; 钟南山-Zhong Nanshan, 36; 许章润-Xu Zhangrun, 39). Except for Zhong Nanshan and Yuan Guoyong, two influential medical experts, all other figures are fierce critics and dissidents of the Chinese government. Through the filter of information sources, the Chinese government was framed as an isolated regimen without supporters, especially among those independent and knowledgeable Chinese.

4.1.3.3 Critical discourse analysis of three reports

The chosen NYT report is titled “*China Spins Coronavirus Crisis, Hailing Itself as a Global Leader.*” It was an article of 1,162 words, written by Javier Hernández and published on February 28 of 2020, about one month later after the lockdown of Wuhan.

Since the headline, the report begins to lay down a negative impression of China. In the lead, the report says: “The propaganda push suggests the Chinese government might be worried about the lasting damage of the outbreak.” The two complex sentences can be reverted to three propositions: the Chinese government worries about the damage, China spins the crisis, and China hails itself. On the one hand, these three propositions determine the general discourse structure of this news report; on the other hand, the verb *spin* means to turn something around quickly. Combined with another verb *hail*, China is described as someone who tries to get rid of his mistake by distracting others’ attention. Therefore, this report is to warn the readers not to be distracted by China and keep its fault in mind. In the next, a brief background review is presented in the first paragraph, and China’s coronavirus response is judged as irresponsible, evil, and life costly to solidify the macrostructure’s internal logic.

In terms of the superstructure, the NYT’s report is a typical cyclical structure in that each part of the news schemata is not realized at once but in installments. One salient advantage of the cyclical structure is that the report can directly emphasize some components of the news schemat through a simple repeat. In this report, the general cyclical structure is composed of three similar substructures. First, the substructure starts with a background check on China’s coronavirus sufferings, with context details from the mortal victims, economic loss, and public anger. Then in the episode part, the government is in “*crisis*” and “*don’t know how to respond,*” so it is “*eager to*” take any “*last-ditch efforts,*” which are defined as a “*propaganda push*” by

the report. In the last, a comment of both evaluation and prediction is made by NYT or through other tongues, which usually come in an incurable tune. According to NYT, the Chinese government's measures have "*provoked blowback from the public*" and "*is likely to face lingering questions about the party's credibility.*" Thus, under the cyclical structure, the episode part of the news report is divided and surrounded by background and comments, where the news media has a better initiative on the content, and designated attributes are easily inserted into the agenda's object.

The microstructure analysis is composed of semantic, stylistic, and rhetorical analysis. The semantic part is about the local coherence of propositions and the shared knowledge between the media and its readers. The most obvious local coherence pattern is between one proposition of the Chinese government's action and another proposition of a harmful output, for example, "*The Chinese government silenced whistle-blowers, withheld crucial information and played down the threat posed by the new coronavirus, allowing an epidemic that has killed thousands to take hold across the country.*" Another pattern is between the crisis and the government's incompetence in the form of avoidance and distraction. "criticism at the United States" is to "highlight the country's successes," and "cartoon mascots meant to stir patriotic feelings" is mean to "reframe the crisis as a vindication of the party." Behind all these local coherences, one unspoken but shared consensus is that the Chinese government simply has no ability to contain the pandemic, and it has to make extra efforts to distract both its people and the international community so to defend the regimen.

The first evidence of the discourse style is the syntax. In NYT's report, the simple tense sentence of short length is used when the proposition has an evident negative tendency. "*The attempt to rebrand is a gamble,*" "*the public will continue to doubt him.*" The complex sentences are put forward when a suggestion that requires extra framing work is made. For instance, two complex sentences are written with a strong coherence to address the heavy life and economic loss: "*China is still deep in the throes of a public health crisis, with more than 79,000 confirmed cases of coronavirus infections and at least 2,700 deaths. Factories in many areas have halted production, and the authorities have imposed lockdown measures across much of the country, beginning in January in the central city of Wuhan, the center of the outbreak.*" The lexis is also one style's evidence. In addition to the already commonly used words such as *communism, propaganda, authoritarian* that referring to China as an anti-American opponent, the NYT adds some new words with the new approach to accuse the Chinese government's incompetence and uncooperativeness, for example: *withhold, play down, missteps, secretive, delaying, inconsistency.*

In terms of rhetoric, several classic strategies can be detected in the news report. The first one that catches our attention is the usage of numbers. When the number is big enough to accuse the government's inability and panic, an exact number will be mentioned, for example: "*79,000 confirmed cases,*" "*2,700 deaths,*" "*teleconference meeting of 170,000 party cadres;*" but when the data is not clear, or not serving the media agenda, pronouns or even no determiner will be the case, like "*some in the party,*" "*Online influencers,*" "*Factories in many areas.*" Another notable strategy is a mix of ideologically coherent perspectives and selective usage of information sources. In the particular proposition added to describe the Global Times –

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just after the proposition of its news report content, it is called “nationalistic tabloid” by the NYT. Moreover, other sources that provide propositions of possible pro-government messages are labeled as official affiliates or not sincerely cited. “A recent story by Xinhua, a state-run news agency, featured experts from several allies of China... lavishing praise... Memes have circulated featuring recent praise from a World Health Organization expert for China’s efforts.” At the same time, through a set of extra adjectives, those who were quoted as evidence of criticism are often described as professional, independent, and academic. For instance: “co-director of the China Media Project, a research program affiliated with the University of Hong Kong,” “senior fellow and director of Asia studies at the Council on Foreign Relations.”

The second report, written by Macarena Vidal Liy, published on February 6, 2020, on El País, has its original title as “China impone la censura frente a la ira ciudadana por la epidemia” (China imposes censorship in the face of public anger over the epidemic). In order to maintain consistency with the other two English reports, its content will be explained directly in English.

Five propositions can be obtained from the EP report’s headline and lead: The Chinese public is angry over the epidemic; the death toll is abnormal; the mask distribution process encounters irregularity; the Chinese government strengthens its control over the information; the Chinese government sends propagandists. The overall theme of this article is so evident that it needs no more elaboration: the Chinese public is angry about the irregularities found in the death toll and mask distribution process. The Chinese government sends propagandists and strengthens censorship as its response to public anger. Strengthen and impose are two verbs with mandatory and involuntary implications. Since the objects of the propositions to which these two verbs belong are censorship and information control, a strong negative impression of the subject – the Chinese government – was implanted at the beginning of the report.

The EP report’s superstructure begins with a top-down style. The news report put a nuclear proposition of the macrostructure as the first sentence – the Chinese official death toll is inaccurate and incomplete. In the last sentence of the first paragraph, the report introduces another crucial topic – censorship. After the introduction of key propositions, the EP formally begins the news story with a background review of the “*little oasis of freedom*.” EP suggests the freedom will be temporal and blames the Chinese central government’s “*social stability comes first*” policy and its preference for information control as the solution. In the episode part, the anger and difficulties suffered by the Chinese public are used as the main event, and the government’s response occupies the consequences part. Therefore, a confrontational relationship is established between the Chinese people and the government. Due to this confrontation, the EP leaves a hopeless prediction as its comment at the end.

In terms of semantic analysis, as a continuance and extension of the superstructure’s public-official confrontation, the EP report’s principal local coherence is between the proposition of public suffering/demand and another proposition of official unhelpful response. For instance, the private media “ask for transparency throughout the entire process... Nevertheless, through the state media, the government is already trying to take charge of the story;” when “some doctors had to resort to protecting themselves with

raincoats instead of special suits or to make their own masks,” although the authority “*had to make a concession,*” its next move is to “*sent...more than 300 journalists*” and to make the report “*disappear.*”

Unlike the New York Times’s usage of simple tense and short sentences when necessary, the EP reporter has shown a strong personal style in preferring complex sentences and present perfect tense, which allows her to establish coherence between any propositions, for example, “*The openness was extended to social networks, through which has circulated information that made it clear to what extent the information was hidden in the province at the beginning of the crisis.*” It also helps to emphasize the suffering suffered by Chinese doctors and citizens: “*The images of exhausted doctors, whose faces were deformed by the uninterrupted hours of work with the mask on, have spread all over the world.*” And eventually, it would imply the inability of the Chinese government. Regarding the lexis, the report tries to describe the Chinese media with positive discourse – “*most combative,*” “*unusually incisive,*” “*uncovered,*” and negative discourse with China’s official policies and departments: “*real number,*” “*precarious situation,*” “*failed dramatically,*” “*frustrating,*” and “*terrible reputation for corruption.*”

To convince its readers, the first rhetorical strategy executed by the EP report is a remarkable usage of numbers. The exact number is given by the report when necessary. For example, to stress the epidemic’s severity, the report reads: “*...already infected more than 24,000 people and has killed 492.*” “*50 million people,*” “*only at 70% of their production capacity.*” Also, the number is used to imply the possible negligence of the Chinese president – “*Absent in public for eight days.*” The other noted strategy is the use of metaphor. The two weeks of promised transparency are compared to “*a small oasis,*” and the anger expressed through this little space is compared to a “*wave.*” Though not explicitly expressed, a clear size contrast can be found between these two metaphors, indicating the comparison strategy. Another comparison strategy evidence can be found when the report describes the consequences of the Chinese RedCross’s irregularity – “*doctors wearing simple surgical masks while the politicians meet with the coveted N95 mask worn.*”

BBC’s China’s tainted cotton is a report of 1787 words. Its author is John Sudworth and was published in December 2020 on both BBC English and Chinese websites. Compared with the English edition, the Chinese edition title reveals more information, as it literally reads: Xinjiang cotton: New evidence exposes forced labor behind the fashion industry. After combining headlines and reads of both editions, three propositions can be summarized: China forces Uyghur and minorities into cotton fields in Xinjiang; BBC discovers the potential scale of forced labor; Xinjiang cotton industrial accounts for a fifth of the world’s cotton supply. No selective reporting is implemented here as the first two propositions are BBC’s statement, and their factual content support is left to be presented in later paragraphs, while the last proposition contains enough factual content.

However, in the following macro proposition – “*documents reveal force labor,*” when the BBC translates and cites several Chinese official documents and uses them as the superstructure’s episodes component, selective reporting begins to show its face. For example, BBC cites “*Adopt method to mobilise*

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and organise” and interprets with “Others speak of pickers being “mobilised and organised” and transported to fields hundreds of kilometres away.” BBC emphasizes that the workers were mobilized and suggests forced labor, while the original Chinese document concerned more on increasing the farmer’s income by cotton pick, “54000 farmers are planned to go out for Gold Rush through the cotton pick,” reads the document offered by BBC. The same pattern – that only cites part of the original text – occurs in all other documents that BBC believes are evidence of forced labor. BBC: Transferring all those who should be transferred – Document: Focus on low-income families with work capacity...transferring all low-income families that should be transferred; BBC: 21000 workers were labor transferred to pick cotton for a Chinese paramilitary organisation – Document: We use the cotton pick and other short-term seasonal labors as critical income increase node.

The above is how selective reporting has been directly implemented in the discourse’s episodes. Another hardest hit area is the superstructure’s background. In explaining the motive behind the government’s labor transfer program, the BBC cites the official slogan to prove that the Chinese government discriminates against the Uyghurs. “Work, the government appears to believe, will help transform the ‘outdated ideas’ of Xinjiang’s minorities and remake them as modern, secular, wage-earning Chinese citizens.... ‘deep-rooted, lazy thinking’... ‘labour is glorious,’” and “Such phrases echo the Chinese state’s view of Uighur lifestyles and customs as acting as a barrier to modernisation.” However, these slogans are not designated for Uyghur or any minority but are widely used in the national Poverty Alleviation Scheme (PAS) (Jiang & Li, 2017). When referring to CPC officials’ participation in the PAS, BBC accuses them of being censors and minorities’ private information grabbers, that the “350000 officials... are also instrumental in deciding who should be sent to a camp.” Once again, BBC tries to describe a nationwide policy as a minority-targeted, using a blurred and huge number without mentioning that it is the overall counts of officials’ participation during the PAS. According to the Chinese official narrative, 2.08 million officials were trained for PAS and “village-based work” in 2018 alone (Zhou Wenchong, 2019), and the data registration of the low-income family is an obligation for those village-based cadres. In another case, to support the forced labor transfer as the only reasonable explanation for the “hundreds of thousands of people, who apparently had no previous interest in picking cotton, should suddenly rush into the fields,” BBC points out that the average monthly salary is “just 1670 RMB (\$255, £188) each,” but what it has neglected is, the average monthly income for Xinjiang rural residents was only 997 RMB in the year 2018 (Du, 2019), and the cotton pick has enough economic attraction for low-income families in Xinjiang.

In terms of the intertextuality analysis, except for quotations of Chinese source information, the BBC’s report has offered nine hyperlinks to other websites or pages, including research reports and international conventions. Besides, three particular figures were interviewed as background and comment elements of the discourse’s superstructure. However, none of the hyperlinked content is from the perspective of the Chinese government or Chinese village-based officials, nor to mention the ordinary cotton pickers. The three figures are Dr. Adrian Zenz, a senior fellow at the Victims of Communism Memorial Foundation in Washington; Mahmut, a young Uyghur exile in Europe; and Damien Sanfilippo, the director of standards

and assurance of the Better Cotton Initiative. Similarly, the voice of local officials, cotton pickers, or even the Chinese citizens is absent from the BBC report's intertextuality. Under such an unbalanced narrative, selective reporting is not just a filtration of factual content but has deprived the discourse power of one party involved.

4.1.3.4 Negative discourse designated to discredit the Chinese government

Based on the result of the two NLP tasks, we find that the three analyzed news agencies' media agendas are not entirely consistent with each other. The EP holds a fairly objective opinion on China, with a slightly polarized but generally neutral tone used in its reports. Its sentiment analysis result is confirmed by the key terms extraction, that during the first months of the epidemic, the EP's focus was concentrated on the possible expansion of coronavirus that led to a global pandemic, which unfortunately became a reality. The flaws in the Chinese political system were mentioned but were not promoted as EP's nuclear media agenda.

On the other side, both NYT and DW paid enormous attention to the Chinese political system and its performance in the face of the pandemic. Although both their sentiment analysis results are slightly towards a positive attitude, according to the keywords extraction result, their general attitude towards the Chinese government is confrontational and critical. The discrepancy between the two NLP results might be because their media agenda's priority was the development of the coronavirus, and a considerable part of their reports was a mere description of the situation without moral judgment. The notable dispersion in the NYT's sentiment analysis result is one evidential signal. Besides, considering its strategy of focusing on interviews with Chinese figures, the high and stable score in the subjectivity analysis by the DW indicates an intensive direct quotation of personal statements by the Chinese dissidents, which shifts the formal news text to more emotional-subjective expression and prevent the TextBlob's algorithm from better accuracy.

In the news discourse analysis part, three news reports are chosen and interpreted with Van Dijk's theory. The first two reports by NYT and EP share the same object of agenda-setting and macrostructure, which is China's propaganda efforts during the pandemic. However, due to the different cultural contexts and target reader groups, each of the three agencies has demonstrated a particular approach to framing the shared object.

The New York Times has defined the Chinese propaganda effort as a distracting tool with the purpose of covering the government's missteps during the first weeks of the pandemic. Within the NYT's news discourse, the Chinese government is incompetent in handling the coronavirus and harmful to the Chinese people. Thus it should be responsible for the heavy life and economic loss in China. However, facing both domestic and international anger, the Chinese government's response is to reframe itself as a leader in fighting the pandemic. Nevertheless, the party's credibility is already in jeopardy, and its affiliates are both ridiculous and unconvincing. Therefore, professional and independent experts agree that China's propaganda work will not achieve any domestic or foreign results.

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Like the New York Times, the Chinese government's propaganda is also negatively portrayed in El País's news report. Nevertheless, the EP's perspective is not focused on the Chinese government's systematic incompetence but on the public-official confrontation. The Chinese public, especially the private media, is angry and dares to challenge the Chinese government in the EP's news discourse. Furthermore, the government's control is not unshakable. When the crisis is grave enough, with a certain degree of openness, the gathered public anger will force the government to make a concession. The government could use censorship and propagandists to suppress the exposed public anger, but as the pandemic is far from being controlled and factories kept shut down, the Chinese politicians, including the president, may suffer another dramatic failure.

The last BBC report has openly used selective reporting as their strategy in reporting China. It has neglected factual content in both the discourse's episodes and background parts. The selective reporting in episodes is done by selective translation and quotation, which distorts the original intentions, and selective reporting in the background part focuses on interpreting nationwide policy as particularly minority-targeted and discriminative. As a result, the PAS is successfully painted as a forced labor program designated for minorities on the Xinjiang cotton issue.

Generally speaking, in all four foreign news reports' agenda-setting, the Chinese government has been designated an evil role that it is incompetent and arbitrary, deceiving the world, manipulating public opinion, and treating its own people like a fascist regimen. Based on all these features, the western news media is trying to describe a regimen facing serious domestic opposition, which, to Chinese nationalists, would remind them of the Qing dynasty after it betrayed the Boxers or the Kuomintang ROC in the late 1940s. Furtherly, the western elites are actually encouraging more resistance or even rebellion from within China as they have stated their support by openly using an agenda against the Chinese government. Like the former U.S. National Security Advisor Matt Pottinger concluded after alluding to the PRC as the past warlord government:

Wasn't a similar idea beating in the heart of the May Fourth Movement, too? Weren't Hu Shih's language reforms a declaration of war against aristocratic pretension? Weren't they a broadside against the Confucian power structure that enforced conformity over free thought? Wasn't the goal to achieve citizen-centric government in China, and not replace one regime-centric model with another one? The world will wait for the Chinese people to furnish the answers. (2020)

4.2. China Nation-Minzu structure as a challenge to the official narrative on nationalism

Although there is criticism such as soft or weak of the Chinese government's foreign policy, the general advantage enjoyed by the western powers during the first decade of the 21st century had relieved CPC from internal dissident when it encountered foreign pressure. The Chinese nationalists can understand and approve of the so-called "hides its brightness and bides its time" (韬光养晦) strategy. As Deng Xiaoping ever said, "Enemy troops are outside the walls. They are stronger than we. We should be mainly on the

defensive” (Kissinger, 2012, p. 373). Therefore the western countries’ resolve test approach and evil China agenda would only consolidate the CPC’s legitimacy, not the other way around.

However, foreign pressure is not the skeleton key of every internal problem, as the rise of cybernationalism also means a possible deviation or even challenge to the official nationalism narrative. Due to China’s cultural dominance within the boundary and its surroundings for more than 2000 years, the traditional proto-nationalism had kept an open attitude toward Chinese identification, which emphasized the cultural identity. Nevertheless, during the Century of Humiliation, such cultural confidence was almost wiped out by foreign powers, and the definition of Chinese became a sensitive, sometimes provocative question. The inherent flaws inside the China Nation theory make the Chinese government quite vulnerable when facing this question raised by its nationalistic supporters, for which Chinese cybernationalists have to make efforts in a total opaque. In the next, proceeding from two issues, we will try to study the challenges and evolution that traditional civic nationalism has encountered in the Internet age.

4.2.1. Hanfu Renaissance Movement

Generally speaking, the Hanfu (汉服) concept can be understood from a broad sense and a narrow sense. The broad concept refers to the general term for the traditional Han people’s costumes from the origin of ancient Chinese mythology to before the Qing Dynasty, while the narrow Hanfu refers to the Han Dynasty’s daily costumes. In both senses, it is tightly linked with the racial Han people. Although the Hanfu Renaissance Movement – usually refers to as Hanfu Movement – participants have different goals, the most widely accepted consensus is to re-wear Hanfu and expand its influence and daily usage.



Figure 22. Bottom: A Chinese Paint of the Late 10th Century

Top: A Modern Scene Revival of the Paint

Source: Internet with Public Dominion / <https://www.bilibili.com/video/BV187411E7NV>

There is no unified conclusion on the landmark event that indicates the Hanfu Movement's beginning. Some scholars believe that when an internaut wore Hanfu publicly on the streets and was praised by other internauts in 2003 was the beginning (Li, Zhu, & Cui, 2015, p.41), and some other scholars believe that the foundation of "HanNet" (汉网)⁹⁴ (<http://www.hanminzu.com>) is the sign (Zhang Xian, 2009, p.66). However, it is clear that the commonality between the two events lies in the direct influence of the Internet, and based on what happened after the Hanfu Movement began, the leading group of participants is also constituted by internauts. Therefore, the Hanfu Movement should be firstly considered a cultural movement in the Internet era. Figure 22 shows a primary paradigm in the Hanfu movement: reproduce historical images/memories by modern participants, use the Internet platforms to spread reproduction and Hanfu, and further establish a psychological connection with ancient figures and cultures.

As shown in the previous chapters, since the mid-1990s, Chinese nationalism has entered the Internet era, and grassroots cybernationalism has emerged. When Chinese internauts with higher education and economic level – the middle class – begin to pursue nationalism, like other men and women around the world, they must be eager to find spiritual power from history – especially the traditional *high culture*. However, a large part of the Chinese government's nationalistic narrative is based on the abandonment of traditional Han Chinese high culture – which is usually regarded as one critical cause of the Century of Humiliation (Ouyang Zhesheng, 2019) – and the emphasis on the proletarian culture. For instance, if we look closely at Figure 10, the stamps on the 56 Minzu, we can find that the Han costume shown at the leftmost in the first row is quite different from the Han costume shown in Figure 1. This is contrary to what Gellner said, the infiltration and transformation of the bottom culture by the high culture during the shaping of the nation and nationalism (Gellner & Breuilly, 1983). Therefore, as a supplement to Han symbols' vacancy in the government narrative, the Hanfu Movement, based on Han's traditional high culture, has naturally occurred. According to one survey done by Chinese researchers, rather than forcibly promoting Hanfu as a symbol of the China Nation, most Hanfu Movement participants only hope to revive Hanfu and make it a ceremonial costume of the Han people for festivals and ceremonies – just like Japanese kimonos, (Li, Zhu, & Cui, 2015, p. 43). For this part of the participants, they only felt that part of their identity recognition provided by the official narrative was missing, but they did not have a clear sense of rejection for the government's China Nation narrative, which includes 55 minorities.

However, as a cultural product with obvious racial characteristics, Hanfu's Renaissance Movement would inevitably tend towards ethnic nationalism. As the only two dynasties ruled by minorities, the Qing (Manchu) and Yuan (Mongolian) dynasties are often regarded as objects of humiliation and hatred by some Hanfu supporters. In particular, the Qing Dynasty, the Chinese government that greeted the first impact of the western invasion amidst the Century of Humiliation, had suffered countless failures and lost a good number of territory. The Hanfu activists believe that the Qing Dynasty was too incompetent to resist invasion,

⁹⁴ <https://web.archive.org/web/20120723081131/http://www.hanminzu.com/>, retrieved on November 6 of 2020.

implying that the minority regime could not be as good as a Han regime. Therefore, as shown in Figure 23, some Hanfu activists are eager to express their hostility toward Qing openly.



Figure 23. College Students Shoot Qing Dynasty Flag with Bow and Arrow

Source: Internet

In the worst case, the Hanfu Movement will directly involve racism, and some Hanfu activists do not hide their intention. For example, from the English website URL of HanNet, it can be seen that the fundamental identity of its members is Han Minzu; and the remarks made by its members include: HuaXia nationalists must be a pedigree defender⁹⁵; all sovereignty belongs to the Han people is the prerequisite of China political system⁹⁶; the long-term goal of Han Minzu's revival is the expansion of Han genes⁹⁷. Such a Han nationalist, or Han Royalist (皇汉), as mentioned in the third section of Chapter 2, its predecessor can be traced back to the times of the Tongmenghui and the Republic of China. This historical connection has made many Han Royalists believe that the Kuomintang's ethnic nationalism is superior to the CPC's civic nationalism and even further support/sympathize with the Kuomintang/Republic of China – including today's Taiwan regional regime. Therefore, after Chinese scholars severely criticized the racist characteristics of HanNet and the Hanfu Movement (Zhang Xian, 2009), several Hanfu Movement websites were censored by the Chinese mainland government.

Obviously, there are huge disagreements on Hanfu Movement's ultimate goal, whether for its participants or researchers. Such divergence originates from the theoretical deficiencies built into the government's nationalistic narrative and the discriminatory practices in actual ethnic policies. On the one hand, the Chinese government cannot theoretically respond to the Hanfu Movement. On First China's "Cultural Heritage Day" in 2006, when asked about his opinion about Hanfu, the Minister of Culture Sun

⁹⁵ <https://web.archive.org/web/20110722150404/http://www.hanminzu.com/Article/xhzd/201009/956.html>

⁹⁶ <https://web.archive.org/web/20110722150404/http://www.hanminzu.com/Article/xhzd/201009/956.html>

⁹⁷ <https://web.archive.org/web/20120316174022/http://hanminzu.com/Article/xhzd/201110/983.html>

Jiazheng said, “I still don’t know what clothing can truly represent China. This is probably one of the biggest puzzles we face” (Wang Jun, 2010b, p. 40). As discussed in the previous chapter, elites of the Chinese government have not actually constructed a definition of “us,” nor can they prevent the people from spontaneously launching an exploration of it when a public sphere is formed. In most cases, the government’s attitude towards Hanfu is open and tacit. It can only take coercive measures to avoid possible destructive consequences when the Hanfu Movement has crossed certain boundaries – such as the HanNet case.

On the other hand, while the Chinese government ignores Han’s traditional high culture, it considers the traditional costumes of other minorities as cultural heritage and allows their usage for political symbolism. Ethnic minority political elites can wear traditional costumes to participate in national meetings⁹⁸, while Han representatives can only wear western suits. This lack of political symbols has aggravated Hanfu activists’ anxiety, and to a certain degree, that political vacuum is also one of the root causes for Han Royalist groups like HanNet. Therefore, when the Chinese government tried to reform the Hanfu Movement, such as changing Hanfu to Huafu (华服, or Chinese Costume, a term more cultural than racial), establishing a National Chinese Costume Day, and incorporating ethnic minority clothing into the Chinese Costume system, it was generally questioned and opposed by Hanfu Movement activists (Wang Jiwen, 2019, pp. 19-20).

Given the Hanfu Movement’s potential racism, opposition to the government agenda by Hanfu supporters may not necessarily trigger a correspondence among the broader civic nationalists. Nevertheless, the Chinese government’s preference for ethnic minorities’ clothing is only a small part of its comprehensive preferential policies. Therefore, from a general nationalistic point of view, preferential policies and their consequence have converted the Hanfu Movement – including the Han Royalists – from a cultural-racial issue into part of the general nationalistic agenda and could lead to a shift of civic nationalists toward racial nationalism.

4.2.2. From preferential policies to Pan-Halalizing

The preferential policies, which were mainly carried out during the Hu Yaobang era, were designated to ease the boiling minorities’ political demands cultivated by Hu. We have categorized these policies into different groups in chapter 2. Though theoretically, each minority in China can enjoy preferential policies at the same level, some minorities can exploit them beyond the policymakers’ first intention in practice. One most iconic phenomenon is Pan-Halalizing.

“Halal” is a word widely used by Muslims around the world; it could refer to anything considered permissible and lawful under Islam (Jallad, 2008, p. 79). Nowadays, it is mainly used in food consumption, particularly meat that has been ritually prepared or slaughtered according to Islamic dietary law (Riesz, 2018, p. 223). “Halalizing” refers to the act or process of making something (forbidden before) halal (permissible now). As Islam enforces a strict code on food consumption, the halalizing of something initially forbidden

⁹⁸ <https://www.reuters.com/article/idCNChina-733020080305>

by the Quran could be an act of inclusiveness and tolerance, an act of coexistence. For example, in Spain, some Muslim immigrants developed a Halal Iberian Ham (p. 230), a simulation of the traditional Spanish ham in which pork was replaced by lamb and beef. By being inclusive, halalization does not draw much attention in Europe. However, things are different in China.

In the Chinese context, halal is generally referred to as qingzhen(清真), meaning “Islam,” “Islamic,” or “Muslim” (Sai & Fischer, 2015, p. 160). Unlike European Muslims, Chinese Muslims use qingzhen as a mark to denote cleanliness, goodness, and that the provider of the food or services is Muslim (Gillete, 2000): for example, qingzhensi(清真寺) – the mosque, qingzhenshipin(清真食品) – halal food. Therefore, although the concepts halal and qingzhen are not totally equivalent, we use halal as a direct translation of qingzhen in our investigation to facilitate the understanding of our non-Chinese readers. The traditional definition of halal in China is more about self-regulation and self-identification for the Muslim groups, but it could be abused, intentionally or unintentionally, resulting in the concept of Pan-Halalization. By investigating the evolutionary process from halal to Pan-Halalization, we may determine the crucial factors of Pan-Halalization.

As part of the Muslim minorities’ cultural feature, halal food is well-protected within the preferential policies, including multiple provincial regulations. For example, the Halal Food Supervision and Protection Regulation of Jiangsu Province (江苏省清真食品监督保护条例) came into force from 2006; the Halal Food Production and Management Regulation of Liaoning Province (辽宁省清真食品生产经营管理条例) was enforced in 2012; and since March 1, 2013, 5 other provinces have implemented the General Regulation on Halal Food Certification (清真食品认证通则)⁹⁹.

These regulations deal with food hygiene and safety, but some clauses are more about food. For instance, in the 4th clause of the Liaoning regulation, the provincial Ethnic Affairs Commission (EAC) is authorized to launch enforcement actions against violation of regulations, and this authorization can be transferred to any local halal food industry association, which implies that the Muslim community can take coercive action on any halal food issue. The Muslim community in Liaoning did form a Halal Food Inspection Squadron, although it was officially registered as a nongovernmental organization – the Liaoning Halal Commercial Food Management Association (辽宁省清真商业食品管理协会), according to its homepage <http://www.liaoningqingzhen.com.cn>, the members dressing and work just as common Chinese law enforcement members do.

Jiangsu province focused on expanding the halal food supply chain and offered economic subsidies for the halal industry. The 4th clause of the Jiangsu regulation guarantees governmental support for any halal restaurant in commercial centers, bus/train stations, airports, and ports; the 9th clause sets a minimum limit for the number of halal restaurants in any municipality; the 19th clause demands that local governments to

⁹⁹ http://www.gov.cn/jrzq/2013-03/01/content_2342772.htm

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use their budget to offer economic subsidies for halal food suppliers. That is to say, Jiangsu's preferential policies cover almost all halal commercial operation sectors.

Not just the provincial level, the Chinese Muslim community also calls for national halal food legislation with stricter punishment. In 2012, two Muslim scholars, Ma Yuxiang and Ma Zhipeng, suggested that the Criminal Law should state that those who violate the halal tradition "can be sentenced to more than ten years imprisonment, life imprisonment, or up to the death penalty" (Ma Yuxiang & Ma Zhipeng, 2012, p. 341). Some NPC representatives did propose halal food legislation in 2016; however, this attempt was swiftly removed from the yearly legislation plan when it faced heavy criticism.

Till here, Halalization in China can still be considered as administrative and legislative practices of preferential policies, as the Muslim community tries to consolidate its privileges with cooperation from official departments and uses the privileges within the administrative system. However, the escalation but not the satisfaction of the current privileges by the Chinese Muslim group has changed the essence of halalization. Because even official halalization is limited to food consumption practices, when the local Muslim community takes the initiative, halalization could be applied to any case involving Muslim/Islam, and convert the preferential policies into Pan-Halalization

During the summer of 2017, in Xi'an, a client angrily discovered that the water dispenser in a bank branch was not available for him because it was "Muslim exclusive" (Monseason, 2017). After he angrily posted a photo of this on the social network Weibo, Chinese internauts were also irritated. However, according to the bank's official response on Weibo, which was soon deleted but screenshot by internauts, the Muslim-exclusive water dispenser "is a kind service based on long-term practice and was endorsed and praised by the local Banking Association."

Muslim Exclusive is not an accidental phenomenon in China. The International Students Division of Peking University (PKU) – one of the top two Chinese universities – states that one of its canteens is Muslim exclusive while non-Muslim students are forbidden from using it.¹⁰⁰ Even though we could suppose the halal canteen in universities was a convenience policy for Muslim students, in the PKU case, this restaurant's exclusivity implies religious isolation between the Muslim and non-Muslim groups and violates the regulation on the exclusion of religion from educational institutions (China State Council, 2004).

¹⁰⁰ <http://www.isd.pku.edu.cn/info/1208/1935.htm>.



Figure 24. Top: Shadian Muslim Community’s Mobilization Meeting for Alcohol Ban

Middle: Dr. Yusupov’s Seminar Poster

Bottom: A Wanted Order – Terrorist Suspect Escaped Shadian after the Attack

Source: Internet with Own Elaboration

Such incidents of privilege escalation have been seen not only in the big cities but also in small settlements, for instance, the ban of alcohol in Shadian (沙甸禁酒). Shadian is in the southwestern border province of Yunnan, where 1.52% of the provincial population are Muslims (Ma Xiaofan, 2016, p. 43). According to Dr. Ruslan Yusupov (2016), since 2008, the Muslim community has banned the sale and consumption of alcohol in Shadian. Like Liaoning province, in Shadian, local Muslims had formed an inspection squadron, which was supported by the local police department (Peng, 2017, p. 221). Merely one month after the bloodiest terror attack in Xinjiang province by Muslim terrorists, given the forthcoming

period of Ramadan, an infamous indoor inspection took place on 22-23 August of 2009. The local government's support lasted years until another bloody terror attack occurred in Kunming, the capital of Yunnan province, and three related terrorists were busted in Shadian (Yusupov, 2016; Liu Ye, 2015, pp. 86-87). From Dr. Yusupov's point of view, "The ban of alcohol ... should best be viewed as a sort of a local 'social compact' which is specific to the local Hui conception of their national belonging" and "is a collective product of historical legacies, state actors, and Shadian citizens." On the other hand, Dr. Peng Hongjun believes that the ban on alcohol is a violation of both citizens' rights and religious freedom (Peng, 2017, p. 223).

In Shadian and some other Muslim settlements mentioned by Dr. Peng for the alcohol ban movement, the Muslim community tends to impose religious prohibition on their non-Muslim neighbors, and in other situations, their religious preferences are imposed as well. For instance, airline companies only offer halal food during a flight for the clients, without precaution or alternative. Professor Xi Wuyi (习五一) is an outspoken atheist researcher from the Chinese Academy of Social Science, and she frequently reveals information related to Pan-Halalization on her Weibo account and calls for public alertness of religious infiltration into secular society. In the first three months of 2019 alone, she has posted seven microblogs about halal aviation food. One example is her microblog of 2 May 2019, when she posted that "Flight CA1262 of Air China, from Xining to Peking, all food is halal" with some photographs as evidence (Xi, 2019). An airline service expert's investigation also confirmed that at least 20 domestic and international airlines are only offering halal food (Hou Xiacong, 2011, p.10). However, according to the SEAC, aviation halal food should be bookable rather than forcible (SEAC, 2012).

Further abuse of the halal food concept could involve economic conflict or even organized crime. Legally speaking, any employer in China is obligated to provide halal food for Muslim employees (Yan Zhongwu, 2013), and some Muslim groups have blackmailed companies based on this cause as the norma of halal is determined by Muslim employees. In 2008, a group of Muslim employees vandalized a construction site after the company refused to pay them "a totally unrealistic amount of food subsidy" (Ma Jun, 2014, p. 319). In 2018, a crime group was sentenced in Hebei province for its members firstly hiding their religion and signing a contract without special food requests, then blackmailing companies for not offering halal food.¹⁰¹ In January 2019, a viral video on Chinese social networks showed Muslim employees vandalizing a halal canteen in Ji'an of Jiangxi province because of "the use of 'unhalal' chicken."¹⁰²

At the Central Ethnic Work Conference of 2014, Chinese president Xi Jinping stated that Equality before Law is the basis of the Unity of Minzu, and local authorities should handle minority issues without any hesitation¹⁰³. However, minority preferential policies are deeply entrenched in the Chinese administrative system and cannot be easily modified by one president's statement. As Muslim minorities enjoy preferential

¹⁰¹ http://www.xtrb.cn/xt/2018-04/09/content_625512.htm

¹⁰² <http://news.dwnews.com/china/news/2019-01-18/60113244.html>

¹⁰³ <http://cpc.people.com.cn/xuexi/n1/2017/1123/c385476-29663133.html>

treatment through the term halal, other minorities will inevitably follow suit in asking for the same preferences. For example, now researchers are calling for a “halalization-style” protection of Manchu’s diet culture. “There are plenty of regulations and laws protecting halal food ... however, a policy focus on Manchu food is hard to find ... a ‘localization’ law/regulation based on Manchu diet culture has not yet been framed” (Liu Huimei, 2015, p. 20). “The development of Manchu diet culture requires more financial investments, budget distribution and preferential policies” (p. 33). “For the protection of Manchu diet culture ... (authorities) should allow and strengthen the participation of the local Manchu food association ... (authorities) should hire Shamanism practitioners as food supervisors” (p. 35).

In seeking “halalization style privilege,” local governments and common citizens take a direct and effective measurement: they change the ethnic identification. Guozhangzi (郭杖子) is a small township in northern China. During 1985-1986, through mobilization by the local government, “90382 Guozhangzi residents had recovered or changed their ethnic identification,” the Manchu population rose from 1982’s 3.77% to 1992’s 27.9% (Jin Yanming, 2011, p. 12), and reached 75.4% in 2002 (p. 18). The main reason for this dramatic increase is the official effort. The residents were mobilized by the local government’s propaganda about the minority’s preferential policies, especially the privileges accorded in education (p. 24). For the local government, the demographic composition “change” allowed for the conversion of Guozhangzi to a minority autonomous region, a fact that could be used as leverage in the negotiation with the central government for both political and financial subsidy (p. 22). Guozhangzi is not a unique case of ethnic identification change; from 1992 to 2003, a county in Sichuan province also successfully established a minority autonomous government through modifying ethnic identification (Han, 2012, pp. 137–138).

These other minorities have nothing to do with the term “halal” or “Pan-Halalization.” However, the crucial element here is the tactic applied during the operation of preferential policies. For the Muslim minorities, the term “halal” stands for their tradition and dignity, and disrespecting halal symbolizes a disrespect of Islam itself and a violation of the Unity of Minzu, which is the important political principle for China’s minority issue. Hence, halal as a religious tradition has become suitable for all Chinese citizens. After consolidating the supreme position of the concept of halal, Muslim groups then consciously or unconsciously add more content to it; the greater the scope of halal is, the more the privileges that can be exploited from it. For the other minorities, the whole process is learnable and repeatable. Only the term halal should be replaced by their own cultural concept, which can be discovered or invented. Therefore, imitations by other minorities are also part of the Pan-Halalization process.

Although it originated from a religious food code, Pan-Halalization is never just about food consumption (Ma Jin, 2016, p. 17). After reviewing several cases of Pan-Halalization, we find that the two key factors for the evolution of normal preferential policies into Pan-Halalization are: minority initiative and official acquiescence.

First, within the government’s existing political framework, minorities as the beneficiary of preferential policies are already enjoying various privileges. However, some minorities have crossed and

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blurred the official policy boundary by expanding the scope of privileges and transforming the preferential policies into Pan-Halalization. In the Shadian incident, Muslim residents were not forced to drink, and they could just accept the secular habits of other neighbors, but they chose to ban alcohol in a multicultural community. Halal food supply in companies is the same logic, preferential policies already have guaranteed the companies' obligation to offer halal food for Muslims, but some minorities turn it into a blackmail excuse. For non-Muslim minorities, they could have stayed within the preferential policies' boundary instead of taking the example of the Muslim groups. The minorities' initiative is an undeniable key factor of the Pan-Halalization.

Official acquiescence is another key factor. Because in all the Pan-Halalization cases mentioned, the official attitude tends to be neutral and supportive. It is the bank that sets up a Muslim-exclusive water dispenser and defends it. As a public university, PKU also does not hide its intention to privilege Muslim students. While Shadian's Muslim enforcement team broke through neighbors' doors, local police were on its side. Airlines' food choice is mostly an economic one, as halal food companies subsidized by the government budget are much more competitive than their non-halal competitors. Except for explanations like protecting minorities' tradition, culture, and identity, the direct cause of all these phenomena is that the policymakers once had promised a federalized political system with more autonomy to the minorities, but it fell through due to opposition from the vast majority of political elites. Therefore, a system of appeasement policies aimed at appeasing already encouraged minorities must be introduced, which means the government was expected to keep silent on the abuse of preferential policies.

However, not everyone is the beneficiary of preferential policies, not even every minority member. If someone is enjoying the privilege, there must be another one or more people suffering from it. Obviously, the Han population is the primary adverse sufferer of preferential policies. However, besides the visible economic, cultural, and political discrimination imposed by preferential policies, there is another critical reason for Han's (and many Chinese minorities included) opposition against them can be found from the nationalistic perspective, the violation of a Chinese (proto-) nationalism's principle – equality through meritocracy.

One of the most outstanding examples of meritocracy in Confucianism can be found in the Keju. Candidates must prove their ability to understand and use Confucian classics to become new members of the bureaucratic system. Of course, this examination system was not truly open for all qualified society members, and the Confucian classics may not be practical for daily governance, but it indeed had potentially egalitarian implications. In traditional Chinese society, this examination system offered significant upward mobility and improved openness in education and politics, which also contributed to relatively egalitarian income distributions (Fukuyama, 1995, p. 25).

Meritocracy through education reveals that the Confucian hierarchy system is not a simple unequal system. A better understanding of it – according to Professor A. T. Nuyen – would be to consider it as “treating unequals unequally” or with “vertical equality” (Nuyen, 2001, p. 70), which can be understood as:

the inequality of the meritocracy should be presented in the disparity of the shares of good for different *parties*. The crucial problem here is, what makes the *parties* equal/unequal? as we have investigated in previous chapters, for Confucianism, the answer is and only is the merit of the individual, which usually is reflected in the form of examination scores, but today it can be further expanded into any fair competition result. Hence, in Confucianism, absolute egalitarianism is not what is worth defending, but equality of opportunity is (Li Chenyang, 2012).

As traditional Keju did not adhere to universally total equality but followed a hierarchy, intellectuals who had passed the examination were extremely privileged over other members of society in all aspects. A chapter from the 18th-century Chinese novel *The Scholars* (儒林外史) was a satire on how people dramatically changed their attitude toward an old and perennial Keju loser after he miraculously passed the examination. For the wife, the father-in-law, the neighbors, and the local bureaucrats, this perennial loser suddenly became a noble and wise man, the community's pillar figure, a future colleague, and a political ally (Wu Jingzi, 2004). The story seems ridiculous but cannot be more authentic. Even in the modern Chinese society, a common belief is "Destiny Determined by One Examination" (一考定终身), which refers to the NCEE. However, what important is, in a distorted and indirect way, Keju partly achieves Gellner's description that "the employability, dignity, security, and self-respect of individuals, typically, and for the majority of men now hinges on their education" (1983, p. 36). As Professor Greenfeld indicated, this correlation between education and social position is the basis of modern equality and nationalism (2018). Therefore, a political procedure that shaped Chinese proto-nationalism is now also the cornerstone of modern nationalism, and the dual traditional-modern credibility of the principle "equality through meritocracy" has maximally empowered its potential social/political influence. The preferential policies openly break this principle, with ethnicity as the only criteria.

Of course, the policymakers understand the inequity caused by the preferential policies, that a rural Han resident may need more subsidy than an urban minority, and the bonus point in the NCEE could be disruptive to one individual's future. However, fearing more the exposure of its theoretical inefficiency, the Chinese government has to make the preferential policies vague, and thus it can enjoy maximum flexibility and transform the theoretical questions into policy disputes. For example, the most questioned reproductive policy, which allows minorities to have more children, had stepped into its last final stage as the NPC passed a "total open of the second child"(全面开放二孩) that allows all Chinese families to have two children in 2015¹⁰⁴, while the National Health Commission also has expressed its endorsement in the 9839th NPC proposal of "regional experiment of a total open reproductive policy."¹⁰⁵ During the evolution of the reproductive policy, the government has actually canceled a part of the preferential policies without touching the political idea behind it.

¹⁰⁴ http://www.gov.cn/gongbao/content/2016/content_5033853.htm

¹⁰⁵ <http://www.nhc.gov.cn/wjw/jiany/202102/d75d0c89ff124d3bba043eb4fdb0a610.shtml>

However, the preferential reproductive policy has become the shared memory of one generation, and the discrimination and the social crack brought by it will not dissipate as quickly as the policy change. Furthermore, the changing of reproductive policy is mainly because of the incoming aging society, that the government takes action only after seeing the risk. Hence, if other preferential policies were not challenged by risk, the Chinese nationalist's displeasure would only last.

4.2.3. An eroded civic nationalism

As mentioned before, Chiang Kai-shek of ROC has explained the relationship between Han and minorities from the perspective of a patrilineal clan, viewing the Han as the father, the state's pillar, and the dominant civilization; in contrast, the minorities were regarded as backward and subordinates who needed the guidance of Han. Although civic nationalism is a consistent proposition of the Communist Party of China, a significant boost to its victory in the revolutionary war era, in the process of ethnic identification in the 1950s, the Chinese government has politically shaped a large number of ethnic minorities within the concept of China Nation. Indeed, during the Mao Zedong era, class political identity had overwhelmed national identity. However, after the Reform and Opening-up (1978) began, the Chinese government had to face the minorities' nationalistic consciousness or localistic consciousness, which grew spontaneously but also resulted from the government's cultivation. The key question remains on how to explain the relationship between the Han people, who make up the vast majority of the China Nation, and other minorities.

The PRC's constitution states that the relationship between each Minzu should be "Socialist relations of equality, unity and mutual assistance," while "it is necessary to combat big-nation chauvinism, mainly Han chauvinism, and also to combat local chauvinism." Therefore, the 56 Minzu are equal in every sense, 1/56 for Han, 1/56 for Manchu, 1/56 for Hui, Uyghur, or any other Minzu. Besides, the primary concern of the Chinese government is that the Han oppresses the minorities through abuse of its overwhelmingly dominant population – from our observation of the extreme branches of the Hanfu Movement, this is not without reason. However, the overwhelming majority of the Han population is an objective reality, and the Chinese government's deliberate ignorance of the Han identity has instead stimulated the ethnic consciousness among the Han population, especially on the cultural aspects.

To make matters worse, the Han also leads in economic development due to its demographic advantage and geographical reasons. Then, alongside the political restrictions, the concept of Han as merely 1/56 is bound to suffer a constant impact, which is naturally a great challenge to the "socialist relation." The Chinese government's countermeasures are preferential policies that promote ethnic minorities' economic and cultural development by deliberately giving them privileges, and thus the equally 1/56 status is preserved. However, in essence, this privileging represents the Chinese government's recognition of the unequal status between the Han and other ethnic minorities. On the one hand, since preferential policies only exclude Han people, it means that the implementation of the policy is based on the cost of Han's interest in every aspect

that involves the preferential policies, with Han being the blood donor and ethnic minorities being recipients. Naturally, only healthy and strong people give blood to the weak and wounded, not the other way around. Therefore, the Chinese government actually recognized the economic dominance of the Han. On the other hand, since the only criterion of preferential policies is Minzu, it is very likely that Han from poor areas will transfuse blood to ethnic minorities of wealthy areas. For example, in Guizhou Province, urban ethnic minorities with better educational infrastructure can unconditionally obtain ten bonus points for the NCEE, while rural Han candidates with poor educational conditions are at a distinct disadvantage (Wu Cinan, 2013, p. 67). The only explanation for this situation is that the Chinese government believes that the Han's 1/56 is smaller than the 1/56 of ethnic minorities.

Although the preferential policies can be understood in good faith to maximize the development of ethnic minorities, it is undeniable that official civic nationalism does not guide the formulation and implementation of government policies in practice. Moreover, as the official narrative, civic nationalism has to bear the dissidence caused by the government's policies, resulting in a negative impression among the Han people and fostering blatant challenge to its principles. This also explains why extremely racist Han Royalist has spawned from the cultural Hanfu Movement.

But does this mean an inevitable end of civic nationalism in China? We do not think so. First of all, the pressure exerted by foreign forces on China is still enormous, and the issue of ethnic minorities is the top priority of this pressure. The opposition favored by foreign narratives is usually the minority versus China – as the Uyghur independence activists emphasized on their web pages, “East Turkestan is a part of Central Asia, not of China. East Turkestan's people are not Chinese; they are Turks of Central Asia”¹⁰⁶ – hence there is no way Chinese nationalists would abandon the concept of China Nation. As mentioned above, even among the Hanfu Movement participants, most of their hatred is expressed toward the Qing regime, and only the racists of a small number would target the Manchu people; similarly, on the issue of preferential policies, the core contradiction lies mainly in the unfairness caused by the rigid criteria that only value ethnicity (Han, 2012, pp. 186-189). Second, for Chinese nationalists, all internal challenges can be blamed on the government. Imagination or not, it seems all dissidence can be dissolved through policy change - at least temporarily. Then, completely abandoning civic nationalism and turning to ethnic nationalism is not optimal for Chinese nationalists. And finally, the Chinese government still insists on civic nationalism. In South Korea, a country almost entirely composed of the Korean nation, in order to attract more skilled overseas Koreans to settle in the country, the government has specially implemented the Overseas Koreans Act to provide national welfare and free immigration to them. In theory, Chinese ethnic Koreans are also among the beneficiaries. However, out of fear of causing cognitive confusion in Korean Minzu, the Chinese government pressured the South Korean government to remove Chinese Koreans from the special new visa programme (Seol, & Skrentny, 2009, pp. 157-158).

¹⁰⁶ <http://www.iuhrdf.org/uyghurs>

The Chinese government and its policies have greatly influenced Chinese nationalism in terms of internal issues. Considering the external pressure has just contributed to the Chinese government's legitimacy among nationalists, then it seems likely that as long as the Chinese government successfully defuses the internal challenges, civic nationalism will eventually triumph in China. Nevertheless, leaving aside whether the Chinese government could defuse them or not, the nationalism ideology – whether ethnic or civic – must answer a question – which is ignored by both ROC and PRC – that why a Chinese, racially or culturally, should be a member of the China Nation; or in other words, how to build up the nationalistic consensus? Of course, it is a question for every nation-state. Therefore, finds and experiences from western scholars could be an answer or at least some guidance. Based on Gellner's analysis, the usual measures include monopoly of education, cooperation within the domestic market, and sharing of high culture (Gellner, 1983). On the other hand, from Benedict Anderson's view, all these measures are only designated for members within the political boundary (Anderson, 2006). Then comes one most problematic situation for the Chinese nationalism – the political boundary itself is incomplete and under attack.

4.3. China identity: Between “them” and “us”

Usually, nationalism is a game of defining “them” and “us,” and the border is marked by culture, language, sovereignty, and race. Therefore, challenges like transcultural background, dual citizenship, and mixed race could be fatal in some circumstances, such as the Yugoslavia Civil War. Although most Chinese people are residents of the PRC, and Chinese society has a long history of cultural homogeneity, the challenge of an anti-nationalism rebellion is still vibrating the China Nation concept. The rebellion could emerge both from outside of the current PRC political boundary or within, but the commonality is that the rebel has a clear cultural-political connection with the broad China concept, particularly a governance relation. Thus from the nationalistic perspective, they are members of the China Nation, are part of “us;” however, due to various reasons, the rebels refuse the China Nation identity and turn to a self-defined identity which often has closer contact with a foreign identity/ideology, a preference on the identity of “them.”

4.3.1. Eye-catching rebellion: The case of Hong Kong & Taiwan

The most eye-catching rebellion against the China Nation occurred in Hong Kong and Taiwan (HKT). The British colonist occupied Hong Kong through the first inequality treaty with Qing, ruled it for 150 years, and the mainland government had to promise a different political system to take it back. Japan also had forced Qing's cession on Taiwan during its early expansion; although after WWII, Taiwan was returned to ROC's control, the later civil war and foundation of the PRC only had made Taiwan a much more complicated issue. In both cases, HKT were never ruled by the current PRC government for quite a long period, even till today; on the contrary, during the last century, HKT were governed by regimens that have a good reason for showing hostility against PRC.

No matter the Kuomintang's ethnic nationalism or the CPC's civic nationalism, China's unification is always one fundamental political demand. During WWII, when the British temporally abandoned Hong

Kong, Chiang Kai-shek's ROC government had sought its possible return after the war (Chen Lu, 2018), and the PRC also has marked HKT as its core interest. Nevertheless, the central government's opinion does not receive a positive response from the local people. One exact piece of evidence is China's appellation used by HKT people – especially the HKT internauts – 支那(Cina, Zhina, or Chee-na).

Invented by the Indians, Cina is a word of Sanskrit origin that was used to name China. The word “China” is the modern evolution of Cina. Initially, Cina was a good word because it means intelligence in Hindi (Huang, 1999, p.58), and the Chinese and their neighbors did not refuse to use it. For example, the Indochina Peninsula (印度支那半島). However, as the Japanese empire expanded its victory over China, Cina became a pejorative word to dehumanize the Chinese by suggesting an inherent inferior Chinese identity. After WWII, due to ROC's official demand, the Japanese government officially banned the use of Cina because “it was a name hated by the Chinese” (Yang & Meng, 2010, p. 46). For Chinese nationalists, the word Cina connotes maximum malice because it represents suffering full of tears and blood, and any use of this word will undoubtedly cause a strong reaction. For HKT people who had suffered from the Japanese and are supposed to be staunch opponents of the term Cina, they chose to revive it to insult the mainland Chinese.



Figure 25. Taiwan Internauts Use Cina to Insult Mainlanders.

Source: <http://disp.cc/b/163-9NcB>, with Own Elaboration

In figure 25, we can see that in a breve discussion by Taiwan internauts, the word Cina has been used intensively, with the deliberate intention of insult. As the internaut *ryan100100* said: “Cina is meant to discriminate the 1.3 billion animals across the strait,” and *bbovallcome* reconfirmed that “it’s a pleasure to see the animals are irritated (for Cina).” Clear in the practical, the word Cina is widely bound to an animal implication and has evolved into the phrase “支那贱畜” (Cina lowly animal) – an even more apparent dehumanizing expression. Though some Taiwan residents opposed the word Cina and had filed an accusation

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in 2016, ROC's Taipei Prosecutors Office formally rejected the case and determined that Cina is not an insulting word¹⁰⁷. The same year in Hong Kong, when two pro-democracy politicians were elected as legislators and took their oath, they changed the official script and called the PRC as People's Re-fucking of Chee-na¹⁰⁸.

Of course, the usage of dirty language is never a rare scene for virtual communities. The continental internauts also use words like Wanwan (湾湾), Green-haired turtle (绿毛龟), or HK Chank (港灿) to insult the HKT internauts. However, the continental insults emphasize an intellectual-moral superiority (Wanwan, HK Chank) or attack the ideology (Green-haired turtle: green is the official color of the pro-independent party in Taiwan), while the HKT internauts focus on a rejection of the China Nation: they do not consider the Japanese invasion as their own suffering; moreover, HKT internauts continue with the inherent inferiority path and dehumanize the continental people just like the Japanese did.



Figure 26. Hong Kong protestors with US/UK flags.

Source: Reuters and Getty Images, with own elaboration.

One potential explanation is that a typical dehumanization act occurs when a particular minority group seeks separatism from the majority group (Haslam & Stratemeyer, 2016, p. 26), and HKT internauts are not hiding their desire for separation. In Hong Kong, the demand for an independent state of Hong Kong nationality has drawn attention from both Chinese and global researchers (Yang, 2017, pp. 81-82; Kaeding, 2017); in Taiwan, the first party platform of the ruling Democratic Progressive Party is independence from China¹⁰⁹. As the UN's self-determination principle is expressed as 民族自决 in Chinese, for HKT politicians and internauts, building up a local nation identity is their first task. Nevertheless, the Chinese proto-nationalism is so strong that a new minority identity is problematic for convincing people when they share the same language, culture, and race with the majority Chinese. Therefore, the separatist movement must paint the China Nation as vile so the local people would easily turn to a new option.

On the other hand, considering the balance of power between HKT and PRC, the separation cannot be simply announced and achieved but requires foreign intervention and global consensus, especially from

¹⁰⁷ <https://www.localpresshk.com/2017/06/china-china/>

¹⁰⁸ <https://www.scmp.com/news/hong-kong/politics/article/2027413/three-rejections-and-four-deviations-mark-hong-kong>

¹⁰⁹ <https://www.dpp.org.tw/upload/download/%E9%BB%A8%E7%B6%B1.pdf>

Western countries. The U.S. has been a long-term supporter and protector of ROC, and the UK was Hong Kong's suzerain. So naturally, HKT local separatists would love to seek their support. As figure 26 shows, Hong Kong protesters called for a U.S. "liberation" and waved the colonial era flag, suggesting they would prefer foreign domination rather than the PRC. A similar situation exists in Taiwan – the U.S. and ex-suzerain Japan are considered decisive help to the formal independence (Wu Chunyi, 2004). The ROC ministry of foreign affairs has also constantly emphasized its efforts and achievement to improve relations with the U.S. and Japan¹¹⁰.

To the Chinese nationalists, both the objective – a divide of the China Nation and the methods – to dehumanize the Chinese and seek the foreign intervention of the HKT separatism movement is intolerable, but the even more critical question is, should the HKT separatists be categorized as "them" or "us"? It might be easy to define HKT separatists as "them" and mobilize a confrontation emotion just like the U.S. or Japan case, but it also would be precisely what the separatists want.

4.3.2. Reverse nationalism: a price for proto-nationalism's celestial empire image.

As discussed in chapter 2, proto-nationalism, which is the historical basis of the current identification of the China Nation, is primarily determined by the cultural boundaries of China. For Chinese nationalists, the hostility and resistance to the concept of the China Nation shown by politicians and internauts in HKT can still be attributed to Western influence historically, opposition to the PRC realistically, and education-economic differences methodologically. Then when a trend appears within the PRC's political boundaries, which opposes the China Nation and all Chinese nationalist claims – rather than simply giving up Chinese identity, the appeal of Chinese nationalism is fundamentally questioned.

Like its global counterparts, Chinese nationalism originates from proto-nationalism, and a pillar of Chinese proto-nationalism is the absolute superiority of Chinese culture. In the ancient era, a Chinese chose to be Chinese because China represented the emperor, which was located at the center of the world – as pictured in Figure 6. In other words, China represented civilization. The difference between them and us is that we were civilized and advanced, while they were barbaric and unenlightened. Nevertheless, the terrible weakness of this narrative is that if China cannot prove its civilization and advancedness, the loyalty of members of the community will be significantly challenged. At the end of the Century of Humiliation, China barely proved its huge military potential through World War II and the Korean War; in the first forty years of the PRC, China's civilization and advancedness were minimally maintained by restricting exchanges and demonstrating that communism was not inferior to capitalism – mainly thanks to the USSR. However, since the Reform and Opening-up, China's contacts with the world, especially with developed countries, have been increasing, and communism has gradually given way to the market economy. On the other hand, the west now sees itself as the representative of civilization, while other alien countries – no matter cultural, economic, or political – are barbarians (Valle de Frutos & Menor Sendra, 2010). In the case of China, the once leader

¹¹⁰ https://www.mofa.gov.tw/News_Content.aspx?n=95&sms=73&s=68025

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of civilization is now barbarian. Therefore, the issue of being civilized, which was once temporarily concealed, has been brought to the surface again. Naturally, there are many scholars and politicians who try to propose various discourses to maintain China's national identity under new conditions, but in the face of the huge gap between China and foreign countries, many Chinese, including all strata of society, have chosen to move towards the opposite of nationalism. A grassroots concept without official recognition for this phenomenon is called reverse nationalism.

The upper-class elites who had the deepest contact with the West were the first to fire. With the support of then-President Hu Yaobang and Premier Zhao Ziyang, and under the guidance of several scholars from Beijing, a documentary titled "He Shang" (河殇, literally: River Sorrows) was broadcast on China Central Television in 1988. The river in the River Sorrows refers to the Yellow River, China's mother river; and the theme of the documentary – as its director Xia Jun stated – was to depict the "ugliness and poverty" of the Yellow River. (Wang Duoxi, 2013, p. 190) In the documentary script, the following lines appear:

The yellow earth cannot teach us what true scientific spirit is. The raging Yellow River cannot teach us what true democratic consciousness is. The yellow earth... the Yellow River... cannot breed new culture. The Confucian culture... cannot create the enterprising spirit of a nation, the legal order of a state, and the renewal mechanism of a culture. History has proved that: modernization construction according to an inland cultural governance model might accommodate some new achievements of modern science and technology... but the entire nation cannot be endowed with a powerful civilizational dynamism with it. (Su & Wang, 1988, p. 108)

The other side of the binary opposition to the Yellow River/yellow earth/China is the concept collection of ocean/azure/West that the producers praised. A similar geopolitical binary is Alexander Dugin's "Land civilization against sea civilization" geopolitical binary (Dugin, 2015). However, unlike Dugin's binary opposition is used to demonstrate the correctness and necessity of the Tellurocracy theory, in River Sorrows' narrative, oceanic civilization represents democracy and science, azure blue symbolizes international trade, and Western countries are the future of humankind. Therefore, as a failed civilization, China needs to replace yellow with blue, abandon tradition, and complete the reconstruction of the cultural-psychological structure. So, how to accomplish this reconstruction? In December 1988, Liu Xiaobo, a well-known Chinese activist, said in an exclusive interview with a Hong Kong newspaper that "China's backwardness, the ghost of Confucius' thought lingers... maybe it has something to do with race... one hundred years of colonization has made Hong Kong what it today is. China is too big, so certainly it will take three hundred years of colonization to achieve what Hong Kong today is, and I still doubt whether three hundred years will be enough." (Jin Zhong, 1988)

Obviously, in the eyes of some Chinese elites, the Chinese tradition, which defines China, is essentially incorrect. Except for the Christian civilization, all other civilizations have either been annihilated or are dying. (Zhao Dingxin, 2007, p. 41) Because the concept of "China" should belong to the most civilized and developed entity, and for the benefit of racial Chinese people, China of the psychological context must be killed and replaced with western identity, more specifically, the Christianity identity. Due to the symbolic

effect of River Sorrows, groups that hold similar ideologies are known in China as the Heshang Faction (河殇派). Since its initial members mainly were college students and young professors, its influence gradually reached the greatest in the two decades after 1988. One example is when the U.S. invaded Iraq in 2003, Jiao Guobiao, a journalism professor at Peking University, wrote a poem “To the American Soldiers.” Jiao Guobiao praised the U.S. military and the United States, calling it a symbol of human civilization, the backbone of the world’s justice, that the war was to bring democracy to Iraqis. He also expressed that he was either willing to join the US military or be killed by it in the US “liberation war” on China.¹¹¹ Another example is the Charter 08 (零八宪章) of the year 2008, which was endorsed by hundreds of Chinese intellectuals led by Liu Xiaobo.

For social elites, no matter their ideological belief, it seems the biological Chinese people’s interest is still their concern. The purge and implantation of ideas and cultures are for the survival and development of every Chinese. However, as modernization progressed and the expansion of individualism in China, another type of reverse nationalism became popular, especially among Chinese internauts – the “spiritual foreigner” (精神外国人). The spiritual foreigners can be Spiritual Japanese (精日), Spiritual American (精美), Spiritual German(精德), and many more, depending on the individual choice. Next, we will choose the Spiritual Japanese as an example for investigation.

It is a normal global cultural phenomenon that Japanese pop culture is sought after and a subcultural group is formed. This subcultural group is called 哈日族 (literally: Japanese Fans) in China. However, loving Japanese pop culture is not the same as Spiritual Japanese. There is an obvious difference between the two: the Japanese Fans would only express their admiration for the Japanese popular culture, while the Spiritual Japanese would additionally add a value orientation, that everything from Japan is good, and everything from China is bad. Under the guidance of this value judgment, the Spiritual Japanese groups have developed two typical behavior patterns:

First, to deny and humiliate the political entity of the Chinese nation-state, the People’s Republic of China, while worshiping the Japanese nation-state, especially the fascist Japanese Empire of World War II. Spiritual Japanese are of Chinese nationality, but subjectively identify themselves as Japanese citizens. Therefore they feel deeply frustrated and resentful about their Chinese nationality and further hate any group that does not openly renounce Chinese nationality. One famous slogan is, “My parents give me a Cina body, but the Imperial Army grants me the Yamato spirit” (父母生我支那身，皇军赐我大和魂). While referring to China/Chinese people as “Cina,” “Cina pig,” “Smelly Cina of yours,” they call themselves “Me the Imperial Army.” (Yang & Huang, 2018)

Secondly, to deny and humiliate Chinese culture and history while worshiping Japanese militaristic culture. As a subcultural group, one important part of Spiritual Japanese offline activities is cosplaying Japanese imperialist military uniforms, reenacting the Japanese army’s major victory in China, or typical

¹¹¹ <https://www.epochtimes.com/gb/4/5/11/n536305.htm>

atrocities such as the Nanjing Massacre. For further understanding, one specific case will be discussed in chapter 5. Spiritual Japanese are committed to actively deconstructing Chinese history, especially modern history. Through backgrounding the positive aspects of Chinese culture and foregrounding its backward side, the legitimacy and justification of Japan's invasion of China are defended by Spiritual Japanese. They firmly believe that the Japanese race is superior to the Chinese, that "the killing of 300,000 in Nanjing was too few", "not one Cina pig is killed in vain," and "there was no wronged soul under the sword of the Imperial Army." (Ruan Bo, 2019, p. 19)

The "Japanese" concept of the Spiritual Japanese is merely a symbol or code. Other spiritual foreigners can easily replace the code Japan with other countries, but their core behavior logics are the same, everything is bad in China, everything is good in foreign countries; in localized words, even the moon in foreign countries is more round (外国的月亮更圆). Spiritual foreigners' primary method of argumentation is to selectively compare those aspects of China that are inferior to foreign countries, then expand the inferiority and generalize it to the whole of China, and conclude that China will inevitably fail compared with foreign countries. For instance, because the Japanese killed Chinese more than the Chinese killed Japanese, China lost the military competition, so China is a pariah country; because Germany's mechanical technology is better than China, China lost the technical competition, China is a pariah country; because America's GDP per capita is higher than China, China lost the economic competition, China is a pariah country. Therefore, a spiritual foreigner's identity is much more acceptable and honorable than being a citizen of a pariah country.

Compared with the social elites of the Heshang faction, a major difference between spiritual foreigners is that they do not care about the salvation of the Chinese people. On the contrary, spiritual foreigners need a backward, pariah China to satisfy their imagination and contrast to the perfect foreign countries. Nevertheless, in the eyes of Chinese nationalists, there is no difference in essence between the Heshang faction and spiritual foreigners, as they are both betrayals of the China Nation; similarly, Chinese nationalists who are unwilling to give up Chinese traditions and unwilling to join foreign nationalities are also condemned by Heshang faction and spiritual foreigners and are regarded as enemies. Therefore, although the political demands and behavioral logic of the Heshang faction and spiritual foreigners may vary widely, in China, where nationalism is on the rise, both are classified as reverse nationalism. Their existence and actions are closely related to the development of Chinese nationalism. Moreover, the same question applied to the HKT issue can also be asked here: should the reverse nationalists be considered as "them" or "us"?

4.4. Chapter Conclusion

After a whole chapter of discussion, one most obvious impression is that Chinese nationalism, like China's modernization, has undergone a drastic development in a short time – which is natural as nationalism is part of modernization. At the same time, just as China's economy and culture have become increasingly diverse, so too have Chinese nationalism and its rivals taken on many forms. Nevertheless, beneath the

cluttered exterior, as a typical ideology of modernity. Hence through the localization of classic nationalist theories, we can still summarize the three main threads of ideas inside the Chinese nationalism of the Internet age.

First, external pressure is the absolute driving force behind Chinese nationalism. Indeed, in the proto-nationalism era, identity construction was accomplished through the attractiveness of the core concept of China, and the distance from the core concept defined “them” and “us.” However, even after the end of the Cold War and China’s massive participation in the western economic system, the pressure from outside did not make Chinese nationalists feel any possibility of relief. Before the 911 incident, the military pressure exerted by the West – especially the United States – on China was even greater than in the 1980s. Because of such enormous military pressure and the observation of how the Western powers treated Russia after its surrender in the Cold War, after embracing a completely xenophilic and pro-western ideology in the 1980s, many Chinese intellectuals gradually turned to the nationalism ideology since the 1990s. (Zhao Dingxin, 2007, pp. 309-310) In this case, whether it is the Chinese government, Chinese nationalists, or Chinese intellectuals – which should naturally form an opposition faction within China according to the western expectation, are willing, and at the same time have to maintain a mentality of confrontation against foreign powers. In the era of the ebb of communism, this nationalist consensus based on external pressure became China’s political roof. Whenever Western powers, especially Western cultural elites, express hostility to China, hoping to weaken and disintegrate the alliance between the Chinese government and Chinese nationalists, the political roof of nationalism becomes more solidified than before. After thirty years of shielding, this vigilant and defensive psychological consensus has become China’s political correctness, and foreign powers and foreign interference have become the most sturdy pillar of Chinese nationalism. Mixed with the Century of Humiliation history, Japan and the U.S. have become the wind vanes that define them. A piece of evidence from the opposition side is that whether inside or outside the PRC political boundary, advocating foreign civilization superiority and calling for direct foreign intervention is the fundamental consensus among those who oppose Chinese nationalism, no matter how vastly different they may be from one another.

Until the end of 2021, in the foreseeable future, the friction between China and the U.S. does not show any proof of mitigation, but foreign powers cannot use violence to suppress the Chinese government as they did during the Century of Humiliation. Since the advantages of the Chinese government’s insistence on nationalism outweigh the disadvantages, it cannot betray the nationalists like the Qing government. For the nationalists, when facing the only political entity that can represent the China Nation, there is no motivation for betraying due to the inertia rooted in proto-nationalism. Therefore, the “alliance” between the Chinese government and Chinese nationalists is unlikely to break down in a short period of time.

The second main thread is that the interpretation of the identification of the China Nation by the civic nationalism based on proto-nationalism has obvious flaws. Beginning in the 1990s, with the dissolution of the Soviet Union, countries that traditionally used communism to provide collective identities experienced

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various degrees of chaos, especially in Yugoslavia, where a brutal and bloody civil war broke out. Since the beginning of Reform and Opening-up – about 12 years before the Soviet dissolution, China has gradually distanced itself from the stereotypical communism, so the confusion brought about by this cognitive upheaval took effect earlier than in other communist countries. At the same time, the traditional interpersonal relationships were also challenged by a modernizing individual society. Considering that a large number of ethnic minorities exist in China, then, according to Samuel Huntington’s point of view (1996, pp. 219-221), China itself is also on the “fault line” that is prone to ethnic conflicts, hence the Chinese government urgently needed to stabilize its domestic, and the only theoretical weapon left is civic nationalism.

From the perspective of ethnic nationalism, the direct solution to the question of “who am I” is to eliminate the alien within political boundaries through population cleansing. A more recent example was the forced expulsion of Germans from their homeland by Poland and the Soviet Union after World War II, and an earlier classic example is the genocide of Tasmanians by Australian colonists. On the other side, typical civic nationalism believes the state should resolve identity issues through culture and smooth assimilation, as in the case of the Bretons and Strasbourg in French. However, we should note that one decisive reason for civic nationalism’s success during the French Revolution was that Paris itself was an economic and cultural highland in Europe. That is to say, France was not an example of inferiority when facing foreign powers; on the contrary, the 1789 Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen, together with consecutive military victories, had consolidated the superiority of France.

This is exactly what China cannot offer. Chinese proto-nationalism was developed based on the Confucianist worldview that China takes the absolutely dominant position. At the end of the 20th century, the impact of the Century of Humiliation had not scattered, and after the Chinese people’s massive contact with the developed world, they found that there was still a huge gap in almost every aspect. Considering that there have been phenomena such as the Heshang faction and spiritual foreigners among the Han people, the attraction of civic nationalism among those minorities who had a relatively long distance from China Nation core – both geographically and psychologically – is even more questionable. The Chinese government’s countermeasure is to use policy inclination to ensure that minorities gain greater benefits within the China Nation than independence to alleviate doubts about civic nationalism. This move can naturally stabilize ethnic minorities for a certain period of time, but it inevitably goes against the original intention of civic nationalism. As Wang Huning, an important political figure in current China, wrote in the book “The Logic of Politics”: to insist on ethnic equality, we must oppose any ethnic privilege. In particular, it is necessary to protect the rights of small minorities unconditionally. Big nations should compensate for the inequalities that have formed during history by treating themselves unequally (Wang Huning, 2004, p. 339). Wang’s idea can be traced back to Zhou Enlai’s Ethnic Debt theory. Obviously, in the view of top CPC leadership since its foundation, the equality of all ethnic groups can only be achieved through implementing inequality on the main ethnic group. However, the consequence of doing so is that the main ethnic group is increasingly suspicious and resistant to civic nationalism and subsequently stimulates the greater Han nationalism that CPC has always worried about. Because of this, after 30 years since Reform and Opening-up began, the

Chinese government, on the one hand, must continue to appease the minorities who are no longer satisfied with the existing preferential policies; on the other hand, it must face the increasingly loud doubts from Chinese nationalists.

The last thread is that Chinese nationalism is and will continue to rise for a long time. Yes, because of the congenital defects of proto-nationalism, government policies, and geopolitics, Chinese nationalism is facing enormous challenges. However, Chinese nationalism will only become stronger and more appealing in the foreseeable future, with two factors determining this. First, the continued economic progress and social development will further shape and consolidate a unified Chinese domestic market and economic community, and thus the high culture of Chinese nationalism will enjoy more expansion. Second, from a historical perspective, the large-scale ebb of nationalism – in Europe, the United States, and Japan – stems from the dysfunction of nationalism. That nationalism will be shelved once it cannot solve domestic and international problems – concentratedly reflected in military defeats or pyrrhic victories. China has significantly benefited from nationalism in recent centuries as a political entity. Inspired by nationalism, a Chinese aristocrat in the 1900s vowed to Sir Robert Hart to make China the most competitive exporter (Hart, 1903, p. 263); the communists would persuade poor peasants to accept land rent so to form the National United Front against Japan; abroad students who familiar with the West would also be willing to endure the shortcomings of China's system.

Another seemingly counter-intuitive example is in both the Heshang faction and the spiritual foreigners. Indeed they oppose Chinese nationalism, but their behavioral logic itself is rooted in principles set by proto-nationalism, that a mediocre China is unacceptable. For the Heshang faction, what they are pursuing is the complete westernization of China, and the final objective of westernization is to make China return to the sequence of “civilized states” and to keep up with and even lead the trend of the world. On the other hand, spiritual foreigners can be seen as the Heshang faction who have given up any efforts in improving China and are only (mentally) willing to enjoy the fruit, to get out of the reality of mediocre China by fantasizing themselves as members of “civilized state.” The inner logic of both can be summarized as how to make the collective/individual Chinese become part of the superiority. Therefore, no matter how the Heshang faction and spiritual foreigners reject and despise Chinese nationalism, the rising of Chinese nationalism still forces them to follow the nationalistic way of viewing the world.

As mentioned multiple times in the previous chapters, the Chinese government still adheres to the Soviet-style nationalist theory, making it difficult for Chinese nationalists to obtain useful theoretical guidance from the government's narrative. In most cases, their actions are usually based on temporary emotions and personal experiences. But this does not mean that the actions of nationalists are out of sense or without internal logic. As professor Sonia Valle de Frutos finds: “experience is a great source of identity and self-awareness. To the extent that individuals acquire meaning through experience, they attempt to group with those who have a common experience to find common meanings” (2008, p. 155). By sorting out the three major threads of ideas, we can clearly understand the consensus and red line of Chinese nationalism

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and then deduce its political implications – both explicit and implicit ones. Only based on this result, supplemented by the cognition of the Internet as a public sphere, can we advance our research to the next part – the Cyberactivism of Chinese Cybernationalism.

5. CHAPTER FIVE: CYBERACTIVISM FOR NATIONALISM IN CHINA

Regardless of whether the theory is flawed and the political environment is limited, nationalism as a political movement and political appeal will inevitably endow its members with a sense of action. Although China has always lacked the theoretical construction of modern nationalism, we can still explore the level of consistency with nationalism theory by investigating Chinese nationalists' behavioral paradigm. The essence of this behavioral paradigm investigation is to explore the practice of activism, especially cyberactivism, among Chinese nationalists.

In the first step of the exploration, we must achieve a robust understanding of the relevant theoretical constructions of cyberactivism. In particular, distinguish between cyberactivism and traditional activism, and also between the 1.0 version and 2.0 version of cyberactivism.

Next, given that the government strictly controls the Internet, the direct compatibility between the Internet and cyberactivism must also be taken into account. In chapter 3, we not only analyze the current situation of the Internet in China as a whole but also study the possibilities, advantages, and disadvantages of the three major networks as public spaces in detail. While Chinese social networks still have many flaws – including the universal ones and China-specific ones, for Chinese nationalists who are both cooperating with the official narrative and at the same time against some part of it, social networks can theoretically provide enough space for relevant discussions and actions. The actual feasibility of the Internet as a public sphere will be examined through the specific case studies in this chapter.

Additionally, in the previous chapter, we found that the decentralization of communication power does not mean the complete demise of pyramid-style information nodes but is a challenge to traditional news media's monopoly launched by grassroots informative nodes. This new “flashlight-mirror” model implies a strong interaction between opinion leaders and popular opinion, which also means that through the analysis of key opinion leaders and key events, we can infer the tendency of public opinion. In terms of nationalistic issues, this also could be a further demonstration and practical test of the ideas threads combed in Chapter 4.

5.1 Chinese activism in the Internet era

The term activism usually refers to “practices of individuals challenging the status quo in order to bring about social, political or economic change” (Harlow & Guo, 2014, p. 465). It contains various forms such as petitions, letters to newspapers and politicians, political campaigns, boycotts or commercial protections, demonstrations, strikes, sit-ins, hunger strikes, etc. (Obar, Zube & Lampe, 2012). Activism is not a moderate and neutral ordinary action, and its concept has been political and intense since the day it was invented. Chinese scholars directly define it as “generally referring to people's violent attitude towards

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political events or issues” (Lin Chaochao, 2012, p. 198). Given that the essence of activism is that groups act together to achieve a specific purpose, collective action is also a feasible research angle. Mancur Olson believes that collective action must be based on a certain consensus or collective interest (2009), while Sidney Tarrow classifies the properties of collective action into four categories: collective challenge, common purpose, social solidarity, and sustained interaction (2011, p. 9). As a result, since the mid-1990s, some grassroots activist groups have mobilized citizens to cooperate online and offline, “and ultimately, while realizing their related interests, has increased the ordinary citizens’ political influence to public power institutions and even their direct participation in the revision or formulation of relevant public policies” (Zhong & Xu, 2016, p. 56).

With the rise of mass media, collective action has new organizational channels and information transmission platforms, and a new term, media activism, has also been created. It is not difficult to see that the creation process is to add a limited scope in front of the term activism. It is still a crucial academic concept, but the research object has completed its media platform evolution from newspapers, radio, television to the Internet. According to Alice Mattoni, media activism can be understood in three ways: activism through the media, activism in the media, and activism about the media. The first definition refers to the use of media technology to organize, promote and interpret social movements. The second definition refers to meme recreation of mainstream media or commercial culture symbols, and subversive actions on symbols or images of certain controversial topics, which collectively referred to as “cultural jamming”; A third definition refers to actions that attempt to reform media policy or media operations at both domestic and transnational levels (2013). Some pioneers of media activism, such as Kim Deterline and Ellen Andors, define media activism as activism that uses media and communication technologies to promote social and political behavior. Its Methods include publishing news, producing video and audio, disseminating information about protests, and organizing highly media-relevant events (Zhong & Xu, 2016, p. 56). Chinese scholar Han Hong believes that media activism is a breakthrough in traditional public space. Promote civic action to solve social problems by providing citizens with more open forums to discuss topics of common interest (Han Hong, 2016, p. 71).

However, the “refeudalization” phenomenon of social institutions and mass media to which Habermas refers, has limited the potential of media activism initiated by traditional news media, that the “neomercantilism” forces actors in the public sphere to compete for publicity (Habermas, 1991, p. 195). Hence the mainstream media tends to use a “protest paradigm” to report on activist behavior, of which journalists usually focus on the superficial appearance of the action – such as the number of people involved, the dramatic scene – rather than the profound message that activists try to deliver (McLeod & Hertog, 1999; Watkins, 2001). Under such circumstances, “the public sphere becomes the court before whose public prestige can be displayed – rather than in which public critical debate is carried on” (Habermas, 1991, p. 201). To bypass traditional media gatekeepers, activists have to find alternative media channels. Due to its accessibility and autonomy, the Internet makes it the best platform solution against media filtering and censorship. Since then, cyberactivism has come to the stage.

Just as media activism is a further development of activism, so cyberactivism is a further development of media activism. In the new media environment, media activism is mainly manifested as online activism with the network as the medium of action, and it has two basic forms: cyberactivism and hacktivism.

Cyberactivists use creating websites, organizing online actions, and improving public media literacy as measures for social advocacy, media supervision, civic empowerment, and fundraising. They mainly address social issues through online civic action within the framework of the law, so to expand the support base and catalyze positive social change. As stated by Lorenzo Mosca, cyberactivism is about using the internet to gather political information, discuss political issues, and perform acts of dissent online (2010, p. 4). The first appearance of cyberactivism was in 1990 at the protest against MarketPlace software of the Lotus company, and the anti-WTO movement in 1999 was a full-fledged demonstration of cyberactivists' potential and effectiveness.

On the other hand, hacktivism is mainly about attacking the other party's websites or changing the URL for socio-political reasons. Some activists, who are more radical with less trust in social institutions or believe that they cannot change social institutions, will use hacker methods to achieve "electronic civil disobedience" (Vegh, 2003, p. 76). Furthermore, when this hacker behavior crosses political boundaries and involves other political entities, it may evolve into a cyberwar.



Figure 27. Left: MACPA website; right: ATAV website.

Source: Redhacker.org.

In China, both cyberactivism and hacktivism have emerged and been taken seriously. In 2003, the Chinese non-governmental organization 爱国者联盟 – literally “Patriot League” (1931-9-18.org¹¹²) – called for an online petition against the adoption of Japanese technologies in the Beijing-Shanghai railway project. A total of 82,752 signatures were submitted to the Ministry of Railways and had a certain impact on the

¹¹² The begin date of 2nd Sino-Japanese War. The domain name was sold but its previous content is available through Web Archive (eg. <https://web.archive.org/web/20070321101841/http://x.1931-9-18.org/>).

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policymaking. Two years later, the same organization once again participated in a global online petition against Japan's attempt to be a permanent member of the UN security council. Finally, 22 million signatures were collected and officially submitted to the UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan (Han Hong, 2009, p. 173). After the Tiananmen Square incident in 1989, hackers from HKT intensified their attacks on mainland computer systems, including dropping a virus called "Bloody" (or 6/4) and redirecting Chinese websites to Amnesty International; mainland hackers chose to attack Taiwan regional government's websites and promote the "One China" policy (Vegh, 2003, p. 79). After the U.S. bombed the Chinese embassy in Belgrade, Chinese hackers formed the Honker Union of China¹¹³ (HUC) and attacked the U.S. websites, including those of the Maryland Association of Certified Public Accountants and Navy Afloat Total Asset Visibility. As shown in Figure 27, date 5.8 can be recognized on both pages, which represents the time when the Chinese people learned about the U.S. assault.

As activism empowered by the Internet, cyberactivism's form is bound to be constrained by the progress of the Internet. Hence cyberactivism will evolve accordingly when the Internet evolves from web 1.0 to web 2.0, which, according to some scholars, can be classified as cyberactivism 1.0 and 2.0 (Sandoval-Almazan & Gil-Garcia, 2014). In the era of cyberactivism 1.0, web 1.0 products including websites, emails, and independent media have become favorites for activists. These tools allow activists to organize regional and even transnational campaigns while ensuring that content update speed within the action reaches the level of traditional media; however, information nodes, or action leaders, are still largely rooted in the traditional pyramid model of communication. The action is still difficult to cross the language barrier, and the substantive activities of the action still depend on the offline organization. Compared to the 1.0 version, the cyberactivism 2.0 overcomes the former's shortcomings in many ways: information is updated at an instant rate, participants are more independent than before, machine translation maximizes cross-cultural collaboration, and actions can take place entirely online, which completely freeing participants from the restrictions of time and place.

Nevertheless, academia has not only praised but without question for cyberactivism. Gurak and Logie argue that cyberactivists are too focused on information update speed while ignoring information verification and in-depth analysis (2013, p. 45). Harlow and Guo found that participants who engage with a cause online will usually not go to the offline march (2014, p. 470). More severe allegation defines cyberactivism as essential slacktivism (Lee & Hsieh, 2013; Zhong & Xu, 2016; Dookhoo & Dodd, 2019).

Malcolm Gladwell questioned that "Facebook activism succeeds not by motivating people to make a real sacrifice but by motivating them to do the things that people do when they are not motivated enough to make a real sacrifice" (2010, p. 46), i.e., slacktivism simply makes a person feel good or as if they have accomplished something, while in fact there is no real personal effort to bring about effective changes. MoveOn is an influential organization that has been in existence for more than 20 years and has mobilized 8 million Americans with the goal of progressive social change through adopting electronic technology to

¹¹³ Honker, or 红客 (literally: Red Hacker).

organize, lead, participate, and finally win the fight. Sarah Shulman has made an empirical investigation on its mass Emailing cyberactivism practice against the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). As only a tiny portion of the emails contained innovative content, the EPA had no ethical and technical scruples to delete these emails without reading most of them (Shulman, 2009). This also confirms one of the three main weaknesses faced by cyberactivism as proposed by Coleman and Blumler: the inability to reach the core of agenda-setting and influence government decision-making (2009, pp. 135-136).

In addition, many scholars believe that this new form of activism is at best the concentrated expression of a grand personal show of internauts who are often immersed in this helpless illusionary form of activism without knowing it. Slacktivism makes the active individual feel good (Chrisensen, 2011). Copying and sharing information gives some internauts a false sense of accomplishment. In this case, delivering a political message is an end in itself. Harlow and Guo directly equate slacktivism with “clicktivism,” arguing that this form has distorted activism to the level that a click of the mouse can be considered as “real” participation (2014, p. 463), while genuine participation and dedication to the movement are excluded. Others argue that clicktivism, which started out as a moral imperative, can easily turn into downright slacktivism (Cornelissen, Karelaia, & Soyer, 2013, p. 244). In the Chinese context, there are similar concepts, namely keyboard man (键盘侠), keyboard politician (键政人), and Air-conditioned adviser (冷气军师). The above criticisms are all expressing one concern: cyberactivism is in pursuit of a selfish interest – whether a conscious self-image construction or an unconscious sense of activism illusion, more of grabbing social privilege than effectively contributing to the public good.

After a comprehensive review, we found that for Chinese nationalists, the advantages that cyberactivism can offer are very much in line with their actual needs, while the disadvantages are not insurmountable. First, though as in street protests, cyberprotests directly challenging the state are much more constrained than those based either on existing laws or on claims about justice and morality that do not touch directly on questions of state authority (Yang Guobin, 2009, p. 35), the Chinese nationalists just right lack the will to challenge the government directly. For the Chinese government, as mentioned before, on the one hand, it is very wary of offline collective actions, and on the other hand, it regards online speech as one decisive measure in understanding the people’s demand and maintaining its power. Therefore, the Chinese government is more open to cyberactivism.

Second, for the ordinary, non-opinion leader nationalist, cyberactivism is not a fast-track to social privilege. Compared with other activists, the rival of Chinese nationalists is not the unconscious inaction of a particular institution or society. In many cases, nationalistic cyberactivism involves specific social groups or individuals, such as Heshang faction professors or members of a Spiritual Japanese GIM group. Because the conflict between the two sides is based solely on ideological differences, nationalism and reverse nationalism cyberactivism are often fierce and without a bottom line, of which the details will be discussed later in this chapter.

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Finally, due to the constant pressure from foreign powers, nationalists' cyberactivism has a very intuitive perception of the public good's core part. This consensus ensures the voluntariness and mobilization basis of the nationalists, and at the same time determines that the first motivation of their cyberactivism is not based on morality but on the interests of China Nation – at least the nationalists believe so. This prevents cybernationalism's cyberactivism from degenerating completely into clicktivism.

To better guide the case studies of cyberactivism, it is necessary to set a specific research path based on its basic action paradigm. Sandor Vegh places the cyberactivists' tactics into three categories: awareness/advocacy; organization/mobilization; and action/reaction (2003, pp. 72-84). In Vegh's view, activists should proactively engage in advocacy to raise people's awareness, and one typical example is that activists achieve information distribution through sending emails widely; In addition, information nodes on the Internet, including websites or blogs, should provide other participants with feasible communication space and action methods, and timely update the information needed for action; finally, in the most extreme cases, cyberactivists can turn to hacktivism to achieve their goals. Sandoval-Almazan and Gil-Garcia have developed a four-stage conceptual model to explain political movements using social media, which is sequentially formed by Triggering Event-Media Response-Viral Organization-Physical Response (2014, p. 369). The triggering event refers to one dramatic scenario that would catch the public's attention, such as the case of a 28-year-old peddler in Tunisia being violently treated by the police; then, whether positive, negative, or ignored, traditional media should respond to the triggering event, and this response will "foster information aggregation for the activists;" then, activists will create an online community to develop a collective identity among the public; and finally, on the basis of virtual community and collective identity, cyberactivism will begin to expand to reality, activists will organize physical responses such as marches, protests, petitions, and even riots. Moreover, these physical responses will often become new triggering events, and thus a loop is established for the activism development.

Due to its nature as a social movement and collective action, cyberactivism's action paradigm can also be analyzed from the social movement's perspective. As professor Manuel Castells states, the social movement is collective action conscious about its impact, both in the case of victory and defeat, and transforms the values and institutions of society. Like other types of movement, cyberactivism is also structured according to three principles: "identity, adversary and social objective" (Lazo López, 2016, p. 34). In Castells's opinion:

the Identity refers to the self-definition of the movement of what it is, on behalf of whom it speaks; the Adversary refers to the movement's principal enemy, as explicitly identified by the movement; and the Societal goal refers to the movement's vision of the kind of social order, or social organization, it would wish to attain in the historical horizon of its collective action. (Castells, 2010, p. 74)

While the fundamental purpose of cyberactivism is to influence political decision-making and advance social development, we must also think about how to judge its direct effects, as this determines the cycle speed of the four-stage model. According to Zeynep Tufekci, four core values determine the success

of a social movement: **Worthiness** is about convincing people of the rightness of a cause; **Unity** is a signal of determination; **Numbers** illustrate public support; **Commitment** is indicative of the ability to persist and potentially disrupt (2014, pp. 8-9). As all these four values can be excavated from cyberactivism, “the widespread notion that protests and actions in the streets work better than online social media movements does not necessarily hold” (p. 9).

Based on the above literature review and combined with our knowledge of Chinese nationalism, we have prepared four cases to analyze nationalist cyberactivism: the “Year Hare Affairs” case, which represents the Self-identification construction by Chinese nationalists; the “God’s Eagle” example that shows the formation of a nationalistic information node; the “Counterstrike against Halal food” that involves how the cybernationalists action inside China, and “BBC Reeducation Camp Video Report” that of cybernationalists’ reaction to foreign culture elites’ assertion.

5.2 Year Hare Affairs: from UGC to national cultural product

The original Chinese name of Year Hare Affairs (YHA) is 那年那兔那些事, literally “the story of that hare happened in those years.” The YHA is among several successful patriotic cultural products in China, even the best. Its main body is a series of comics/animation that uses animals as an allegory for nations and sovereign states to narrate political and military events. The main characters of YHA, as figure 28 illustrates, include the hare as the People’s Republic of China, the baldhead as the Republic Of China, the communist bear as the Soviet Union (the same bear without the communist symbol as Russia), the eagle as the United States, the crane-like chicken as Japan, the bull as the United Kingdom, the Gallic rooster as France, and the cat as German.



Figure 28. Main Characters of YHA.

Source: Internet with Public Dominion

The beginning of YHA can be traced back to a UGC on the Internet forum Super Basecamp (超级大本营, <https://lt.cjdbby.net/>), a bbs dedicated to military affairs. Although neither the original thread (<https://lt.cjdbby.net/thread-1066806-10-1.html>) nor the refined version on the other military forum offered by the author (<https://bbs.meyet.net/thread-418966-1-1.html>) is available now, the UGC has spread so widely that many other Chinese forums have backups, such as the influential Tianya forum (<https://tuoshuidu.com/article/130132/1.html>).

On 5 February 2011, the user Yefengzhilang(野风之狼, literally: Wolf of the Wild Wind) started a thread with the title “Glorious Past of the Little White Rabbit” (小白兔的光荣往事). According to the author’s post, his original intention was to “summarize little white rabbit’s arms export using publicly released materials.” With a crazy usage of argots, the author finally has narrated CPC and PRC history in an entertaining but also proud tone. Under his metaphorical description, China is a white rabbit that seems pure and harmless in appearance but ambitious and scheming inside, trying to restore its ancestors’ glory while also surviving in a world led by the eagle (U.S) and the bear (the Soviet Union/Russia). The little rabbit has encountered many challenges in the story, just like China in history. However, the rabbit always finds a way out using its wisdom and valor.

The little white rabbit’s story quickly gained popularity among military forums, especially for the new generation of internauts who were tired of the official dreary tone. The usage of argot contributes to the correction and perfection of historical facts involved, as only severe history enthusiasts can understand the argot and participate in its discussion; however, the argot also stops the further expansion of this cultural product because severe history enthusiasts are a minority of internauts while the common internauts have no idea about it.

Then comes the cartoonist Niguangfeixing (逆光飞行, literally: Backlight Flight). His real name is Lin Chao, but he usually uses the nickname Mashe (麻蛇, literally: Patterned Snake). Lin Chao is also a history-military enthusiast. After reading the little white rabbit’s story, he tried to evolve the monotonous text into a more attractive form. In May 2011, Lin Chao started to release a comics version of the little white rabbit story on Super Basecamp and changed the name to Year Hare Affairs. Until 2019, the cartoonist has drawn 69 chapters in total.

As we can see in figure 29, compared with other comics from China or Japan, the style and quality of the YHA comics are only better than the most simplified drawing. However, the theory that “visual images retain more impact and are far more engaging than text alone” is proved here (Abbot, Donaghey, Hare, & Hopkins, 2013, p. 3). Even these low-quality comics are much more attractive than the text. As a result, the popularity of YHA grew fast, and soon Lin Chao was contracted by a commercial comic platform – Tencent

Comics. According to the official data, until 2019, the YHA had been viewed more than 20 million times on the Tencent Comics alone¹¹⁴, not to mention other channels.



Figure 29. Left: One early creation of YHA comics; Right: YHA animation

Source: Tencent Comics & Tencent Video

The initial success brought the cartoonist's career to a new level. In 2014, he established his own company, formed a professional team, and received more than 20 million Yuan (3 million US dollars) investment in the next two years.¹¹⁵ With such adequate funds, Lin Chao furtherly upgraded the YHA to make it animated. On March 5, 2015, the first season of YHA animation was broadcasted on those major video-sharing websites, especially teenage-oriented websites like Acfun and Bilibili.

The YHA animation is fully colored and has significantly improved its quality, as shown in figure 29, but the quantity is still not too much. The first season of YHA has only 12 episodes and 96 minutes in total. The themes of each episode are: The foundation of the PRC; the Korean War and its aftermath (2 episodes); The return of Chinese aboard scientists and the successful nuclear test (7 episodes); The 1962 Sino-India military clash; and the shot down of US-backed Taiwanese spy plane.

These themes are obviously about China's victory over the foreign (-backed) forces, which are classic nationalist expressions. In terms of the narrative style, while keeping the entertaining style, YHA

¹¹⁴ <https://web.archive.org/web/20201017221934/https://ac.qq.com/Comic/comicInfo/id/545088>

¹¹⁵ <https://www.tianyancha.com/brand/b661a134478>, accessed July 27, 2019.

emphasizes the efforts and sacrifices Chinese people had devoted to achieving the victory, and at the end of each episode, some documental photos and videos are inserted as history proofs.

The animation of YHA turns out to be another enormous success. Until 2019, the first YHA season was still the 14th most popular Chinese animation on the platform Bilibili, with 57.42 million views for the 12 episodes. By the end of 2021, five original seasons and one spin-off season have been created and broadcasted¹¹⁶. Many internauts, especially the young generation, start to refer to China and themselves as a hare, for instance, 我兔威武 (Bravo my hare), 兔党 (Hare party – the CPC), 兔军 (Hare army – the Chinese army), 种花家的小兔子 (Little hare from China). The YHA internet forum supported by Baidu Company also is built up. Until 2019, one million internauts are following it, with 24 million threads have been posted.¹¹⁷ Besides, on the Weibo platform, 300 thousand blogs have been posted with the tag #Year Hare Affair (#那年那兔那些事儿#).

Starting from one internaut's inspiration, the YHA is now already an iconic symbol for cybernationalists, and the success only takes less than five years. Its impact is so significant that even the official departments have to approbate it and try to absorb its influence, especially the Communist Youth League of China (CYL). For example, in 2016, Lin Chao was contracted by the CYL as a tutor for its vlog platform, and CYL's official account began to use "little hare" to refer to its followers on the Weibo platform (Ma Huijuan, 2016).

5.2.1 YHA's Bilibili comments analysis

The comments on Bilibili are sorted by "hot level." Although the platform does not offer any information about the algorithm applied, reliable speculation is that the hot level is jointly determined by the number of upvotes and the number of sub comments on the original comment.

Until July 31, 2019, YHA's 12 episodes of the first season have received 110995 comments on Bilibili. For each episode, the top 80 hottest comments are planned to be captured as samples, so there should be 960 effective samples for the investigation in an ideal situation. In the capture process, with the help of Octoparse, we have detected and collected various types of information, including the commenter's account, the body of the comment, and the number of upvotes. However, due to the compatibility issue, only 851 effective samples with complete information were available in the end.

One basic data analysis was conducted at first. The 851 comments were made by 693 internauts, of which 74 internauts have commented at least twice. This result reveals a high passion for participation from YHA's audience. On the other hand, these 693 users have received 298303 upvotes. The highest data comes from the account Xingkongdeshouwang (星空的守望), with 17719 upvotes. However, as the average upvote

¹¹⁶ <https://www.bilibili.com/bangumi/media/md1689>

¹¹⁷ <https://tieba.baidu.com/f?kw=%E9%82%A3%E5%B9%B4%E9%82%A3%E5%85%94%E9%82%A3%E4%BA%9B%E4%BA%8B%E5%84%BF>

per user is 430 while the median is only 64, the sample standard deviation of upvote is unbelievably significant, reaching 1830985, which shows a highly concentrated internauts' attention.

The next process is sentiment analysis. Through the usage of the SnowNLP tool, researchers can verify the sentiment expressed by text, and the analysis result of a sentence should fluctuate between 0 and 1, while 0 shows a most negative sentiment and 1 means a most positive sentiment.

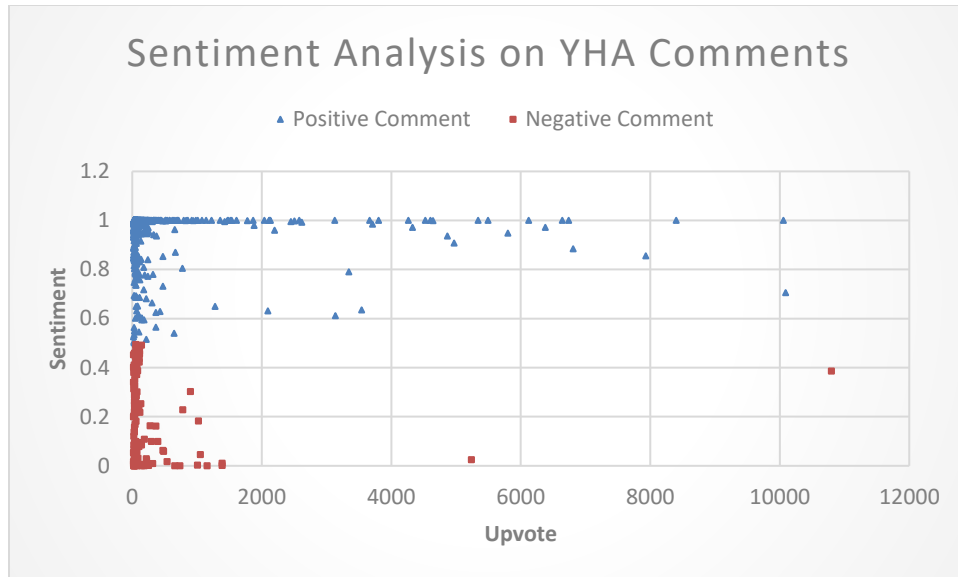


Figure 30. Result of Sentiment Analysis on YHA Comments

Source: Own Elaboration

Of the total 851 examples, their average sentiment factor is 0.8348, and the median is 0.9997. These two numbers show an extremely positive attitude from audiences towards the YHA in general. Then, a coordinate with the upvote number as the X-axis and the sentiment factor as the Y-axis is established as figure 30 presents, and the results are classified into two groups: the positive comments (≥ 0.5 , 717 results) and the negative ones (< 0.5 , 134 results).

As we can see, large amounts of data were gathered around the range from (0, 0.8) to (0, 1.0). This means many comments without massive upvotes – lower hot level and less visibility – appreciate the YHA, so the positive attitude towards YHA is not a result of the Bandwagon effect – in which the probability of individual adoption increases with respect to the proportion who have already done so (Coleman, 2015, p. 77) – but a genuine voluntary opinion among the audiences.

Although the majority of comments with more than 2000 upvotes have shown a positive attitude, there are two outstanding negative comments:

“我认识麻蛇是两年前，他非常惧内，两年后的今天，他仍然惧内，然后还催我西木头 (/TDT)/。” (“I met Mashe two years ago, he was very henpecked, two years later, he is still henpecked, and hasten me the Westwood Studios.”). 神奇陆夫人 (Shenqilufuren), (10796, 0.3855).

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“中印建交是4月1日，中巴建交5月21日，我好想明白了些什么。” (“*The establishment of the diplomatic relationship between China-India was on April 1. China-Pakistan was on May 21. I might understand something here.*”). 查理·兔(Chali·Tu), (5240, 0.0243).

The first negative comment is about the YHA author, and it is more like a friendly joke than criticism. Also, the second comment mocked India as April 1 is the Fools’ Day while praising Pakistan as 521 is the homonym of “I love you” in Chinese. After a thorough review, we found that none of the “negative comments” with more than 1000 upvotes is a negative reaction towards the YHA and its worthiness. For instance, the most negative comment (coordinate: 1155, 0) is a list of Indian casualties during the 1962 military clash. On the other hand, all “positive comments” with more than 5000 upvotes are positive reactions directly linked with the YHA and its worthiness. Therefore, even though the number 0.9997 is already an impressive result, the accurate response of the audience should be more favorable than the data shows.

The second analysis of YHA comments is keyword extraction. A Chinese stop words list developed by Harbin Institute of Technology on the Github platform is specially modified and applied on these 851 examples, which results in a text file of comments excluding the noise words. However, due to the language difference, a text in Chinese cannot be further analyzed without a proper segmentation, so the Text Segmentation Tool Jieba based on the Python platform is adopted. As the text file is thoroughly prepared, the methodologies TF-id and TextRank can be used, and here is the result:

TF-id Key Words and Weighting Factor	TextRank Key Words and Weighting Factor
We (我们) 0.0739399788575	China (中国) 1.0
China (中国) 0.0664215914858	Country (国家) 0.484395947867
Country (国家) 0.0437207146684	The U.S. (美国) 0.30773159566
Hare (兔子) 0.041548745581	Hare (兔子) 0.209249943014
Animation (动画) 0.0353024398203	Homeland (祖国) 0.156513967988
They (他们) 0.0322605685944	History (历史) 0.156342503824
You (plural) (你们) 0.0301602256497	Animation (动画) 0.137271495356
Self (自己) 0.0271272240039	Patriotic (爱国) 0.13021479599
The U.S. (美国) 0.0259256705954	World (世界) 0.119036662843
Homeland (祖国) 0.0259073276745	Grandpa (爷爷/外公) 0.116794385107
Zhònghuā (an affectionate and homophonic transformation of Zhōnghuá-China from YHA) (种花-中华) 0.0242593797861	Like (喜欢) 0.114246255777
Patriotic (爱国) 0.0225441535478	Japan (日本) 0.109577135616

Grandpa (爷爷/外公) 0.0192175993684	War (战争) 0.0948321740318
---------------------------------	--------------------------

Table 5. First 13 Key Words and Weighting Factor of YHA comments

Although these methodologies have two different algorithms for keyword extraction, still many similarities can be found in both results — for example, China, Country, Hare, Homeland, the U.S., Patriotic, and Grandpa. As hare is the representative of China in YHA, Zhōnghuá (中华) refers to the China Nation and mainly concerns the culture (Chang & Holt, 2014, pp. 162-164), Country and Homeland also refer to China. Obviously, the most salient keyword is China.

Another interesting keyword is Grandpa, and an example of its usage is:

“我的外公当年是参与“两弹一星”当中导弹的研究人员，老人家一辈子都为此而骄傲。”
 (“My grandpa was one of those researchers who participated in the missile test, and the old man is proud of it for the rest of his life.”). 素陌_红 A 真美味 (Sumo_hongAzhenmeiwei), (1515, 0.9998)

Here the concept “Grandpa” has the same hint as “history.” A national myth is built up by recalling the glorious memory, which contributes to waking up the self-awareness of national belonging.

The United States and Japan are two other common keywords of both algorithms. This shows a strong sense of confrontation towards these two countries, which is reasonable as Japan invaded China and left behind countless disasters, while the U.S. is the most powerful threat to China in reality.

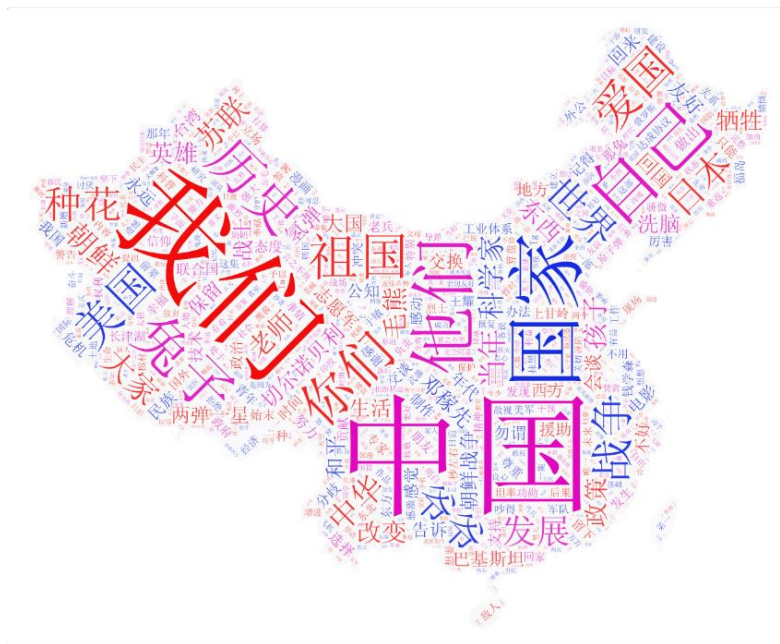


Figure 31. Word Cloud of YHA

Source: Own elaboration

Another interesting phenomenon we should notice is the massive usage of pronouns. The TextRank methodology ignores them but is crucial for this study, especially the words “We” and “They.” This

phenomenon means the audience of YHA is gradually understanding and using the concept of a national boundary, although without a clear academic cognition. Taking this phenomenon into consideration and reorganizing the keyword weighting factor, a WordCloud can be created, which allows a direct interpretation of worthiness shown by the YHA: 我们-中国-国家-自己-爱国-他们-美国 (**We-China-Country-Self-Patriotic-They-the U.S.**). As figure 31 shows, most of the YHA worthiness is about a national self-awareness based on the confrontation against the outside entity.

5.2.2 Cyberactivism toward a self-identification in YHA

The process of YHA's development is also a process of decoding. Its original manuscript is a thread full of argots that are only suitable for a small group of readers, but the Chinese cybernationalist successfully decoded it and simplified it for the common internaut. Maybe some information was lost during the decoding and simplification, but it is an affordable loss compared to the significant impact of YHA. Internauts show an overwhelmingly positive attitude towards YHA, and a consensus framework is widely accepted; the most important part is that all this happened under the anthropomorphic symbol of China – the hare. An internaut who accepts the hare as China or refers to himself/herself as a hare is also declaring himself/herself as a cybernationalist. This is a de facto political flag, and it is so influential that the government must accept its existence and try to ally with it. YHA is not just an Internet cultural product. In some contexts, it is already Chinese cybernationalism itself.

Castells states that “because contemporary nationalism is more reactive than proactive, it tends to be more cultural than political, and thus more oriented toward the defense of an already institutionalized culture than toward the construction or defense of a state. When new political institutions are created or recreated, they are defensive trenches of identity, rather than launching platforms of political sovereignty” (Castells, 2010, p. 33). In the case of China, the situation is somehow unique compared to Europe. China was a total agricultural country just decades ago but now promotes its industrialization/informationalization process at a crazy speed. Most Chinese internauts still have the agricultural era's mark but live in modern society, and thus cybernationalism in China is both classic and contemporary. As a result, identity and political sovereignty are bound tightly together here.

Generally speaking, the YHA is a typical case for Vegh's awareness/advocacy category. The authors Yefengzhilang and Lin Chao's first motivation is to tell a story that China takes the upper hand, or China has its superiority in other more familiar words. All the text, the comics, and the animation are about to advocate a sense of national identity by elevating audiences to the pattern of state-to-state competition. In contrast between reality and cultural works – constant external pressure, past sufferings, and today's achievements – the audience naturally recognizes and accepts the worthiness delivered, that although there were hard times and huge sacrifices, the China Nation is excellent and worth following, which precisely is what the Chinese nationalists need, the consolidation of national core's attraction.

Unlike the classic four-stage model, after YHA itself became a triggering event, the response of China's news media was actually slower than the establishment of a virtual organization. Whether it is a written story or a comic, the authors and fans of YHA took the initiative to establish a virtual organization with the support of social networks, completed Vegh's mobilization through this viral organization, and further expanded their influence to achieve upgrades of text to comic, comic to animation, which is authentic physics responses. Only when this physics response becomes sufficiently influential, that a large number of audiences have shown high recognition of the work, and both the unity and number values are fully demonstrated, then the traditional news media and other public institutions participate in the cycle of cyberactivism, and furtherly guarantee the commitment value.

After reviewing the YHA cyberactivism case, we can confirm that in the 2010s, cybernationalists desperately needed a symbolic flag that had better compatibility with their Internet era taste. The themes of each YHA episode and CPC's publicity materials have no essential difference. Whether it is the Korean War or the Sino-Indian conflict, YHA's value orientation and material selection align with the official narrative. The reason why YHA succeeds in gaining publicity is that its creation is entirely based on the Internet-style: a runtime that fits better the fast society rhythm, a more humorous and interesting text language in line with the fashion, and a more efficient and timely interactive environment. The success of YHA is a success of the viral organization over media response, a success of cyberactivism 2.0 over media activism, or even cyberactivism 1.0.

Besides, based on the first result, we can also confirm that the self-identification advocated by cybernationalism's cyberactivism is not to create a brand new identification but a reconfirmation of what already existed inside the traditional nationalism and proto-nationalism. The emotions and psychology that can be observed in the YHA audience are the same as those observed in other Chinese nationalists in recent centuries. Before the era of Confucius, Chinese politicians already had the concept of "Enrich the country and strengthen the soldiers" – "the rich country has strong soldiers, and those with strong soldiers are victorious"¹¹⁸," the Qing government also used the same concept as a guideline ideology in its self-rescue movement after encountering imperialist aggression; in the 21st century, economic development and military security are still the two pillars of the "Great rejuvenation of China Nation." This consistency, rather than reflecting the coherence of Chinese civilization, confirms that the cybernationalists' judgment of China's external environment is similar to that of their predecessors. Hence, under the premise that external pressure dominates the trend of Chinese nationalism, self-identification in the Internet age is bound to be full of historical elements, which, on the other way around, determines that the historical value judgment is an important factor in alleviating the pressure of nationalism, as we can observe in the issues of China's lost relics and Sino-Japanese relationship.

¹¹⁸ 《管子, 治国》 Guanzi, Govern, 3. <https://ctext.org/guanzi/zhi-guo/zhs>

5.3 Opinion leader career of God's Eagle

The protagonist of this case study is 上帝之鷹 (Shangdizhiying, literally: God's Eagle), a senior user of many military Internet forums who also own account on other types of social network with the same/similar ID. For example, his Weibo account is @上帝之鷹_5zn (Shangdizhiying_5zn). According to his self-description, he is a professional English – Chinese translator with some works about history. Before the turning point, God's Eagle is just an ordinary Chinese internaut like many others.

However, things changed after the Sihang Warehouse Japanese Military Cosplay Incident (四行仓库日军照事件). Sihang warehouse is located in the city of Shanghai. As the Chinese army successfully defended the warehouse against the Japanese during WWII, it provided a morale-lifting consolation to the Chinese army and people in the demoralizing aftermath of the Japanese invasion of Shanghai, and today it is one of the iconic symbols of Chinese national spirit construction.

On the night of August 3, 2017, 10 days before August 13 – the date when Japan started the invasion of Shanghai in 1937, four Chinese youths wearing the Imperial Japanese Military's uniform took some photos in front of the Sihang warehouse to commemorate the 80 anniversary of Japanese invasion. These four men shared their photos through GIM groups as proof of glory. They described their action as a “night assault to Sihang” and “Generals participated in the Shanghai Incident¹¹⁹ revisit the old spot,” which resulted in border dissemination among other internauts, especially the history-military enthusiast group. God's Eagle, due to his profession and habit, also encountered these photos four days later, and he was immediately irritated.



Figure 32. Left: Four Chinese wearing the Imperial Japanese uniform in front of the warehouse, 2017

Right: Chinese soldiers were defending the warehouse during World War II, 1937

Source: Internet with Own Elaboration

¹¹⁹ “Shanghai Incident” is the Japan Empire’s glorified name for the invasion of Shanghai.

According to God's Eagle's Internet activity record, on the morning of August 7, after he saw these photos, he continuously posted two threads with the titles "Fuck these bloody traitors!" (草拟吗的王八蛋狗汉奸!), and "Call for Repost" (发金币, 求扩散) on the Northdy Forum. He left a Weibo Url in the second thread and stated that "Northdy is too small to cause public awareness... require help to expose this evil act."¹²⁰ During the interview with our researchers on 22 August 2017, which is available as the dissertation's attachment, God's Eagle furtherly confirmed that he and some Northdy members had formed a small "workgroup" to counterattack this provocation but he refused to offer more detail for privacy concerns. At the end of that day, God's Eagle did receive help from some influential Weibo accounts, including the founder of Northdy and the Cartoonist Lin Chao.

At first, God's Eagle's efforts seemed to work. With more than 5,000 reposts, 3,000 comments, and 3,000 upvotes on this microblog, he successfully drew attention from some internauts and even Shanghai's official newspaper Xinmin Evening News. Nevertheless, his microblog was censored and removed from the Weibo platform within 24 hours, and the news report's digital version was censored, too. God's Eagle expressed his anger towards the Weibo's owner Sina Company and claimed that he had received personal threats from some internauts, and he fought back these threats with a long blog titled "The Vice and the Virtue in the Internet Age – A Review of the Military Uniform Gate" (网络时代的魔与道—军服门始末回顾), in this article, God's Eagle stated that:

"Also, because I want to show my own attitude, I will not stop fighting because one or two microblogs are censored. And I dare to guarantee that there are many people like me. We will use our own experience to tell everyone that in this busy, materialistic, and filled with shameless events age, there will still be many real patriots. The martyrs will not be forgotten, their spirit will not be forgotten, and they can't be insulted by those skunks! We don't want our descendants to worship the Japanese and Korean celebrities while they don't know anything about the martyrs who really need to be remembered! This is what we continue to fight for!"¹²¹

God's Eagle has expressed a powerful nationalistic emotion with the words he uses for the article, and he keeps his promise to continue to fight. Since then, God's Eagle has dedicated himself to the fight against the Spiritual Japanese and other adversaries of the cybernationalist, and those internauts who supported him during the Sihang uniform incident formed his first follower group. At first, it was a small group, but by August 2019, God's Eagle had posted more than 3,000 microblogs with 220 thousand followers on Weibo. One of his latest blogs about the Hong Kong Protest of 2019 receives 56,635 upvotes, 3,236 comments, and 5,656 reposts. After three years of persistence, he is already one opinion leader with a non-negligible influence.

¹²⁰ Retrieved from <https://bbs.northdy.com/forum.php?mod=viewthread&tid=713007>

¹²¹ Retrieved from <https://www.weibo.com/ttarticle/p/show?id=2309404138593290443025>. Translated by the author.

5.3.1 God's Eagle Weibo Data Analysis

Using the web-crawler project, Weibospider developed by the user dataabc on GitHub, we have collected all God's Eagle's microblogs posted from 10 July 2010 to 3 August 2019. The database includes the microblog body, the date of the post, the numbers of upvotes, comments, and reposts. After excluding some data without complete information, 2850 out of 3400 microblogs are finally available for the case study.

The first step of data analysis is a regular keyword extraction with the TextRank algorithm, 20 keywords and their weighting factor are summarized in Table 6:

China 中国, 1.00	Internaut 网友, 0.21	Child 孩子, 0.17	Hong Kong 香港, 0.16
Japan 日本, 0.43	Mobs 暴徒, 0.18	Woman 女人, 0.17	Country 国家, 0.16
Everyone 大家, 0.27	Police 警察, 0.18	Yellow Ribbon 黄尸, 0.16	Japanese Army 日军, 0.15
Female 女性, 0.22	Police Department 警方, 0.18	Student 学生, 0.16	Insult 侮辱, 0.15
Man 男人, 0.22	the U.S. 美国, 0.17	Spiritual Japanese 精日, 0.16	Video 视频, 0.15

Table 6. 20 Keywords of God's Eagle Microblogs

The majority of the 20 keywords can be categorized into three groups. The Japanese Group: Japan, Spiritual Japanese and Japanese Army, its total weighting factor is 0.74; the Gender-Family Relationship Group: Female, Man, Child and Woman, its total weighting factor is 0.78; the 2019 Hong Kong Protest Group: Rioters, Police, Police Department, Yellow Ribbon and Hong Kong, its total weighting factor is 0.86.

It looks like God's Eagle has equally mentioned all three themes during his Weibo career, but can the keywords extraction result indicates the cybernationalist's actual focus point? In order to verify it, a specific data analysis will be conducted.

Generally speaking, the three numbers of a microblog's repost, comment, and upvote represent its popularity or how much attraction it has drawn. However, even for slacktivism or clicktivism, the effort required for different interactions also varies. Compared with the action of reposting and commenting, clicking the "like" button is much easier. Therefore, to better measure the influence of a microblog, compared with the direct addition between three numbers, a more scientific and realistic formula should be: **Influence Factor = Upvote** \times **0.33+Comment+Repost**. Then we can calculate the influence factor of all 2850 examples. After microblogs with less than 500 influence factors are excluded, 868 microblogs with a significant influence are left for further investigation.

As figure 33 shows, we have built up a coordinate with the date as the X-axis and the influence factor as the Y-axis. Then we try to locate some special microblogs, in which the influence factor is more than any other microblogs of a certain previous period, while during a certain period after it, new microblogs'

influence factors are also significantly elevated. These special microblogs are classified as Burst Points, and in total, 16 burst points are verified.

The burst point stands for the moment when a blogger boosts his/her influence to a higher level, at least for a period. The burst point means an intensive mobilization among the existing followers and indicates a possible growth of the follower group, which would maximize the influence factor for future burst points. In the case of God’s Eagle, his burst points can be sorted into four periods:

Approximately 13 August of 2017: The Sihang Incident, the beginning of his career as an opinion leader, only four microblogs with more than 500 influence factor points were recorded in a brief period, while in the next half-year, there were no more influential microblogs.

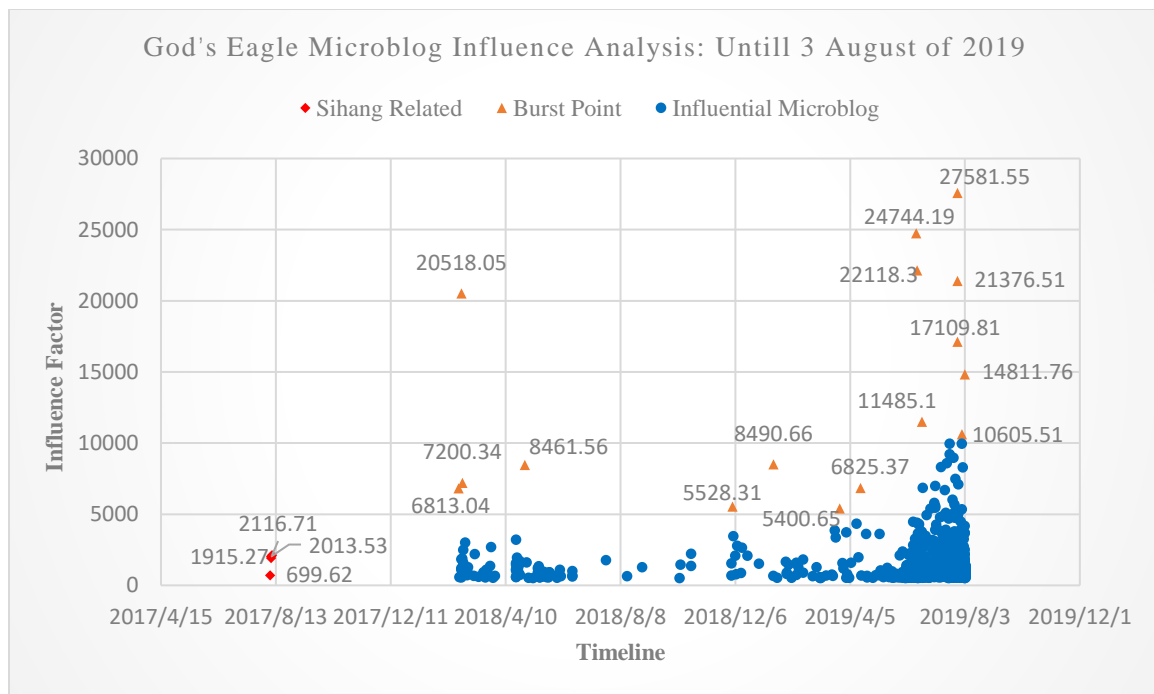


Figure 33. God’s Eagle Microblog Influence Factor Analysis

Source: Own Elaboration

Approximately March 2018: Four burst points and multiple influential microblogs are noted during this period. It started from the microblog of 20 February 2018 (6813.04), when God’s Eagle reported a new Spiritual Japanese military uniform cosplay action in Nanjing. As a city that suffered horrific atrocity, the Nanjing uniform incident has caused a much stronger reaction from the Chinese public, and the emotion reached the utmost three days later when God’s Eagle stated that he had received personal threats from the Spiritual Japanese. In this microblog (2018/02/23, 20518.05), God’s Eagle wrote: “Now try to dox me and made my personal information public...I was not born in that era and cannot fight Japanese with the heroes, but can’t I learn from their spirit?... (Spiritual Japanese) come to me if you dare and I’m here waiting.” (开始人肉我了，把我的资料给公开了... 没生在当年，没能和人家一起扛枪打鬼子，现在学点他们的

样儿都不会? ... 要来尽管来, 候着你们就是). The third burst point (2018/2/24, 7200) is an update about the personal threat, while the fourth burst point (2018/04/30, 8461) is a video in which a Chinese insulted the Nanjing victims and defended the Japanese army in front of the Memorial Hall of the Victims in Nanjing Massacre. Generally. After these four burst points, God's Eagle has proved his persistence in the anti-Spiritual Japanese fight and successfully won more public attention and followers.

Approximately from the end of 2018 till April 2019: four burst points and more influential microblogs are recorded. Three of the four burst points were about everyday social news and were relatively less attended. Only the microblog of (2019/01/15, 8490) was about nationalism that the ROC government tried to hand over some Chinese relics to Japan. We should notice two points: first, after two years of dedication, God's Eagle has successfully expanded his influence beyond the Japanese-related issue; second, the Japanese-related issue is still the most concerned topic for God's Eagle followers, and his influence would only maximize on this topic.

The 2019 Hong Kong Protest Period: Since the beginning of the Hong Kong protest (9 June 2019), eight burst points and numerous influential microblogs can be observed in figure 33. The first in time and the second most influential burst point is the microblog of 13 June 2019 with 24744 influence factor points, in which God's Eagle has mocked the protest "Unarmed?"(手无寸铁?) with nine photos of wounded Hong Kong police officers and weapons used by the protestors. The most influential burst point came on July 26 with 27581 influence factor points, of which God's Eagle has posted an image of a list of Hong Kong local artists and claimed that "Hong Kong independentism-scumbags have created a list of 'Inferior Artists'...Thanks, now we know who our friends are" (港毒制作了一份“劣质艺人”清单...多谢, 现在我们知道谁是我们的朋友了) All other six burst points are also about the Hong Kong protest/protestors and have strongly condemned it/them. The data shows that 655 out of 868 influential microblogs were posted during this period, while God's Eagle only has posted 863 microblogs from June 13 to August 3. Obviously, as the protest in Hong Kong intensified, God's Eagle won more influence over the Weibo platform due to his extreme anti-HongKong-Protest attitude.

There is a **Special Burst Point** not marked in figure 33 because its influence factor is too high to be shown. On 19 June 2019, God's Eagle blogged that "# Yibin Earthquake# ...Some Taiwanese (says): 'More please,' 'Why not bigger?', 'Only 11 less for 1.3 billion, no problem!'..." (#宜宾地震#... 某些台湾人: "多震几次"、"怎么不更大一点"、"不就13亿人口少11人, 没事没事!" ...) as he attached some screenshots from Facebook as proofs. The microblog influence factor has reached 79871, almost three times greater than the "Inferior Artists" microblog. God's Eagle also has exposed some hatred comments from Hong Kong internauts, which results in a burst point marked on the coordinate as (2019/06/19, 11485).

5.3.2 Cybernationalistic mobilization based on adversaries

From the climbing burst points' influence factor in figure 33, it can be seen that God's Eagle's opinion leader career is successful and on the rise. Apart from the close relationship with the nationalistic groups, the critical reason for his success is that he could update nationalism-related information instantly for internauts, an unwavering commitment to his nationalistic cause, which naturally fostered a huge number of followers with high unity. This enormous influence allows God's Eagle to trigger nationalistic events proactively and to start up the four-stage loop. Furthermore, the comment zone of his microblog has become a communication space for cybernationalists to conduct political declarations and political expressions, a (temporal) viral organization.

On the one hand, the follower group of high unity would express a similar opinion on the triggering events, which contribute to the construction of a collective identification; on the other hand, the influence of this collective identification of notable numbers would also force other public sphere participants to take physical response. For example, after the burst point of February 20, 2018, Wang Yi, the Chinese foreign minister, has responded to the question about the Spiritual Japanese during a top press conference and defined this group as "Scum inside the Chinese people" (中国人的败类) (Lu & An, 2018). Another physical response with a more profound impact is, since May 1, 2018, the Law of the People's Republic of China on the Protection of Heroes and Martyrs (中华人民共和国英雄烈士保护法) came into force. Although no spiritual foreigner issue is particularly named out during the law's drafting and voting process, its core principle is just in line with God's Eagle's commitment, that is to "respond to social concerns, and fight back against the vicious behavior of vilifying and slandering heroes and martyrs."¹²²

As Gellner said, if nationalism is regarded as a political principle, nationalist feelings are the anger aroused by the violation and the satisfaction aroused by its fulfillment of this principle (1983, p. 1). As part of the communication pyramid, the traditional information nodes naturally adopt this idea, but just like the case of YHA, the official narrative has been difficult to foster such anger or satisfaction. This is the fundamental reason why new opinion leaders like God's Eagle can compete with traditional news media for publicity in the Internet public sphere, which means God's Eagle has a better understanding of the satisfaction and anger sentiments that cybernationalists need.

In terms of the satisfaction of nationalistic principle fulfillment, due to the Century of Humiliation history and the foreign pressure, especially military pressure, what Chinese nationalists need most is to prove China's military superiority. Not a bloody armistice agreement but an irrefutable military victory over the foreign imperialists. Obviously, this satisfaction is not feasible under the current situation, but even concessional compensations such as the unconditional return of lost artifacts are still beyond the Chinese government's ability. Thus anger would be a more realistic solution.

¹²² http://www.npc.gov.cn/zgrdw/npc/xinwen/2018-04/27/content_2054047.htm, retrieved on January 7 of 2020.

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However, from the individual perspective of cybernationalist, the official narrative loses its attraction due to its conservatism. As we have seen in the Sihang incident, the first response of the Weibo platform and media regulators to the provocation against nationalism is to suppress the incident and conduct censor and filter. Just as China's Minister of Culture is reluctant to determine whether Hanfu can represent China Nation, public institutions are also reluctant to judge the correctness of Japanese military uniforms cosplay in the first place. They are more willing to follow up and offer physical responses only after the public has expressed an apparent inclination. Moreover, cybernationalists value personal experiences more, preferring a visible and concrete rival that usually the official institutions should not target. For example, on the HKT issues, cybernationalists hope to understand the honest thoughts of HKT internauts from a more individual perspective, rather than follow the official indoctrination that, except for "a small handful" opposition, the general tendency is on China's side (Lin Wei, 2016).

As an individual internaut, indeed God's Eagle cannot provide satisfaction sentiment to his followers, but also because of being an ordinary internaut, he has more freedom in offering the anger sentiment. This anger feeling is in line with Chinese nationalism's sense of crisis that imperialism will never give up annihilating China. At the same time, because this sense of anger is primarily associated with foreign (-backed) forces, it is conducive to consolidating the alliance between the state and the nationalists, so the official narrative also supports its fermentation. Therefore, the tactic used by God's Eagle is to expose those actions that would violate the nationalistic principle, or just as Castells said, to establish the concept of the adversary.

Nevertheless, God's Eagle is more independent and individual than the cartoonist Lin Chao. This also means that in the process of establishing adversaries, he can be bolder than Lin Chao and dare to fully display his cybernationalism instead of being limited by official ideology. Although not marked as burst points in figure 33 – mainly because of the 2019 Hong Kong protest, many of God Eagle's influential microblogs are actually contrary to the official narrative. For instance, the microblog of July 13, 2019, which has a 6673.51 influence factor, was about the issue of supra-national treatment (超国民待遇) for foreigners in China (Li & Jiao, 2020, p. 31), suggesting Chinese universities are offering female students as sex companions to African students. In another microblog with an influence factor of 3833.44 and published on March 20, 2019, God's Eagle questioned whether the Qinghai province was offering more NCEE bonus points for minorities than before while cutting off all help to the children of martyrs.

God's Eagle is just one of many cybernationalist opinion leaders that have risen rapidly in recent years. These opinion leaders have attracted the attention of foreign media, such as Guyanmuchan interviewed by BBC¹²³ and Sai Lei interviewed by Economist¹²⁴. Although foreign media tend to associate these opinion leaders with words such as propaganda, xenophobia, or paranoia, they turn a blind eye to the mobilization mechanic behind it. As a result, the foreign cultural elites cannot debate or refute why the adversaries chosen

¹²³ <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-china-58922011>

¹²⁴ <https://www.economist.com/china/2022/01/08/chinas-online-nationalists-turn-paranoia-into-clickbait>

by opinion leaders can attract Chinese nationalists. This kind of arrogance, or inability, once again proves the foreign cultural elites' contribution to Chinese nationalism, just like we have discussed before, and will only further strengthen the current nationalistic mobilization through adversaries.

5.4 Muslim and cybernationalism

Although there are 55 minorities in China, it is undeniable that ethnic minorities who believe in Islam tend to get more attention from the media – especially the international media – than other lesser-known minorities, such as the Shui or Xibe. Since the July 5, 2009, terrorist attack in Urumqi, Muslim Uyghurs have become one of the most important elements of the western media agenda-setting. From traditional western academia's viewpoint, the two keywords of Chinese minority policy are violation and assimilation (Clarke, 2010; Smith Finley, 2007 & Hyer, 2006). For example, in the Xinjiang issue, a common narrative is to separate and emphasize discrepancies between the China nation and Muslim Uyghurs, framing the China nation as a colonizer and assuming Muslim Uyghurs as indigenous (Brophy, 2016, pp. 85-89), and then accusing China is waving “ethnonationalism” against the Muslim Uyghur (Erlanger, 2022), or even a genocide (Smith Finley, 2021).

However, it is not just the Western media trying to tie ethnic nationalism and minorities together. The Han Royalist group has long called for a shift from civic nationalism to ethnic nationalism. Unlike the western paradigm of “because China is ethnic nationalism hence the minorities are discriminated,” Han Royalist's narrative is “because the Han people do not have preferential policies like minorities, so we must use ethnic nationalism to establish a single nation, that through eliminating the discriminatory subjects to avoid discrimination against the Han.”¹²⁵ Among among minorities, the most targeted is the Hui Minzu, whose Islamic belief is regarded as the fundamental pillar of Minzu identity (Gladney, 1998; Zhang Liang, 2015, pp. 217-218).

Barry Sautman believed that the Chinese did not value higher education, that it was not linked to income, and therefore preferential policies would not lead to resentments among Han (1998, p. 100). This is clearly a misjudgment. As we have already discussed in the section “The abused preferential policies,” education is an essential provider of social mobility under the Confucian hierarchy and is part of the core value of proto-nationalism. Additionally, any modern nationalism would not accept a systematic inequality against its own members. Therefore, the game that links minorities with ethnic nationalism is putting the Chinese civic nationalists in a flanking position, that they must get up against the western agenda while facing challenges from the Han Royalists.

The “affirmative action” taken by the Chinese government is often ignored by minority activists and their western supporters (Friedrichs, 2017, p. 47). To Chinese nationalists, it is perfect evidence for the deliberate evil agenda-setting, but the theoretical structure of civic nationalism is seriously in conflict with the preferential policies. In this case, nationalists are neither willing to use preferential policies as weapons

¹²⁵ <https://web.archive.org/web/20110703002237/http://hanminzu.com/Article/xhzd/200907/730.html>

to fight against the Western media on the international platform nor can they provide a persuasive explanation for the theory controversy between preferential policies and civic nationalism domestically. As Chinese nationalists cannot change the western agenda-setting nor push a social movement within China on the nationalism-minority issue, the only feasible action tactic left is what Sandor Vegh said: hacktivism, for which we will use two cases as investigation examples.

5.4.1 Muslim job interview and Uyghurs in the reeducation camp

The first case study on cyberactivism's action/reaction sector is based on a Weibo about job interview experience. On May 9, 2019, a microblogger (account: @1874aaa) posted that:

11 in the middle of the night, my little sister said she had just finished her interview. After reading the curriculum, the first sentence of the interviewer was asking, was you a Hui minority (Muslim)? How do you usually eat? With whom? Ramadan fasting? She is a little breakdown, so I have to comfort her. I don't know what to say and feel so funny. Remember when I went to the part-time summer job, the same first reaction from my interviewer after reading my curriculum and then he said, "we don't want Hui here," I really want to ask, what's wrong with Hui? Is this the so-called "56 Minzus are a family"?

According to her open information, the blogger is a female from the Henan province. She is not an influential Weibo user and only has posted 27 microblogs up to date. Most of her microblogs are merely commented/reposted/upvoted less than ten times. In other words, she is just one of most ordinary Weibo users, and the millions of microblogs published every day could easily cover her complaint microblog. However, somehow and someone found her microblog and started an information storm on it. Until October 26, 2019, this microblog has been reposted 4053 times, commented 5546 times, and upvoted 778 times.

Until the end of 2019, the microblog was still available on the Weibo platform, but the microblogger had already blocked the comment zone, and all comments were not visible anymore. However, as it is more "public" than comment, the repost action is still doable with the visible result.¹²⁶ With the help of Octoparse, we can collect data on those reposts, including the ID of the reposter, the repost's content, the number of reposts (the re-repost)/upvotes, and the time of the repost. Because bloggers could applicate a function called "Directional Repost," some reposts are private and invisible. Therefore we have collected 3239 reposts out of 4053 in total; then those reposts without sufficient information, not leaving a new message, or reposting with a meme/emoji are excluded, which left us 1597 reposts as examples. Among them, 589 are direct reposts of the complaint microblog, while 1008 are re-reposts of the 590 direct reposts. Also, to determine the influence factor of each sample, we have adopted a model similar to God's Eagle case, with a slight adjustment on the upvote weight from **0.33** to **0.25**.

The first step of the analysis is on the participants of the information storm. Though western researchers have confirmed that automation is not commonly used by Chinese cybernationalists and pro-

¹²⁶ A review in 2022 found that all reposts' content is no more visible.

government accounts (Bolsover & Howard, 2019), it would be a reassurance for our investigation to find out whether the participants could form a real “public opinion.” After calculating and grouping data of the reposts, we found that the 3239 reposts were published by 3077 ID (95%), which means the information storm is much more possible a joint action by a large number of internauts rather than a preorganized action by a small number. Within the 1597 examples, the most influential repost scores 1234.75 in influence factor with 453 re-reposts and 3127 upvotes. Seven reposts score more than 100, and 215 reposts’ scores are between 100 and 1.25. As 1.25 influence factor equals one upvote and one re-repost, hence only 14% of participants were notably responded by other internauts, and the majority of participants are common individual internauts with low influence. Besides, the original microblog was posted on May 9, 2019, at 23:40; the first repost was made on May 10, 2019, at 07:46, totally of 583 reposts were made within 24 hours, 2239 within 48 hours, the last recorded repost was made on October 17, 2019, at 17:01. Research shows that normally 50% of its reposts should be made within 55 minutes for a microblog, and 90% within 19.2 hours (Mao, Liu, Zhang & Ma, 2014, p.795). The anomaly of our target microblog shows a high initiative of participation and a long-lasting persistence from Chinese internauts into the incident.

Secondly, we will focus on the content of the reposts. To acquire a general understanding of our 1597 examples, sentiment analysis technology is introduced once again, and the Sentiment-Influence Factor coordination has been built, as in figure 34.

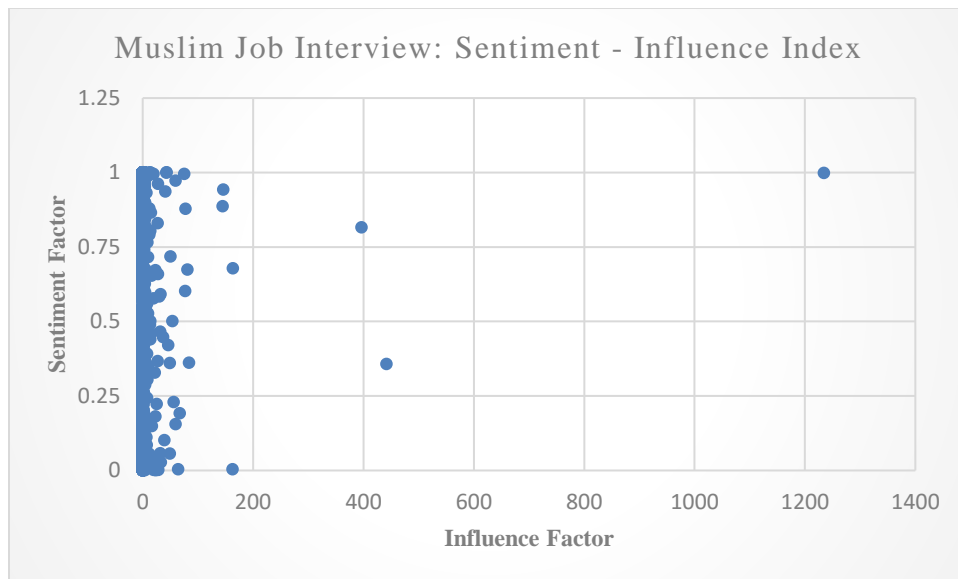


Figure 34. Sentiment - Influence Index of the Muslim Job Interview case

Source: Own Elaboration

Of the total 1597 examples, their average sentiment factor is 0.5244, and 0.5135 as the median. These two numbers indicate a generally neutral-positive sentiment towards the discrimination experience shared by the microblogger @1874aaa. If we consider the influence factor, as Figure 34 shows, the general sentiment could be more positive because there are more influential reposts (influence>100) with a high

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sentiment factor score. However, this result is too superficial and generalized for understanding the detail of cyberactivism, and we must dig into the reposts' content, which can be done through reviewing the keywords of all examples.

TF-id Algorithm Result	TextRank Algorithm Result
回族 (Hui Minzu) 0.2306	民族 (Minzu) 1.0
你们 (You, in plural) 0.1018	宗教 (Religion) 0.4537
惹不起 (Unchanllegeable) 0.0877	特权 (Privilege) 0.4362
民族 (Minzu) 0.0870	公司 (Company) 0.3985
自己 (Self) 0.0705	工作 (Job) 0.3927
猪肉 (Pork) 0.0587	企业 (Enterprise) 0.3824
56 (number) 0.0572	猪肉 (Pork) 0.3604
面试官 (Interviewer) 0.0533	食堂 (Canteen) 0.3528
特权 (Privilege) 0.0460	吃饭 (Eating) 0.3241
一家 (A Family) 0.0450	大家 (Everyone) 0.3202
食堂 (Canteen) 0.0418	一家人 (Families) 0.3140
一家人 (Families) 0.0406	歧视 (Discrimination) 0.3054
天龙 (Sky Dragon) 0.0386	面试官 (Interviewer) 0.2976
歧视 (Discrimination) 0.0380	民族团结 (Unity of Minzu) 0.2493
我们 (We) 0.0372	回民 (Hui People) 0.2404
清真 (Halal) 0.0368	政策 (Policies) 0.2304
高考 (NCEE) 0.0341	单位 (Working Place) 0.2146
哈哈 (Hahaha) 0.0332	同事 (Colleague) 0.1855
回民 (Hui People) 0.0330	生活 (Life) 0.1783
活该 (Deserved) 0.0326	活该 (Deserved) 0.1682

Table 7. Keywords Extraction of Muslim Job Interview Case

Although the two methodologies have different algorithms, we can still find some keywords that appeared in both results: Hui (Ethnicity/People), Ethnicity, Pork, Interviewer, Privilege, Canteen, (a)

Families, Discrimination, and Deserved. Most of these keywords perfectly correspond with the halal food and nationalism issues. Therefore, guided by these keywords and conceptions mentioned before about the preferential policies and Chinese nationalism, we can categorize the result of figure 34 into five different groups.

The direct Accusation or the indirect Satirization were popularly expressed. The first recorded repost – which scores 0.25 in influence factor and 0.0004 in sentiment – wrote: “Do you know the vandalism in Ji’an? Do you know construction site vandalisms? Too many things like this, the enterprise hires a valuable employee but not an unaffordable master.” Multiple influential reposts have expressed the same attitude, for example, “Your question should be ‘what we have done so that the whole family is unhappy now?’” (396.5, 0.82) “Deserved.” (163.5, 0.68) “Never meet a Hui people rethink on themselves.” (145.25, 0.89)

Another trend is to **Criticize** the preferential policies and minority privileges, “You’re innocently involved (because of the preferential policies).” (442, 0.36) “Word ‘family’ is ignored when talking about privileges...” (60, 0.15) “Inevitable result from the discriminatory minority preferential policies.” (49.5, 0.36) “All blame the policies.” (30.25, 0.58) “...Ugly words...but actually preferential policies are discrediting you minorities.” (15, 0.46)

Some internauts **Justified** the controversial employment tactic, and the most influential repost is a perfect example, “Because a Hui employee requires a separate canteen and special rest time (for prayer). A friend of mine had suffered it all as the employer, and in the end, Hui? No thanks. I believe some Hui people have pushed the whole Minzu into this situation, and this should be solved by Hui people themselves.” (1234.75, 0.99) “I’m an interviewer myself, and Hui is off my table certainly. You might be unchallengeable but still avoidable.” (67.5, 0.19)

Defending reposts also exist. As an internaut said, “Not the same. The judgment should be done through the individual action but not the ethnical label...this girl didn’t join any vandalism...I’m not going to satirize her.” (146.25, 0.94) “This is DISCRIMINATION, what are you cheering up for?” (14, 0.80)

The final category is **Suggestion**: a self-proclaimed Hui internaut wrote: “I was interviewed many times, also was asked about halal food requirement, and my answer is ‘Don’t need,’ your sister was breakdown because of the religion...” (75.5, 0.99) “Why don’t you just say ‘I’m ok to eat with colleagues’ or ‘I will bring my own meal?’” (163.25, 0.003) “...can’t you just say you are religionless and don’t need special food treatment?...” (64.5, 0.0029)

Our second example of the relationship between ethnic nationalism and minority is a video clip from BBC News. It has two versions: the Chinese one with the title 被送到「再教育營」的新疆維吾爾人 (literally: Those Xinjiang Uyghurs sent to “Re-education camp”) was published on Youtube platform on October 25 of 2018 and has a runtime of 4 minutes 33 seconds; the English version is titled “China’s hidden camps,” and was published one day before the Chinese version and one second longer. Both versions can be

found on the Youtube platform. As the title reads, this video report's main theme is the re-education camp in Xinjiang.

Due to the research topic, our data analysis is entirely based on the Chinese version of the video. As of March 20, 2022, the video had a total of 820227 views, 5566 upvotes, and 9032 comments. Unfortunately, due to the mechanism of youtube, we cannot collect sub comments completely. Hence our final dataset is only the 4312 direct comments collected by Octoparse.

In the first step, we will repeatedly use the Muslim Job Interview case formula to calculate the influence factor of the comments and make a preliminary judgment. We found that 4312 comments were published by 3921 IDs (91%), proving that no use of automation and fake accounts were observed, but a large number of individual internaut active participation composited this cyberactivism. The most influential comment scores 1628.75 with 4691 "likes" and 456 "replies." In total, there are 19 comments score more than 100, 129 comments score between 10 to 100, and 463 comments score between 1.25 to 10. 14% of participants have received at least one like and one upvote like the Muslim Job Interview case. However, due to the Youtube mechanism limit, we cannot acquire an exact timeline of the comments, and no participation persistence analysis could be concluded.

Based on the experience of the Muslim Interview case, we found that Chinese internauts are very fond of using a sarcastic tone, which greatly affects the accuracy of sentiment analysis results. Therefore, we decided not to use sentiment analysis on BBC videos but directly undertake keyword and classification analysis on these data, for which the LDA model is applied to the content of 4312 examples. The overall result will be available as a dissertation attachment, while figure 35 shows five groups of topics and general top-30 most salient terms. After reviewing each topic group and their respective top-30 most salient terms, we find that these five topics can be interpreted as:

1. Many internauts were **Defending** China's policy while **Accusing** foreign forces, including the U.S., the U.K., the western journalists, and the Muslim terrorists. The most influential comment reads: "When terrorists in Xinjiang are driving cars and wielding machetes at innocent people, Westerners say they are civil rights fighters, a democracy's struggle against dictatorship; when the popular guerrillas in Syria, Iraq, and Afghanistan resist the aggression of U.S. imperialism, Western media said they were terrorists. When American, French, and British planes dropped bombs on civilians in Syria, why did Western media and BBC pretend to be deaf and dumb? Are bombs dropped by democratized planes not bombs? How China's re-education of radical religious elements has become a dictatorship? Not democratic?" Another internaut accused that "the BBC really deliberately smeared (China) this time, and you don't understand how bad those extremists have done to ordinary people. I hope you will publish a documentary about Xinjiang's thieves, robbers, and sellers of cut-cakes in the inner land." (82.5)
2. Some internauts defended China with more emphasis on **Personal Experience** with CPC policies, Chinese police, and schools. A perfect and influential example was, "My high school is located in

a province in the central part of China. I have not gone out once in the evening for three years in high school, and I have never had any entertainment activities. I just do exam papers every day. It is very similar to the concentration camp described by the BBC. I hope the BBC will come and interview me.” (320) while another internaut wrote: “I was oppressed by the CPC government from elementary school to learn English. As the name suggests, English is the language of the British, so I assert that the CPC government is an accomplice of the British government...” (51.5)

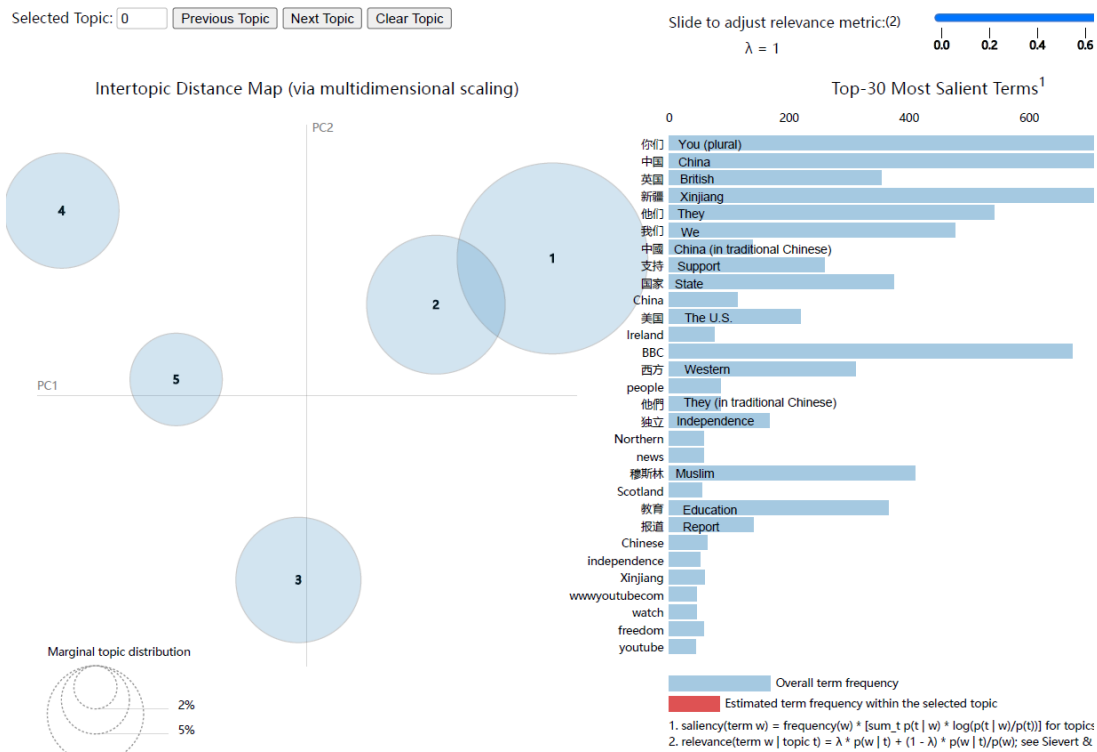


Figure 35. LDA Result of BBC Videoclip

Source: Own Elaboration

3. All terms of this topic were in **traditional Chinese**, which suggests **HKT** internauts' participation, and their attitude is mixed of defending and criticizing. “The U.K. likes to talk about human rights so much, should all these people be sent to the U.K. and let British talks about human rights then, the BBC is full of prejudice and arrogance.” (198.75) “I would like to ask the following group of “patriotic” people who strongly support the persecution of the Uyghurs. Whether one race should be deprived of all rights and dignity when there is a person in this race who did something that was characterized as a terrorist attack by the “authorities” at some point in history?” (21.25)
4. Some internauts have offered **English** translation for their comments. For instance, the comment with a 36.75 influence factor was written in both Chinese and English: “我们是东亚病夫时，我们被说是黄祸； When we were the sick man of Asia, we were called the yellow peril. 我们被预言是

下一个超级大国了，我们被指是主要威胁。When we are billed to be the next superpower, we are called the threat”

5. With heavy use of English, internauts were **Advocating** for the independence of Ireland, Scotland, and Wales, as the second most influential comment said: “支持北爱尔兰独立！如果有需要我们可以捐钱捐物 we support for Northern Ireland independent and separate from British, if you citizens need, we can supply money and materials. please stand up, North Ireland!” Some others were **Encouraging** more Muslim immigration to the U.K.: “Hi Dear BBC. Thanks for uploading this video. Only one suggestion. How about we sending these people to your country????????????? Please treat them as your family and love them after they arriving at your country.” (83.75)

5.4.2 Analysis for the cases of Muslim-cybernationalism: dedications but not for changes

We chose two cases to analyze in this section to more intuitively show the two-sided dilemma faced by the civic nationalists by summarizing the similarities and differences between the cases. The first similarity is that both cases involve experiences and possible discrimination against Muslim groups in China. In the Muslim Job Interview case, internauts did not deny the discrimination mentioned by the microblogger; similarly, in the comment area below the BBC video, there was no influential voice denying the existence of the re-education camps. The second similarity underlying the first superficial similarity is that both cases have the relationship between the China nation and its subordinate Minzu as their key agenda. That is, whether ethnic minorities who believe in Muslims should be particularly targeted – no matter it is about the mandatory halal food requirement for employers or the re-education camps that keep high alert on Islamic extremism. A further interpretation of this key agenda can be stated as “should religious belief become a benchmark in political power distribution in China?”

Another similarity is that although the total sample size of the two cases is different, the proportion of comments/reposts with the most basic influence (Influence factor > 1) in the two cases is highly consistent, which is only about 14%. In the meantime, more than 90% of the commenting/reposting participants would take action only once. Although limited by the mechanism of Weibo, we cannot obtain the number of views on the private microblog, so we cannot get the comments/views (engagement) ratio of the Muslim Job Interview case, but based on the data of BBC video, when only direct comments are counted, the engagement ratio has reached 0.525%, and after including indirect comments, the engagement ratio has reached 1.10%. Research shows that an engagement ratio of 0.5% is already the most favorable data (Harrington, Macdonald, & D’Cruze, 2019; Sader et al., 2020). Clear the BBC video – very possibly the other case too – has drawn infrequent broad participation. This characteristic of broad participation but low internal connectivity and frequency of participation confirms the two cyberactivism cases as authentic demonstrations of public opinion. It also offers solid evidence that the values of unity and number can be extracted from cybernationalism and its cyberactivism.

Furthermore, we did not find leadership from opinion leaders like the Eagle of God in both cases. The influential comments gain popularity from a more independent choice by internauts rather than the professional career's accumulation, quite similar to the early experience of God's Eagle. This is because the reposts/comments that we study are actually under the direct control of the microblogger/BBC Youtube channel. If the two subjects want to, they can interrupt the communication of internauts at any time by blocking the comment/repost function, just like what the microblogger has done. Therefore, the viral organization's sustainability would be at risk from the beginning. Moreover, in both cases, apart from triggering events, the other three phases of the four-stage model did not exist at all.

In terms of differences, the two most obvious differences between the two cases are: one occurred on a Chinese social network under PRC influence, and the other occurred on an English social network under the U.S. influence; one was triggered by a Hui minority, a subpart of the China Nation, and another was triggered by BBC, a western news media. A possible interpretation of these two differences with Mao Zedong's political terms could be: the Muslim Job Interview case is a contradiction among the people (人民内部矛盾), and the BBC video case is a contradiction between ourselves and the enemy (敌我矛盾). Naturally, Chinese cybernationalists have adopted different cyberactivism approaches to different contradictions.

For the Muslim Job Interview case, the participants of cyberactivism have satirized a lot, but the mainstream was still tended to "reason" with the microblogger and tried to convince her in a nationalistic way. Cybernationalists had mentioned a bunch of unpleasant results caused by preferential policies, implying the incident was rooted in the inequality between privileged minorities and the majority of the China Nation. These reposts of the suggestion category are actually calling for an abandonment of narrower minority identity and accepting the bigger China Nation identity. However, facing the BBC, cybernationalists basically gave up effective communication. They choose to attack the BBC and other foreign forces, which in their perception are represented by the BBC, to discredit them thence destroy their discourse power and agenda-setting. Alternatively, they also choose to completely ignore the two China&Muslim core topics set by the BBC, reversing it to British&Muslim, of which the fundamental purpose is still to undermine BBC and foreign forces' discourse power by demonstrating the hypocrisy of western cultural elites.

However, beneath the two different approaches lays the same cyberactivism behavior logic, hacktivism. No matter activism, media activism, or cyberactivism, their regular output should be a social, economic, or political change. But among the many hacktivism cases cited by Vegh, the tactics of activists can be subdivided into two categories: to destroy the adversary's virtual organization by dropping viruses or attacking the server; by tampering with the website URL, activists prevent the adversary's advocacy and seize the power of agenda-setting (Vegh, 2003). The same features can be found in two previous cases: even in the defending repost group, we did not find any call for a petition or any other actions to prevent future discrimination against halal food requirements; similarly, the BBC's emphasis on possible human rights violations is ignored or mocked. Under such conditions, it is difficult for the microblogger and BBC to shape

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an intended virtual organization. Their discourse power was weakened or even deprived as much of the discussion deviated from the original agenda.

The core reason why cyberactivism adopts hacktivism is that civic nationalism cannot answer the question mentioned above, “should religious belief become one benchmark in political power distribution in China?” Domestically, nationalists can not – maybe also unwilling – to theoretically question the official narrative on the formation of China Nation like Katherine Palmer Kaup or Dru Gladney. Long-standing official educational policies also have reinforced ethnic awareness among minorities, which the civic nationalists cannot deny nor solve with aggressive measures. From the perspective of the four-stage model, the Chinese government has the final veto power over the viral organization and media response, so any large-scale cyberactivism of opposition to the CPC’s Ethnic Debt theory and preferential policies is impossible. Apart from the theoretical flaws, another contributing factor to the use of hacktivism in confrontation against western news media is the non-negotiable hostility between the western cultural elites and Chinese nationalists. Unlike their alliance with the Chinese government, the nationalists are well aware that it is impossible to challenge the agenda-setting of western media, especially on foreign social networks, and they do not believe the western cultural elites may have any good faith in China. Even such “reactionary hacktivism” still relies heavily on Chinese content, as the machine translation does not guarantee a smooth pass over the traditional news media’s gatekeep and a reach to the western public. Therefore, in the BBC video case, cyberactivism 2.0 assisted by machine translation allows activists to overcome language barriers better but does not mean that Chinese nationalists can complete an agenda on their own and disseminate it to the western public. Cybernationalists can only passively react to the western agenda and partly defend their ideology by occupying dependent viral organizations such as comment areas.

A counterexample is, when the cybernationalist can overcome the two major obstacles of theory and archenemy-style animosity, even if an autonomous virtual organization cannot be established, hacktivism is not cybernationalists’ first choice. In the 2016 Facebook Expedition, since the target group was non-mainland Chinese users, the social objective was to advocate for China’s reunification – a cause based on proto-nationalism, hence the tactic that cyberactivism relies heavily on was advocacy/awareness, that not to disturb nor distort the existing public communication space but through sharing Chinese foods and landscapes to wake up the China Nation identity among the target group (Yuan Ming, 2016, pp. 41-43).

The two cases we have selected are just hacktivism’s manifestations in a highly concentrated way. In fact, whether in the YHA or God’s Eagle case, there are traces of hacktivism caused by the lack of theoretical preparation: the narrative stronghold of YHA is the historical events with a widely accepted consensus, such as the Korean War, which is China Nation’s national myth as it was the first time a Chinese army stopped a foreign force. Meanwhile, the YHA would avoid involving those relatively more controversial historical events. God’s Eagle’s defining the adversary tactic does not rely on large sections of theoretical narratives to point out the adversary. Instead, he prefers to use direct emotional shocks, such as

reproducing some content that would seriously challenge the nationalist consensus, or simply accusing a foreign intervention, to frame the concept of an adversary.

5.5 Cyberactivism's impact on Chinese society

As a rising ideology in an industrializing/digitalizing society, nationalist activism has significantly impacted Chinese society. Especially after entering the stage of cyberactivism 2.0, the enrichment of participation forms and participant numbers through social networks enables more independent activism of broader influence. As our chapter 4 title reads, cybernationalism is “shaped” by various incidents. Therefore, cyberactivism, whose principal objective is to push for changes, would necessarily shape cybernationalism.

In one sentence, cyberactivism's impact on cybernationalism is “a clear tendency of polarization” (Ding, 2015, p. 86). This sentence can be translated as both cybernationalism and reverse nationalism are becoming more and more polarized due to cybernationalism's cyberactivism. Yes, like the Proud Boys and Antifa in the U.S., there is also a polarization phenomenon around the ideology of nationalism in China. Starting from Castles' three social movement principles, first, we will review how cybernationalism is polarized.

The best example is the Wolf Warrior movie series in terms of self-identification. In the YHA series, the attraction of China Nation is consolidated by historical mythology. Its essential narrative core is still based on the already happened past, and the subject is usually more inclined toward high-level nationalistic “saints” or symbolic images, such as those elite scientists or nameless fallen martyrs. For nationalists, their demand for cultural products closer to the experience of their era and with more distinctive characters is still unmet, and the Wolf Warrior series fills this vacuum.

Whether it was Wolf Warrior 1 in 2015 or Wolf Warrior 2 in 2017, the plot's core is the same story of a lonely Chinese special force soldier defeating the white mercenaries. However, the box office of Wolf Warrior 1 (545 million Yuan) is much lower than that of Wolf Warrior 2 (5.694 billion Yuan). In addition to the upgrade of technical measures, the biggest reason for the success of Wolf Warrior 2 is that the setting of the story background is more suitable for nationalists' imagination of self-identification. In Wolf Warrior 1, the American mercenaries appeared as subordinates of Chinese drug dealers only after the story had gone through a long play of Chinese special forces' daily life, and the reason for their conflict with the Chinese army was that they illegally crossed the border to conduct drug trafficking activities. Wolf Warrior 1 has the typical narrative often used in past Chinese action movies, emphasizing the Chinese military's hard training and respect for international laws. In Wolf Warrior 2, American mercenaries are incorporated into the narrative structure from the very beginning, forming a typical good-evil antagonism with the protagonist, and dominating the evil side. The overall background of the story has also been moved to a fictional African country, and the protagonist's motivation is no longer to protect the superficial and vague “border” but to protect “concrete Chinese and Africans from evil.” Moreover, the protagonist's final victory relies on the

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intervention of China's state power with legal authorization, which has completed the upgrade from individual heroism to the collective national spirit.

In the plot of *Wolf Warrior 2*, we can find its similarity with many American movies, such as *Tears of the Sun* and the *Rambo* franchise, but unlike the American's interest in civilization defeating the barbarians, *Wolf Warrior 2* emphasizes a sense of once inferior party's rebellion against the superior, as the *New York Times* noted:

In the climactic final battle, (Chinese) Leng is locked in brutal hand-to-hand combat with (the mercenary) Big Daddy, who pulls Leng close to deliver a message: "People like you will always be inferior to people like me," he says. "Get used to it. Get [expletive] used to it." Leng, of course, turns the tables and stabs the American to death. "That's [expletive] history," Leng says, just after delivering the fatal blow. (Palmer, 2021)

Facing increasing pressure from the US, the most preferred product for Chinese nationalists should describe a straight Chinese victory over the U.S., but unlike the American cultural products that can directly call China or Russia out as the enemy, the Chinese government will not allow this kind of "provocative" gesture, and the mercenary of the American background is already the allowed limit. However, this muddling through coverup cannot hide the further expectations of the nationalists for their own positioning – advancing from the past defender of the national territory (YHA) to today's challenger of American hegemony (*Wolf Warrior*).

According to previous research, the mobilization mechanism of Chinese nationalism is based on the definition of the adversary. With the success of cyberactivism, nationalists are more and more willing to systematize the adversary definition driven by emotion. A typical case is the 2016 U.S. election, when Chinese social networks, especially Zhihu – a quora-like question & answer platform – showed overwhelming support for Trump since the campaign began. Although Trump's policies contain many aspects, for Chinese internauts, they focused on two points: opposition to the "white left (白左/ Bai Zuo)" and opposition to political correctness (Wu, Nu, & Xu, 2017; Fan, 2019). These two oppositions coincided with the nationalists' assumption of domestic adversaries.

The term 白左 can be translated as leftist of white people. It is closely related to the progressive left, lib-tard, and white liberal in the Western context. In the Chinese context, the white left can be divided into the hypocritical upper social class and the out-of-reality petty bourgeoisie, and what they have in common is a capital monopoly on knowledge, education, and discourse power (Fan, 2019, p. 20). In terms of specific policies, the white left in the Chinese context is usually linked to "identity politics." In the cognition of Chinese nationalists, the white left represents the attitude of achieving one's own moral achievement by sacrificing the interests of others, and the best means to achieve this goal is the political correctness popularized by forced indoctrination. The superficial opposition against the white left is usually like with the black lives matter movement or Affirmative Actions in the U.S., while also alluding to China's preferential policies (Wu, Lu, & Xu, 2017, pp. 73-74).

Chinese nationalists cannot directly set off cyberactivism against preferential policies as they do against spiritual foreigners. Therefore, they turned to support Trump on social networks and analyzed in detail the anti-white left and anti-political correctness that Trump proclaimed, and eventually completed an anti-preferential policies mobilization in low profile. The advantage of this tactic is that the nationalists are not directly challenging the Chinese government's policies, while the topic of foreign elections and opposition to a certain foreign power has expanded the Chinese government's tolerance for discussions. Finally, after Trump's surprise win in the 2016 election, the nationalists' claim to the white left/political correctness as adversaries in China was consolidated as it gained some international recognition through the physical response in the U.S.

During the research of the previous section, the action/reaction tactic of cyberactivism is a choice in desperation that is full of deflections but without any theoretical debates. It is hacktivism driven by massive voluntary participation but with no signs of actual usage of hacker technologies. However, in some most recent cases, the Chinese nationalists began to reapply the technological means just like in the HUC case. The VTuber is a term that originated from Virtual Youtuber, which is "virtual 2D or 3D avatars that are voiced by humans, are emerging as live streamers and attracting a growing viewership in East Asia" (Lu, Shen, Li, Shen, & Wigdor, 2021, p. 1). Among the VTubers, one case of great success is Kiryu Coco (桐生ココ) of the COVER Corp., whose debut was on 28 December 2019. At a rocket speed, Kiryu Coco reached 100000 subscribers on 11 January 2020 and 500000 on 3 August 2020. However, as she mentioned and acknowledged Taiwan as a country on her stream on 25 September, her Chinese fans were irritated and turned into a nationalistic mode.

In the beginning, Chinese nationalists would only use their own accounts to spam Kiryu Coco's channel during her streaming, hampering others from viewing. But as the channel's administrator began to patrol and block nationalists' accounts, the nationalists soon discovered that they had lost freedom of voice in the target area. Then, gathered at the Internet forum NGA (<https://nga.cn/>), nationalists started to build a formal organization against Kiryu Coco, which had strategic plans¹²⁷, an arsenal of hack tools¹²⁸, and an official "war report" website (<https://fuancbcoco.top/>). Since then, version 2.0 hacktivism has come into our sight.

Unlike the Muslim Job Interview and the BBC Report, this time, the nationalists had set Kiryu Coco's graduation (permanent retirement) for activism's objective from the very beginning. On the mobilization website, the nationalists quoted Mao Zedong's concept of protracted war extensively and used his "We will fight as long as they want until we are completely victorious" slogan as the guiding ideology. Furthermore, to avoid the account being blocked by the channel administrator, they chose to buy accounts from Russian hackers and had specially designed a spam software called Unicycle (独轮车) for Youtube.

¹²⁷ <https://bbs.nga.cn/read.php?tid=23861268>, retrieved on December 9 of 2021.

¹²⁸ <https://bbs.nga.cn/read.php?tid=23561506>, retrieved on December 9 of 2021.

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The wheelbarrow is part of the China Nation's national mythology. As shown in figure 36, during a decisive campaign against the Kuomintang, in order to support the CPC army, Chinese peasants made extensive use of this single-wheeled transportation to provide logistical supplies to the front lines. Therefore, the unicycle also represents the spirit of the People's War. Hacktivism's unicycle is the software that automatically sends comments. After logging in, the user can set the content and frequency of comment action at will, and then the software will automatically detect Kiryu Coco's streaming, sending spam and hindering other people's view experience and interaction. After suffering almost one year of harassment from Chinese nationalists (Sutton, 2021, p. 60), COVER Corp. had to announce on 9 June 2021 that Kiryu Koko will soon graduate.



Figure 36. Up: Chinese peasants using unicycles during Huaihai campaign.
Left: Digital unicycle's panel. Right: Announcement of Kiryu Coco's graduation.

Source: Internet with Own Elaboration

If hacktivism 1.0 is a high-tech, low-participation, low-frequency type of hacktivism in the HUC era, then hacktivism 2.0 in the Kiryu Coco incident is a medium-tech, high-participation, high-frequency hacktivism. Unlike Muslim Job Interview and BBC Reports, it is impossible for a VTuber whose economic interests depend on interaction to close the comment area permanently, and it is impossible to prevent activists from taking physical responses. This is the fundamental reason why hacktivism worked in the Kiryu Coco case, that all the four factors of the Sandoval-Almazan & Gil-Garcia model are authentically independent of nationalists' adversaries and their influence.

More and better cases of nationalism's polarization come from within PRC's political boundary, where nationalists are more likely to get official acquiescence. After all, aside from the topic of the spiritual foreigner, there are many common interests in the nationalist-government alliance. The official acquiescence means that nationalists can issue *proscripti* for the adversary they identify, define it as *hostis publicus*, and use various physical responses to damage the adversaries' social evaluation and economic interests. In this way, it has become political correctness in Chinese society to avoid hurting nationalist sentiments and upholding nationalistic principles.

On November 17, 2018, at the Golden Horse Film Festival hosted by Taiwan, director Fu Yue from Taiwan expressed in her acceptance speech: "hope our country can be treated as a truly independent entity. This is my greatest wish. as a Taiwanese."¹²⁹ This anti-China Nation remark immediately aroused the reactions of mainland celebrities and internauts. Mainland participants at the Golden Horse Festival showed their attitude by emphasizing that there is only one China, refusing to appear on stage to present awards, or refusing to attend festival dinner.¹³⁰ On the Weibo platform, CYL reposted an old microblog of its own, which was a full picture of China and marked "China: Not even a bit can be left behind."¹³¹ This microblog received more than 10 million reposts and 60 thousand comments, and many celebrities from both mainland and Hong Kong have reposted it. Under the guidance and influence of the China Film Administration, mainstream mainland and Hong Kong film practitioners are no longer participating in the Golden Horse Festival.

Due to the economic development and the expansion of the Chinese consumer market, not only entities located in China are affected by nationalist political correctness, but foreign companies are also passively become part of the agenda-setting. Although the vast majority of countries around the world recognize the PRC's One-China policy and only establish diplomatic relations with the PRC, in many business practices, foreign companies still tend to categorize Taiwan, Hong Kong, Macau, and even Tibet into the country group. With nationalism on the rise, this implicit support for the separation of China began to be targeted by nationalists. In January 2018, after being warned by the Shanghai local government, the hotel chain Marriott International apologized to the Chinese public for misidentifying Taiwan and Tibet as

¹²⁹ <https://www.chinatimes.com/cn/realtimenews/20181118000685-260404?chdtv>, retrieved on January 9 of 2021

¹³⁰ www.cfi.net.cn/p20181119000089.html, retrieved on January 9 of 2021

¹³¹ <https://weibo.com/3937348351/H38pPiAGP>, retrieved on January 9 of 2021

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countries.¹³² In April, amid heated domestic discussions, the Civil Aviation Administration of China demanded 44 foreign airlines to correct their websites and stop labeling Hong Kong, Taiwan, and Macau as a country, which was finally obeyed before the deadline.¹³³ In May, after Weibo users discovered that Gap's T-shirts did not include Taiwan and the South China Sea on the "Map of China" – as figure 37 illustrates, Gap issued a statement of apology within hours and announced that it would remove related products from the shelves.¹³⁴



Figure 37. Left: The Gap T-shirt. Right: Chen Man's photo for Dior.

Source: Internet with Own Elaboration

In addition to the respect in politics, the nationalists furtherly demand cultural respect from foreign companies. In November 2018, Dolce & Gabbana was fiercely criticized and boycotted by nationalists for letting a Chinese female model eat Italian food with chopsticks in an advertising video and calling China the "country of shit" in a follow-up interaction between its founder and internauts. The incident culminated in the cancellation of a scheduled Dolce & Gabbana fashion show and the cancellation of contracts by many Chinese celebrities.¹³⁵ In late 2021, Chinese photographer Chen Man's work – shown in figure 37 – for an art exhibition held by Dior has sparked nationalist criticism of "Western stereotypes." In response, the Dior company apologized and removed the work, and the photographer herself apologized to the public on the social network.¹³⁶

¹³² <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/01/11/business/china-marriott-tibet-taiwan.html>, retrieved on January 9 of 2021

¹³³ <https://p.dw.com/p/322Dc>, retrieved on January 9 of 2021

¹³⁴ <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/05/15/business/gap-china-apology.html>, retrieved on January 9 of 2021

¹³⁵ <https://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/italian-designer-dolce-gabbana-calls-china-a-crap-country-cr0nf9p27>, retrieved on February 4 of 2022

¹³⁶ <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-china-59397737>, retrieved on February 4 of 2022

If foreign companies choose to reject nationalists' demands, they would be informally included in a stopwords list of China's Internet economy. For instance, the Japanese APA hotel chain was blocked by the Chinese booking network for placing a book that denies the Nanjing Massacre in every room and refusing to apologize and withdraw¹³⁷; the H&M clothing company also disappeared from the search directory of online shopping websites after announcing that it would refuse to use Xinjiang cotton¹³⁸. This is because even without consideration of the ideology of the Chinese internet economy, the general nationalism tendency of its principal consumers requires them to act in line with nationalistic political correctness.

In the nationalist pressure cases mentioned above, we find that the intervention ability of the Chinese government plays a decisive role in the final physical response level of cyberactivism. For example, in the Golden Horse Festival incident, due to the political reality of the separation of Taiwan and the mainland, even though the mainland market is critically beneficial to the development of Taiwan's film industry, Taiwanese stars and film practitioners have to obey the arrangements of ROC government and openly confront China Nation. On the other hand, film practitioners in Hong Kong – even though they may not ideologically recognize Chinese nationalism – must choose to side with the mainland under political and economic pressure.

In fact, the Chinese government is increasingly tending to actively engage in cyberactivism to control the extent of physical response. In 2005 and 2012, originating from nationalists' online mobilization, two nationwide mass demonstrations against Japan broke out in China. According to Chinese scholars' research, with the progress of urbanization, demonstration participants had changed from college students to citizens, which led to an escalation of violence during the protest. In the 2005 demonstration, there were basically no attacks on Japanese citizens, while the 2012 demonstration violence included the destruction of Japanese shops, arson, attacks on Japanese civilians, and even attacks on Japanese car owners of Chinese nationality that resulted in serious injuries have appeared (Zhu & Zhu, 2013, pp. 108-109). The Chinese government neither wants to be seen as weak and a traitor by nationalists nor wants nationalist activism to hijack the country's economic development and foreign policy (US Cong., 2001; Wang Jun, 2010a, p. 152). Therefore, one balance must be maintained during the cyberactivism practice, and the best strategy is to be active and dominate the activism from the start. So, as in the case of CYL taking the initiative to establish a partnership with Lin Chao, in 2020, China's foreign ministry spokesman quick tweeted to support after a Chinese painter created a satire of Australian troops' atrocities in Afghanistan and sparked a wave of nationalism in China¹³⁹. Likewise, after numerous nationalistic triggering events, including the above cases, before the establishment of an influential viral organization, the Chinese government often would early engage with nationalists' adversaries to avoid serious consequences like the 2012 anti-Japanese demonstrations; or restrict the adversary's definition to ensure an impact on only individual entities rather

¹³⁷ <https://www.shobserver.com/yzzx/html/71030.html>, retrieved on February 4 of 2022

¹³⁸ <https://xw.qq.com/cmsid/20220328A0C11R00>, retrieved on February 4 of 2022

¹³⁹ <https://world.huanqiu.com/article/40udlwjJ0yL>, retrieved on March 15 of 2021

than a broader economic section. This is also in line with the Chinese government's consistent suppression of offline massive social movements (King, Pan, & Roberts, 2013).

Nevertheless, the penetration and dominance of cyberactivism do not mean that the official narrative can re-dominate the ideology of cybernationalist. With the central leadership still clinging to Soviet-style nationalist theories, except for those deeply rooted in proto-nationalism, the universality of other consensus between the government and nationalists is awkwardly verified through cyberactivism. Due to the lack of theoretical preparation, there is still a huge discrepancy between the pursuit of modern nationalism and the Chinese government's policy practices. As previous research shows, the ethnic and civic nationalisms issue is one salient example of this discrepancy, which is concentrated in the preferential policies related cases. At the same time, similar confrontations – if not more serious – would occur when a foreign entity is involved.

Since the Reform and Opening-up, China's contact with foreign countries has continued to expand, and the number of foreign elements entering China has also continued to increase, which makes a pressing issue for Chinese nationalism on how to treat foreign individuals and companies. The Chinese government's policy is to be politically vigilant against foreign governments while welcoming foreign entities economically and culturally to expand trade and technological exchanges (Tian, 2021; Xu Jingwei, 2020; Xiang, 2021). However, this has sparked anxiety about “supra-national treatment” among nationalists. The essence of supra-national treatment is the same as that of preferential policies: promoting economic and trade cooperation by providing certain privileges to foreign citizens and companies, and even “foreign capital” from Hong Kong, Macao, and Taiwan. For instance, in Yiwu of Zhejiang province, in order to attract business from the Arab region, the government took the initiative to expand mosques and allow Muslim merchants to build culturally closed communities (Ge, 2011, pp. 61-63; Jiang Yiwei, 2018, pp. 89- 90). In Shanghai, Tianjin, and other cities that were once directly occupied by foreign hegemonies, local governments are eager to rename the former “foreign concessions” – the forcibly leased territories – to foreign-style districts to demonstrate their admiration and acceptance of foreign cultures (Li Dongye, 2007). In daily life, from policing to education, public service agencies are eager to provide foreign citizens services that are significantly better than Chinese citizens (Li & Jiao, 2020; Xu Jingwei, 2020).

Although nationalists do not deny western countries' economic and technological advantages and are willing to learn from them, this does not mean that nationalists are willing to tolerate the reality of supra-national treatment and cultural concessions. The issue's susceptibility is that the supra-national treatment of foreign entities violates civic nationalism's universal equality principle and stimulates Chinese nationalists' vigilance for its foreign connection. Therefore, in addition to the official discourse, Chinese nationalists, especially ethnic nationalists, creatively invented the saying, “Foreigners enjoy the most and followed by officials, the minorities are third-class but Han is the lowest” (一等洋人二等官，三等少民四等汉), which shows disobedience and dissatisfaction to the government's distortion of Chinese nationalism. Due to the confrontational attitude of the nationalists, cyberactivism related to the supra-national treatment can hardly make a significant impact like other cases mentioned above, but the nationalists are not afraid to declare their

dissidence with the government and take offline action. A well-known example is the “monument smashing in Fangzheng” in 2011. During World War II, the Japanese colonial regiments once occupied Fangzheng County and left many Japanese orphans after the war. Since the 21st century, due to the special historical relationship, Fangzheng County has always had a lot of immigrant populations in Japan, and bilateral economic ties are relatively close. In 2011, in order to consolidate the special relationship with Japan, the local government of Fangzheng County chose to erect a monument to commemorate the former Japanese colonial regiment. The move immediately angered Chinese nationalists, and on August 5, five Chinese nationalists from Nanjing vandalized the monument after advance notice online. Although Fangzheng County announced that the monument was endorsed by the State Council and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, it was eventually forced to demolish the monument in the face of enormous pressure from cybernationalism. (Zhao Ning, 2012, pp. 48-49)

The last group closely associated with cybernationalism and its cyberactivism are the aforementioned reverse nationalists, especially the spiritual foreigner groups that are more used to social networking 2.0. After the continuous cyberactivism, nationalism gradually dominates the society’s agenda-setting, and official forces are willing to join it. Therefore, the pressure faced by the reverse nationalists is increasing, and their behavior is also increasingly polarized. For instance, since God’s Eagle began to expose the spiritual Japanese and the law on protecting martyrs was passed, the Chinese police began to take coercive measures against the spiritual Japanese. On July 29, 2019, the police in four provinces of China jointly issued announcements that nine spiritual Japanese were arrested.¹⁴⁰ Reverse nationalists who lack social and official support chose to use radical hacktivism as a tool of confrontation, and one of their most typical means is Doxxing.

The doxxing is called Human Flesh Search (人肉搜索) in China. According to the Wiley Online Library definition, “Doxxing is a complex, gendered communicative process by which one or several person(s) (doxxer/doxxers) seek private or personal identifying information about another individual (subject/target) and widely distribute it through undesired online mass media channels without the consent of that person, who would be made vulnerable by mass media disclosure” (Eckert, & Metzger-Riftkin, 2020). As the government’s understanding and censorship of human flesh search grow in China, doxxing now is also called Open the Box (开盒), Dig the Bottom (起底), and Make Debut (出道). In order to combat the information nodes of cybernationalism, reverse nationalists have launched doxxing against many opinion leaders and official figures. On Zhina Wiki (支那维基, <https://zhina.wiki>), a website designed specifically for anti-nationalism doxxing, nationalistic figures are listed on the Boxer page¹⁴¹, implying that they were as brutal and xenophobic as the Boxer uprisings of the past. Many of the aforementioned nationalistic figures have their personal information leaked on this portal, including God’s Eagle, Guyanmuchan, and Linchao.

¹⁴⁰ <https://www.rfa.org/mandarin/yataibaodao/renquanfazhi/xql2-07292019135222.html>, retrieved on October 14 of 2020

¹⁴¹ <https://zhina.wiki/Portal:Boxer>

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Some other social and official figures are also doxxed by reverse nationalists, such as the Wolf Warrior films' director and protagonist actor Wu Jing, and many CYL officials.

Usual identity information leaks include identity card numbers, home addresses, family information, educational records, telephone numbers, email addresses, and bank account information. However, since it is difficult for reverse nationalists to launch a cyberactivism with a huge number and strong unity on the Internet within China, they are more inclined to view doxxing as the basis for launching offline activism. On Zhina wiki's personal information page, reverse nationalists have created a dedicated persecute drive (迫害加速) section, and have designed specific offline harassment tactics for each nationalistic figure, including mailing shit, phone/text bombing, and even personal assault. On July 22, 2015, a college student from Wendeng who had long been arguing with reverse nationalists on the Internet was beaten and injured by four reverse nationalists organized through the social network in front of his university's gate (Leng, 2018, p. 80).

It is worth noting that even though they fiercely oppose the Chinese government, reverse nationalists still rely heavily on official power's intervention during their offline activism. In the Wendeng incident, local police tended to decouple the attack from ideological conflict to minimize the impact on the assaulters (Dong Tiance, 2015, p. 68). A more common situation is, by exposing or falsifying nationalistic figures' violation of morality and law, and unearthing the inconsistency between cybernationalism and official narrative, reverse nationalists attempt to induce state power to strike their adversaries. For example, on the Zhina wiki page of a CYL cadre in Fujian Province, the reverse nationalists claimed that the cadre is misogynistic, that there were incestuous relationships in his family, and all his family members have signed a manifesto supporting Falun Gong and opposing CPC. Zhina wiki's participants are encouraged to report this cadre to the state departments based on all these accusations. Under the Eagles of God page, there are also articles claiming that he is undermining the Unity of Minzu and should be reported.

5.6 Chapter Conclusion

Since the digitalization began in China, nationalists' cyberactivism has gradually developed from the early elite hacktivism to the large-scale cyberactivism of social network 2.0. As a mode of collective action that originated outside official control, the primary goal of cyberactivism is to meet the needs of nationalists in the vacuum created by official discourse, which includes a better self-identification for the Internet era, a mobilization mechanism that allows massive participation and effective high-level communication, and a channel to fight back the nationalistic adversaries and achieve a nationalistic social objective.

From the cases we have selected, cyberactivism has successfully achieved the inheritance and development of proto-nationalism identity in the Internet age; virtual communities also allow nationalists to mobilize supporters by emphasizing their enemies; by cooperating with the official, the social objectives of the nationalists can be achieved satisfactorily in China, while overseas adversaries would also be partially

disturbed by hacktivism. Therefore, in general, cyberactivism meets the needs of nationalists at a good enough level in the Internet age.

Nevertheless, that does not mean that cyberactivism has an all-bright future in China. We must see that no matter online or offline, the Chinese government is still the absolute dominant force in Chinese society, and cyberactivism's achievements and failures still depend on it. From a proactive point of view, only if the government forces are not hindering can cyberactivism gain enough publicity to become sufficiently influential in pushing the social changes that nationalists want. From a passive point of view, grassroots nationalists cannot theoretically develop a modern nationalism theory that fits Chinese society because of the official adherence to the Soviet-style national theory. With the full realization of the Internet's potential as a communication tool and the loss of novelty that would inevitably come, nationalist's cyberactivism is bound to fall into the same predicament as the official narrative.

This theoretical dilemma is already reflected in the widespread impact of cybernationalism's cyberactivism. Although nationalists are gaining momentum, and the weight of nationalism itself as political correctness in the general agenda-setting is on the rise, the theoretical differences between ethnic nationalism and civic nationalism, between cybernationalism and official narrative, are only temporarily covered up rather than resolved. Therefore, cyberactivism can truly drive meaningful social progress only when nationalists join forces with official power. Once this condition is not met, cyberactivism will not only bring about more controversy than progress but will expose and intensify the existing contradictions in Chinese society, escalate online disputes into offline conflicts, and lead to the polarization of the entire society.

6. CONCLUSIONS AND DISCUSSIONS

In general, this dissertation is stuck in chronological order. We started our investigation from the very beginning of the first unified bureaucratic regimen in China and finished in some recent cases like the 2019 Hong Kong protest. As the dissertation involves such a long timeline, it is complicated to explicate every single highlight moment of the Chinese nationalism, nor a coherent review of that timeline. Therefore we chose to explain every chapter of this dissertation by explaining the most fundamental events that form the basis of today's nationalism in China with the objective to verify or refute the dissertation's hypotheses set out in the introduction chapter.

In the 2nd chapter, we have paid attention to the formation of modern Chinese nationalism, which is done through three sections of investigation. In the first section, we look back to the beginning of the Chinese centralized bureaucratic system, including the establishment of a bureaucratic system administration and Confucianism's impact on Chinese social consensus. By explaining its most outstanding features and making comparisons with the modern western theories on the term state, we verified that in traditional Chinese society, the existence of proto-nationalism can be traced back to the ages before Jesus Christ. Moreover, as the Chinese proto-nationalism is tightly bound to its political system, its influence is stubborn and persistent.

The second section focuses on the period Century of Humiliation, during which China was incorporated into the Western-dominated world order and lost its traditional superiority for the first time. The first Opium war of 1840 was almost 200 years ago, but it and the subsequent series of events foreshadowed and still affected Chinese nationalism. Using the Boxer Uprising as an example, we find out how a popular anti-minority-ruled-dynasty sentiment gradually evolved into a modern nationalism and how the central government lost its last self-salvation opportunity for betraying the nationalists. While by reviewing CPC's experience during World War II, we have had a solid understanding of how nationalism is eventually accepted by a communist party and becomes the crucial pillar of its ideological basis, which reveals the relationship protocol between nationalists and the CPC – both alliance and leader-supporter. Additionally, as the foreign power came to the stage of Chinese nationalism for the first time, the keynote of the China-foreigner relationship was written during this period. The hostility from Chinese nationalists is not a political invention or manipulation but has a resonant emotion and historical origin. More importantly, after exploring the evolution of the Chinese nationalist movement in the two examples, we can see a clear tendency of proto-nationalism's evolution to modern nationalism.

In the last section, our focus is concentrated on the term China Nation, especially its political practice during the early PRC period before the Internet became available to a considerable amount of Chinese citizens (the year 1997). As communism was the dominant ideology and China's communication with the

outside world was very limited, we paid more attention to the Han-minority relationship in this section, especially the status of the 55 minorities under the preferential policies.

First, by analyzing the similarities and differences in nationalism between the Kuomintang and the Communist Party, we fully understand the origins and basic policies of ethnic nationalism and civic nationalism in China. Especially for the civic nationalism that the civil war (1945-1949) victor CPC upheld, we have studied how it localized from a completely Soviet-style nationalistic theory to a theory that met the political needs of China and the CPC at that time. When the civil war ended, as the CPC re-established the tight PCS-style bureaucratic administration in China, this civic nationalism immediately had an impact on all ethnic groups within China.

On the one hand, the CPC began to imitate the experience of the Soviet Union to carry out a minority identification movement, reorganized a large number of ethnic minorities under the concept of China Nation, and established the ERA system. Nevertheless, at the same time, the CPC also tried to completely integrate the newly-built minority autonomous units into the PCS to ensure the integrity of the China Nation. On the other hand, the major ethnic group Han began to be politically acquiesced as having original sin, while the minorities were given various privileges in many aspects. This artificial inequality sets the stage for future conflicts between nationalists and the official narrative.

Through the research in Chapter 2, we have learned about the origin and development of modern nationalism in China and obtained sufficient evidence to judge the first hypothesis. We maintain that a strong proto-nationalism had long existed in China before the Opium War. Since China established an administrative system with a highly similar nature to the modern state very early, the influence and potential of China's proto-nationalism also reached a peak long before their European counterparts. However, the massive participation supported by this proto-nationalism is still incomparable with the modern nationalism born after the French Revolution. Only after large-scale contact with the west and the introduction of advanced western productive forces and communication tools, can China fully discover the power of nationalism in World War II. Therefore, our first hypothesis can only be partial support. Due to the backward technological level, China did not successfully upgrade proto-nationalism to modern nationalism before being incorporated into the western dominated global system.

The 2nd chapter is about the historical background of nationalists in China, and the 3rd chapter is about the social-technical background of Chinese internauts. The absence of both of these background checks is unacceptable for a comprehensive study of the formation of cybernationalists. Therefore in Chapter 3, we have introduced the element of the Internet. This chapter is divided into three parts. The first two parts focus on descriptive and informative content, including the history and current situation of the Internet in China. Compared with developed countries, China started late but developed rapidly with Internet popularization. Chinese Internet usage quickly expanded from purely academic applications to a full range of mass participation. Rapid development also means that government policies are difficult to follow in time. Before the arrival of social network 2.0, we saw that the Chinese government basically dealt with Internet-related

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issues from the perspective of supervisors, with a similar idea of managing offline entities that focused on the management of physical access points. After 2008, the Chinese government gradually began to participate in social networks as the main body actively, and the focus of policy has also shifted from offline devices to virtual information flow. However, due to the huge volume of Chinese Internet and Chinese internauts, the government cannot actually implement 100% all-weather supervision of the Internet, which also provides the most basic premise for the core of this chapter, the Internet as a public sphere.

Although the concept of the public sphere, proposed by Jurgen Habermas, is mainly based on the western bourgeois society, we could summarize its most fundamental principles and try to implement them in the Chinese virtual community. By exploring the relevant theories of the public sphere and combining the results of the first two parts on the influence of Chinese websites/apps, we have selected some Chinese social networking platforms as possible carriers for the public interest – especially nationalism discussions – and analyzed them one by one.

By discussing the five attributes of Complexity, Accessibility, Interactivity, Autonomy, and Agenda-setting of Internet forums, Groups of Instant Messaging, and Weibo, we found that they have their own advantages and disadvantages, but all of them satisfy Chinese internauts' space need for public interest discussion to a certain extent. We integrate the characteristics of various types of social networks represented by the three into the overall Internet concept, and after comparing it with traditional media, we conclude that the Internet is superior to traditional media in the above five attributes. In addition, during the research process, we also found that China, like other countries, is forming new information nodes enhanced by the Internet, which breaks the monopoly of the upper-level elites on communication channels and information flow in the traditional pyramid communication model. As a result, individuals' level of autonomy and initiative in social communication has been improved, and the relationship with information nodes has also changed from passive indoctrinated to flashlight-mirror mode.

To sum up, we consider that although the Chinese government still maintains significant influence over both traditional and new media in the Internet age, the Internet still provides the best public sphere for Chinese internauts, allowing unprecedented massive discussion and participation based on public interest. To better understand this inconsistency caused by the new forms of communication, the concept of cybertransculturation coined by professor Sonia Valle de Frutos would make vital supplementary. The traditional transculturation occurs between cultural communities with different levels, generally marked by hierarchical and asymmetrical orders, and thus the public was divided into different communities. In the case of cybertransculturation processes, the connections and interrelationships usually occur fundamentally at equality and asymmetry levels as they take place in networks of networks, and thus, a public community is formed (2011, pp. 99-101). In this way, our fifth hypothesis, the Internet is the public sphere for Chinese cybernationalists, has been preliminarily confirmed.

In chapter 4, we narrowed the discussion topic to just cybernationalism. Through reviewing those highlight events of its development, we try to uncover the triggering points of nationalists and nationalistic

movements. As we have mentioned before, nationalism is not only an ideology linked to international affairs, so this chapter also consists of three parts which we will explain through the following aspects: external pressures, internal challenges, and those hybrid situations that contain both internal and external elements.

External pressure refers to moments when the main nationalistic incident participants can be categorized as China and foreign. During the research in chapter 2, we have found that China's modern nationalism was forced out by external pressure, which means the external pressure fundamentally could become a solid pillar of it. However, not all the burdens of history will necessarily be turned into catalysts for nationalism, as the reconciliation between France and Germany is an excellent example.

Unfortunately, in the 21st century, when the Internet has enhanced the international communication between individuals, the historical burden between China and western developed countries – especially the United States and Japan – has not been fundamentally resolved but instead aggravated by new conflicts. While U.S. military power quickly turned to and pressured China after the collapse of the Soviet Union, western cultural elites still observed and responded to China with a Cold War-style confrontational attitude. In the case investigations in this part, we found that seeking to disintegrate the Chinese government's ruling foundation and promote the Chinese people's resistance is the primary purpose of the western international media. Under such circumstances, the attitude of Chinese nationalists to external forces can only be confrontational. Furthermore, due to the gap in overall strength between China and the West and the historical lessons, Chinese nationalists will regard the response to external threats as the most crucial nationalist agenda.

The domestic challenges are about the self-identification of the Han Minzu and minorities in modern China. As the Internet breaks the monopolistic narrative by the government, the unsettled academic debate on the China Nation-Minzu structure is now expanding into the internauts group. On the one hand, due to the development of the economy, the major Minzu Han people began to develop demands for a cultural renaissance gradually, and its essence was that after communism stopped providing enough high culture for China Nation, the high culture of the ancient dynasty era began to occupy the vacuum left by.

Following the Hanfu movement, racist features inherited from proto-nationalism have also risen. The most moderate appeal of this ethnic nationalism is to restore the independence and subjectivity of the Han Minzu under the concept of China Nation. In other words, it is to strengthen the concept of the Han within the structure of the official China Nation-Han Individual and form a China Nation-Han Minzu-Han Individual structure, just like the minorities. This is actually one of the views of Chinese scholars that the China Nation is just the name of the simple summation of all Minzu in China, which was mentioned in the introduction chapter. Nevertheless, given that Fei Xiaotong's integrity with pluralist origins is still the mainstream in the academy, the Chinese government can only turn a blind eye to the demands of this moderate ethnic nationalism while banning the extreme racist groups.

On the other hand, the preferential policies specially provided by the Chinese government for ethnic minorities designated for upholding China Nation have not played a positive role in promoting civic nationalism. Due to the lack of specific theoretical guidance, the Chinese government deduced the guiding

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ideology that it must preferentially treat ethnic minorities on the basis of the vague theory of Han's atonement, and then various preferential treatment policies were set up. However, since the guiding ideology is not a rigorous theory but more like a political slogan, no specific boundaries are defined in the policymaking process, resulting in that ethnic minorities being superior to Han or some ethnic minorities being superior to others.

Moreover, the minorities have great freedom to further explore, blur, and expand the boundaries of preferred policies, and the most direct consequence of this freedom is Pan-Halaliation. Preferential policies and Pan-Halaliation have directly shaken the confidence of supporters of China Nation and civic nationalism, as they have impacted individual equality as the conceptual foundation for modern nationalism. More importantly, it directly encourages each Minzu to pursue greater independence of their own group rather than coordination and unity with the Chinese nation, which promotes the ethnic nationalism of each Minzu and the conversion from Minzu to the nation. Preferential policies and Pan-Halaliation have aggravated the civic nationalists' dissatisfaction and consolidated Han ethnic nationalism's survivability, even though it is officially pointed out as an adversary in PRC's constitution.

If the behavior model in the issues covered in the first two parts is still based on civic nationalism as the subject of the action and its interaction with others, then the problem exposed in the third part directly refers to Chinese nationalism's core agenda – why should the Chinese be part of the Chinese nation. Whether it is the rejection from the HKT region or the rebellion of reverse nationalists, the core issue is the disapproval of the China Nation as their community. The analysis based on proto-nationalism reveals that in order to solve this problem, the superiority of the China Nation must be re-established, which is the direction that Chinese nationalists are striving for. As we have seen in the events related to the 2008 Beijing Olympic Games, the Chinese take this event very seriously, as it can showcase the achievements of China's development, thereby promoting the recognition of China's superiority by Chinese citizens and even the world.

However, in the era of proto-nationalism, the superiority of China was too strong, while the suffering during the Century of Humiliation was too excruciating, and thus one or several stimulations of sports nationalism could not fundamentally satisfy the Chinese nationalism's imagination of the celestial empire. Therefore, even if China unifies Taiwan and suppresses HKT's anti-China Nation sentiment in the future, the theoretical basis of reverse nationalism – which is based on proto-nationalism, will remain without solving the superiority problem.

In chapter 5, we have studied the activism of Chinese cybernationalists. Like chapter 4, it involves analysis of some events but with statistics and big data analysis methods. Another major difference between the two chapters is, in chapter 4, the Chinese nationalists are mainly in a passive position, that they are shaped by the others, while in chapter 5, we saw how cybernationalists take the initiative in the cyberactivism, including self-identification and its consolidation, the formation of propaganda node on the Internet and a

nationalistic mobilization mechanism, and the usage of hacktivism-like actions to interfere with the enemies of nationalism on domestic and international networks.

Although nationalists will take offline actions in some extreme cases, these actions are usually too small to be regarded as satisfying the unity or number of social movements. At the same time, its prior organization and post-event publicity usually rely heavily on the Internet. In contrast, cyberactivism that does not directly challenge the Chinese government's concerns about offline collective action is more successful. It consolidates identity, can mobilize participants to form public opinion, exert pressure on policymakers, and has pushed society in the direction expected by nationalists in a certain scope. Therefore, the sixth hypothesis of the dissertation, that cybernationalists' activism mainly takes place online, is confirmed. Moreover, in the process of self-identification and nationalistic mobilization, we have verified the functional usage of social networks by cybernationalists. Combined with the result of chapter 3, the fifth hypothesis was fully confirmed.

Because of the alliance between the two sides, the Chinese government has indeed given greater tolerance to grassroots nationalism. China's economic development and external geopolitical situation are also more conducive to the development of nationalism. However, that does not mean everyone embraces its cyberactivism. Due to the rise of nationalism in China, we have seen social entities actively expressing support or acknowledging the principles of nationalism in many cases. On the other hand, we also have observed that some Chinese groups and foreign entities do not recognize the rise of Chinese nationalism and its political principles and have chosen to confront it in various ways. Hence, our hypothesis that various social entities have to respond to cybernationalists' activism, both supportively and contrarily, is supported by our findings.

If the fourth chapter is our empirical research to summarize the theory of Chinese cybernationalism, then the fifth chapter is the further confirmation and development of these theories on the Chinese Internet. Combining the content of these two chapters, we can make verifications and evaluations on the remaining hypothesis.

First, it is very clear that Chinese nationalists are not puppets of the Chinese government. Although the two sides have formed an alliance, there is a clear distance between online nationalists and the official narrative, both in theory and in practice: cybernationalists emphasize individual equality, while the government believes that the Han should make atonement to minorities; cybernationalists are very resistant to concessions to foreign countries, especially in terms of culture and history, while the government emphasizes the priority of economic and technological cooperation. After our research is done, we believe that both sides understand the existence of discrepancies. Nationalists would try to force the government to obey nationalistic principles through actions with high publicity, while the government hopes to control the possible scope of influence through active participation in cyberactivism. Therefore, our second hypothesis, the nationalist movement in today's China is mainly the result of the government's manipulation, is refuted.

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According to international scholars, nationalism is an ideology developed by the community of nations to uphold the interests of the collective and individual members. The interests mentioned here are externally embodied on the principle that Gellner stated: the boundaries of national political boundaries and national units should be congruent; while the internal principle is the equality of national membership mentioned by Greenfeld, which is the reason why nationalism can replace religion and mobilize the citizens in the secular industrial society.

The Chinese nationalism revealed during our research fits these two principles perfectly. First, the unification of China is the most substantial demand of Chinese nationalists. As the many cases we have mentioned show, they will attack any entity, foreign or Chinese, that deliberately or inadvertently violates the principle of China's unification, and promote this principle as the political correctness of the whole society through cyberactivism. Second, the principle of individual equality of members is also accepted by nationalists, although they tend to prefer Confucian equality of opportunity over absolute egalitarianism for proto-nationalism reasons. Indeed, the political practice of the Chinese government is more inclined to provide preferential policies or supra-national treatment to minorities or foreign entities. Instead of keeping silent for their alliance with the government, the nationalists tried their best to mobilize social pressure on the government in the studied cases. Therefore, we consider a confirmation that the current political demands of Chinese nationalists are fully in line with the universal principles of nationalism, and the third hypothesis is confirmed.

On the other hand, we conclude that two concepts must be discussed in terms of the Chinese context's influence on cybernationalists. First, we must pay attention to the concept "Century of Humiliation," which can be furtherly elaborated as the relationship between China and the international society. The three facts that should be acknowledged are that ancient China was civilized and powerful, China was once a semi-colonial of foreign hegemony during 1840-1949, and China in the 21st Century is an important member of international society. This kind of revival after a dramatic decline from a superior position is the background that cannot be ignored in the study of Chinese nationalism. Additionally, as we have repeatedly emphasized, the reason why China's proto-nationalism can evolve into modern nationalism is not only due to foreign aggression but also because of the technology and ideas brought by foreign countries. Therefore, the biggest feature of Chinese cybernationalism is that it attaches too much importance to foreign elements, including technical and ideological. As we found in the research, Chinese nationalists are wary of foreign countries and, at the same time, want to be respected by foreign countries. Among reverse nationalists, foreign superiority over China also has become their absolute psychological pillar.

The second concept related to the Chinese context is Confucianism. After dominating Chinese society for more than two thousand years, Confucianism today still has a profound influence on Chinese people. On the one hand, due to the traditional Confucian structure, China is seen as the absolute center of the world. Therefore, Chinese nationalists cannot be satisfied with a mediocre image of China. For the same reason, the arguments used by reverse nationalists to attack other Chinese also mainly originated from the

emphasis on China's backwardness. On the other hand, although civic nationalists do not reject the government-imposed concept of Minzu as ethnic nationalists do, they still tend to favor the cultural assimilation advocated by Confucianism, especially in the Muslim Job Interview case. Moreover, nationalists are still clinging to Confucian equality through meritocracy and are very angry about privileges gained without competition – especially examinations. It is precise because of this that the phenomenon of Pan-Halalazation is so opposed by nationalists that they are willing to take the risk of challenging the government by engaging in cyberactivism to express their dissatisfaction.

Based on the summary of the above two concepts, we confirm that the fourth and the last hypothesis, Chinese cybernationalists' political demands are attributed to the particular context in China, has been verified. During the process of evaluating all seven hypotheses, we have also completed the three main objectives proposed at the beginning of the paper: Investigating the origin and development of the Chinese cybernationalists; Explaining the cybernationalists' potential political demand; Analyzing the Internet's usage by Chinese cybernationalists. At the same time, we should note that in 2022 China is still advancing its informatization, industrialization, and urbanization – in other words, China is still on its way to modernization and the process of cybertransculturation. Since the whole society still has obvious characteristics of the “changing” defined by Dr. Huntington (2006), our research, in essence, is still an analysis of what has occurred within the concept of nationalism.

As a researcher, the author naturally wants this dissertation to not only cover the past but also serve as a basis for possible predictions about the future. But modern nationalism, as a mass ideology that took its full shape in China a century ago and has only broken away from official narratives in the last two decades, still has an unstable relationship with the government, with the rest of society, and with its adversaries. As we have discovered during our research, the rapid rise of nationalism has brought about polarization and radicalization of both nationalism and reverse nationalism. Therefore, at the end of the dissertation, we consider that some discussion of the most recent developments in nationalism is necessary.

The first is the profile of the nationalists themselves. On the one hand, cyberactivism in the form of *proscript* and *hostis publicus* is still in play, but due to theoretical preparation scarcity, the nationalistic passion has changed from an end to a means in the process. The success of cyberactivism lies in grasping the consensus of grassroots nationalism and government, and the activists have made this consensus an open vote for Chinese society. After consecutive cyberactivism movements, voting has been done, and opponents have been forced to keep a relatively low profile. In this case, repeated “voting” cannot achieve any social progress. Naturally, the public's enthusiasm for it has declined, and skepticism has risen. On the other hand, although cybernationalism emphasizes vigilance against foreign powers, for a long time, cybernationalism could not provide theoretical guidelines on how to expect China's relationship with the world, especially with the U.S. and other western developed countries.

After the Sino-U.S. trade war started in 2018, Chinese society as a whole has become more concerned about Sino-U.S. relations, and restlessness about foreign pressure is also on the rise. In this case,

facing the needs of the public, nationalism must prove its ability in narrative construction that can explain the situation. Therefore, nationalists are increasingly incorporating elements of international affairs into their daily identity construction and mobilization actions through the political narrative.

One of the most notable results is the Ruguanism (入关学) concept proposed by an internaut Shangaonian (山高县, literally: Shangao County). Ruguan, in Chinese 入关, can be understood as “Enter the Pass.” It refers to the historical event when the Manchu/Qing regimen broke through the Shanhaiguan (山海关) – a strategic bottleneck and fortress to the east of Peking – and replaced the Ming dynasty in the 17th century. As one iconic event of the dynastic cycle, Ruguan is taught in the Chinese history textbook in the term “Qing Army enter the Pass” (清军入关).

Because the Ming was ruled by Han emperors and Qing was established by the Manchu minority, among many ethnic nationalists, Ruguan represents the metaphor of the victory of barbarians over civilization. Thus for a long time, Ruguan was mainly discussed in a negative tone full of sadness by Chinese internauts. However, in a totally different tone, Shangaonian reused the Ruguan and Ming-Qing wars to explain China’s current challenges. In December of 2019, under the question “What historical lessons did Chinese learn from the history of the Ming’s fallen?” on the Zhihu platform, in less than three hundred words, Shangaonian laid down the cornerstone of the influential Ruguanism, which includes nine principles/declarations:

1. Ruguan is the only path to Jurchen’s¹⁴² unity, the only option for Jurchen’s survival, the only road to Jurchen’s rise.
2. Dust will not go without the broom. Ming will not perish quickly without Jurchen’s push.
3. Eagle training and ginseng digging make some money, but that will not change the reality that most Jurchen youths have to do fish catching.
4. When catching fish, do not daydream about the celestial empire. Fan Wencheng (an ordinary Ming intellectual) can not be bribed through eagle and fish, nor Hong Chengchou (Ming’s defense minister).
5. Rather than accept Ming’s edict outside the Pass, it is better to print the edict in the imperial capital.
6. Even without Ming’s edict, Jurchen is not starved to death.
7. The common ancestry and race can not win Yehe Jurchen’s submission or Korean’s surrender.
8. The amateur learning of Confucian saint theories in Hetu-Ala (Manchu capital) can not change the reality of fish catching.

¹⁴² Jurchen is the unofficial name of Manchu.

9. Do not vainly fantasize about the saint theories before Ruguan; after Ruguan, the authentic Confucian grandmasters will come to our service voluntarily.

Shangaoxian's Ruguanism would be clueless for people unfamiliar with Ming-Qing history, but once understood that Jurchen means Chinese and Ming stands for the U.S., Ruguanism is just another practice of the Insinuating History (影射史学) – a modern allegory that uses historical materials for the explanation of the current situation.

Other metaphors used in Ruguanism include eagle training and ginseng digging are the few advanced and high-income industries China has, and fish catching is the low-value and exhausting one. The Manchu Jurchen is the mainland Chinese, while Yehe Jurchen is those non-mainland Chinese who side with the U.S. The edict, saint theories, and Confucian grandmasters stand for the U.S./western recognition and ideology institutions.

Once we replace the Ming-Qing terms with their connotation for the current world, the idea of the message of Shangaoxian is very clear: only by fighting and winning against the U.S. can China upgrade its economy and obtain more high-output jobs, can make HKT separatists abandon the anti-China confrontation, and can be freed from the evil role-setting under the value system controlled by the west. As underscored by a Chinese researcher, in the face of declining social mobility and economic slowdown, the essence of Ruguanism is to call for breaking the international system dominated by the United States (Yang, 2020, p. 71).

From YHA to Wolf Warrior to Ruguanism, we find that the statement of cybernationalists has become increasingly assertive, more specific, and more systematic at the same time. Considering the decades of war between the Ming and Qing Dynasties, it is not excessive to view Ruguanism as advocacy for the war against North America. However, assertiveness did not prevent Ruguanism from becoming popular. According to the BBC's report, there were twenty thousand questions and answers about Ruguanism made in seven months since its invention, and Shangaoxian's video posted on the Bilibili platform quickly exceeded one million views.¹⁴³

Apart from the domestic economic pressures mentioned before, as well as the betrayal of orientalist narratives – such as the Thucydides Trap theory hotly debated by Chinese and foreign scholars and politicians – and a return to traditional Chinese historical concepts, the deeper reason why Ruguanism can win publicity is that the Ming Dynasty wanted to annihilate Manchu-Jurchen from the beginning, which fits Chinese nationalists' desperate view of the current international situation – a prosperous and powerful China is not allowed to exist under an international order dominated by the United States. However, does this desperate

¹⁴³ <https://www.bbc.com/zhongwen/simp/chinese-news-53803071>

view just a persecutory delusion? Maybe not. Just one month before the Russia-Ukraine war, top western militaries are still planning a new Christian crusade against China with Putin¹⁴⁴.

The nationalists' main adversaries, the reverse nationalists, are also on an increasingly radical path. In addition to maintaining doxxing and harassing nationalists, they have also gradually developed a more systematic hatred narrative: Tuzhi (屠支, literally: Massacre Zhina) or Tutu (屠屠).¹⁴⁵ On Reddit, an American internet forum portal, the reverse nationalists gather under the subreddit CLTV and give a full explanation of their Tuzhi theory.¹⁴⁶

1. **Why:** Because Zhina deserves, the problems cannot be solved without the slaughter of a billion Zhina pigs.
2. **How:** To support Junta is the best way. The fundamental difference between Zhina pigs and humans is that they have no humanity, and we should follow Xi Jinping's Tuzhi measure, forcibly slaughtering with blockade of residential areas and nucleic acid lie detector. It is done once all inhuman Zhina pigs are killed.
3. **Benefits:** Economically, it helps other countries to develop further; environmentally, it reduces the physical and audio-visual contaminations caused by Zhina pigs and saves more resources; it also protects the dogs and cats from mistreatment, improving humanity in the meat production process; it would stop the Zhina pigs from spreading overwork thinking and Confucianism, preventing after-school tutoring, gangsters, prostitutes, and tax evasion; geopolitically, it would reduce the risk of nuclear war, stabilizing the Asia-Pacific region, cutting off Taliban and other terrorists' supplement, accelerating North Korea's collapse and Russian's decadency, helping Taiwan to become truly independent, helping Hong Kong to become part of Europe, and helping minorities to seek nation liberation.
4. **Personal gains:** Zhina pigs will eventually understand us and admire us for we are doing the good.

The narratives of the messages of the reverse nationalists are more direct and extreme than nationalists and even more racist than past patterns of spiritual foreigner behavior. Not only are they not acknowledging and despising the Chinese nation, but they want to annihilate it biologically. The reverse nationalists' racist tendency forced the Reddit official to close their original viral organization, the

¹⁴⁴ <https://www.irishtimes.com/news/world/europe/ukraine-says-berlin-relationship-in-tatters-over-navy-chief-s-remarks-1.4783695>

¹⁴⁵ Due to the censorship, the word 屠 is usually replaced by its homophone 图, thus the terms are usually written in 图支 and 图图.

¹⁴⁶ <https://www.reddit.com/r/CLTV/comments/ov8b0t/%E5%9B%BE%E6%94%AF%E7%90%86%E8%AE%BA%E5%8C%96%E4%B8%BA%E4%BB%80%E4%B9%88%E5%9B%BE%E6%80%8E%E4%B9%88%E5%9B%BE%E5%A4%9A%E5%B0%91%E5%9B%BE%E6%94%AF%E7%9A%84%E5%A5%BD%E5%A4%84%E6%98%AF%E4%BB%80%E4%B9%88/>

ChongLang TV subreddit. So they had to move to the CLTV subreddit and other social platforms, including chonglangTV on bbs.market, Charliebbs, and chonglangTV on Scored platform.

On the other hand, to counter Chinese nationalism, as in the HKT case, reverse nationalists must rely on external forces in their activism. A most recent case is “The Great Translation Movement” (TGTM, 大翻译运动), launched by ChongLang TV. After the start of the Russia-Ukraine war in early 2022, reverse nationalists hope to expose Chinese social networks’ support for Russia and other disparaging remarks against the west on Twitter to undermine China’s international reputation and escalate China’s confrontation with foreign countries. This action quickly got the attention of western media, including CNN¹⁴⁷, Deutsche Welle¹⁴⁸, Radio France Internationale¹⁴⁹, and Radio Free Asia¹⁵⁰. CNN considers that TGTM’s intention is to provide the world with an alternative voice, and the remark that TGTM helps the Chinese integrate into a truly civilized society appeared in the report of Deutsche Welle. However, the reverse nationalism and racism involved in ChongLang TV were sidelined, and the RFA report even accused the banning of the ChongLang TV subreddit is for Chinese investment in Reddit. Under the current geopolitical situation, reverse nationalists are clearly gaining tolerance and support from western media.

Whether nationalists or reverse nationalists, the problem they need to face is actually the same, which is also one of the two critical questions for Chinese cybernationalism: How should the relationship between China and the western world be? The other problem is naturally the relationship between various Minzu under the China nation framework. However, since the direct contradiction between China and the U.S. has become increasingly conspicuous since 2018, just as the CPC once temporarily chose to cooperate with the landlords, today’s nationalists also focus on responding to external pressures.

The answer given by both nationalists and reverse nationalists is an escalation of confrontation on the question of the relationship between China and the west, but what should be more worthy of our attention is the answer given by the Chinese government. As the leader of China, when Xi Jinping described the “Chinese Dream” that he proposed in 2012, in addition to economic development, military strength, and social service progress, on ideological issues, he only emphasized that through the above-mentioned results to show the superiority of the Chinese system, and thereby the necessity of adhering to socialism with Chinese characteristics, without further elaboration on China’s relationship with the western world, although the general interpretation by outside is to reclaim China’s place as a global power and reshape the global order (Economy, 2018, pp. 4-5).

However, for neither the official theory nor grassroots Ruguanism, even assuming that they both seek to reshape the international order and ultimately succeed, there is no arrangement for reshaped world

¹⁴⁷ <https://edition.cnn.com/2022/04/13/china/china-ukraine-great-translation-movement-intl-hnk-mic/index.html>

¹⁴⁸ <https://p.dw.com/p/48OFF>

¹⁴⁹ <https://www.rfi.fr/cn/%E4%B8%AD%E5%9B%BD/20220328-%E5%A4%A7%E7%BF%BB%E8%AF%91%E8%BF%90%E5%8A%A8%E5%90%91%E5%85%A8%E7%90%83%E5%B1%95%E7%8E%B0%E4%B8%AD%E5%9B%BD%E7%BD%91%E6%B0%91%E8%A8%80%E8%AE%BA-%E6%8C%87%E4%B8%AD%E5%9B%BD%E5%AE%98%E5%AA%92-%E8%AF%B4%E8%B0%8E>

¹⁵⁰ <https://www.rfa.org/cantonese/news/reddit-03042022114155.html>

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order in either narrative, especially the arrangements for the western countries. Ruguanism only emphasizes the destruction of American domination of the world, while the official theory still adheres to the traditional idea of Peaceful Rise (和平崛起), hoping to prove China's superiority only through the comprehensive development of society, a measure much close to professor Joseph Nye's Soft Power (1990).

Obviously, the former is barely a political declaration based on hatred of external pressure and has no practical feasibility, but the latter might be too naive in the case of increasing external pressure – although Trump has stepped down, there is no sign that the new American administration has any intention to change the previous policy on China. In its interactions with the U.S., the Chinese government's response was more like a stress response than a targeted ideological-guided decision. While living in Egypt, American writer Peter Hessler observed the Sino-Egypt cooperation program and found that Chinese officials seem to have only a pragmatist line of thinking, only talking about the economy but having no idea about ideological issues. As one Asian female diplomat told him: "To be honest, I think that even within China they don't know what kind of ideology they're going after" (2015).

There are many reasons for China's plight, and one most important reason is that the Chinese government has not found a way to deal with the historical burden brought by proto-nationalism and the Century of Humiliation in the new situation. In the 1990s, China was not in a developing situation compared to other international powers and lacked international influence. Thus CPC could easily find similarities with the China of the Century of Humiliation. Therefore, Deng Xiaoping was able to propose a strategy that "hides its brightness and bides its time" and won the approval of nationalists.

But in the 2020s, China is already "the elephant in the room," with nowhere to hide. So then, the Chinese government must redesign a set of strategies and theories to convince nationalists, which must simultaneously include the Century of Humiliation, the progress made today, and a future outlook based on pro-nationalism. Before becoming China's national leader, during a visit to Mexico, Xi Jinping once said, "There are some foreigners who have eaten their fill and have nothing better to do than point their fingers at our affairs. China does not, first, export revolution; second, export poverty and hunger; or third, cause unnecessary trouble for them. What else is there to say" (Sim, 2009).

For today's China, the Century of Humiliation could be an excellent excuse to cause trouble for foreign countries, and nationalists will warmly welcome it. However, now that Xi Jinping is about to end his second term, but China has not taken the initiative to wave the banner of historical nationalism to create unnecessary troubles. In other words, the Chinese government is unwilling to redesign a strategy with overpowered nationalistic rhetoric, but it still has not found any other path, and thus the ideological vacuum is created.

Another possible reason is that in the face of the huge cultural differences between China and the West, there is not enough effective communication between the two sides, especially the western countries that have long held the upper hand. In December 2016, when Trump had just won the general election, Kissinger was interviewed by Jeffrey Goldberg, editor-in-chief of The Atlantic magazine. He compared his

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exchanges with Mao Zedong and Zhou Enlai and the exchanges between Chinese and American leaders of the new era. He believes that “Yet the Chinese leave such conversations frustrated. The primary subject they want to discuss – philosophical in nature – is never raised, which is ‘If we were you, we might try to suppress our rise. Do you seek to suppress us? If you do not, what will the world look like when we are both strong, as we expect to be?’” (Goldberg, 2016)

At the beginning of the dissertation, we also mentioned that on the topic of Chinese nationalism, most western researchers either do not understand enough or overemphasize the role of CPC while ignoring other equally important historical factors. Just as the Chinese government can only deal with the issues of nationalism – western countries in a stress-response style, many western researchers can only interpret the specific actions of Chinese nationalism from the perspective of the west also in a stress-response way, while cannot theorize and systematize the analysis in the same way of investigating the ethnic conflicts within Yugoslavia. Therefore, as an author who has received all higher transcultural education abroad, I also hope that through this dissertation, I could provide the western academy with some understanding of nationalism from the Chinese and hybrid perspective, with possibly maximized profundity and width, and make the greatest preparation efforts for further scientific research and various exchanges in the future.

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Appendix

All available at <https://github.com/AureliusDeng/Dissertation-Documents>

2011 Civil Service Recruitment Examination result of Ningxia Hui Autonomous Region: *Ningxia 2011*

CSRE.xls

BBC Reeducation Camp Report's Youtube comment: *Uyghurs in the reeducation camp_BBC News.xlsx*

Chinese LDA analysis codes: *LDA_Chinese.ipynb*

Chinese keywords extraction of TextRank and TF-IDF codes: *keyword-extraction.ipynb*

Chinese sentiment analysis codes: *Sentiments_Analysis_Chinese.ipynb*

Chinese word segmentation codes: *Chinese-sentence-segmentation.ipynb*

Deutsche Welle Chinese-Journalistic Agenda-Setting case: *DWChinaWuhan.xlsx*

El País-Journalistic Agenda-Setting case: *ELPAÍSChinaWuhan.xlsx*

English sentiment analysis codes: *Sentiments_Polarity_Subjectivity_Analysis_English.ipynb*

God's Eagle Weibo comment: *God's_Eagle_weibo_data.xlsx*

God's Eagle interview record: *Interview with God's Eagle_in Chinese.mht*

Muslim Job Interview Weibo comment: *WeiboData_Job Interview of a Muslim.xlsx*

Translation sentiment analysis codes: *Sentiments_Polarity_Subjectivity_Analysis_Trans.ipynb*

The New York Times-Journalistic Agenda-Setting case: *NYTChinaWuhan.xlsx*

Year Hare Affair comment: *Year Hare Affair_Comments_Bilibili.xlsx*