

# Conceptualizing the cultural and political facets of “Chinese Nationalism” in an era of China’s global rise

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**Abstract** Understanding Chinese nationalism and national identity is of primary importance in comprehending the increasingly assertive role that a rising China plays on the global political scene. But “Chinese nationalism” is a very difficult concept to deal with due to differences in the Western and Chinese understandings of the term. This article attempts to bridge the gap by analyzing both Chinese and Western conceptualizations of the term and discussing the difference between patriotism and nationalism and their interchange in China today. The importance of nationalism/patriotism in shaping modern Chinese society is also recognized by the Chinese state, that deliberately fosters patriotic sentiment among the young generation through the *Patriotic Education Campaign*. Material from this campaign is used to provide an important indication of the patriotic content of current Chinese state nationalism.

**Keywords** Identity · Nationalism · Patriotism · Civilization · Nation

## The ancient “civilization state” and the modern “nation state”

The search to ensure China’s existence as a prosperous and strong nation and political entity has been a key concern in Chinese modern history. This key concern as well as challenge confronting China has been related to the necessity of creating a new consciousness and viable culture capable of coupling with the multiple challenges and constructing a new society, that is not only “Chinese” in name but also in essence.

Since China implemented the open-door policy from the late 1970s on, the Chinese economy has been gradually and deeply integrated with that of the global economy.

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During the last three decades, many of the contradictions in Beijing's external relations, especially its relations with the West, lie in the externalities generated by its "open-door policy" versus the internalities embedded in the deep-rooted "Chinese consciousness" (Li 2010). The latter is based on the historical memory of a "century of humiliation",<sup>1</sup> which translates into two conflicting faces of China: entering the world capitalist market while preserving its "socialist" and "national" identity. A key contradiction arises between China's "victim mentality"<sup>2</sup> based on the historical experiences and suspicion against the West and Japan and an intense desire to join the power club of Western advanced countries. With its sustained economic growth and rising military strength, China wants the established US-led international community to acknowledge its "Chinese characteristics" as it joins the international order. However, the West tends to interpret "Chinese characteristics" as China's hidden agenda to modify the established rules toward its own interest.

In order to understand what is behind "Chinese consciousness" and "Chinese characteristics" vis-à-vis many China-West confrontations in international politics, such as many issues related to democracy, human rights, the Tibet question, the Xing Jiang riots, etc., the paper intends to provide a framework for understanding these confrontations from the perspectives of looking into the conceptual differences between China and the West, which provides a background foundation for a better comprehension. In other words, it attempts to examine the historical, cultural and political components of many concepts, such as "nation", "nationalism" and "identity", without which one cannot have a contextual understanding and uncover the essence of the complicated China-West relations.

The development of modern Chinese nationalism in its varieties of expression and appearance has been followed with great interest by Western and Chinese researchers alike due to its heuristic and complicated nature, as well as its potential as a social force in today's China. China's long and winding path to modernity and nation-state status is reflected in the many faces of modern Chinese nationalism.

First of all, it is important to understand the fact that China's sense of identity comes from its long history as a "civilization state". That is to say, to apply the unit of analysis of "nation state" (a term that has its historical root in the formation of the modern nation-state system in Europe) to China is paradoxical. The notion that China is a "civilization state" rather than a "nation state" was first formulated by Lucian Pye in a very explicit tone:

The starting point for understanding the problem is to recognize that China is not just another nation-state in the family of nations. China is a civilization pretending to be a state. The story of modern China could be described as the

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<sup>1</sup> The "century of humiliation" refers to the period between the first Sino-British Opium War (1839) and the end of the Chinese Civil War (1949). During this period of more than 100 years the political incursion, economic exploitation, and military aggression by western imperialist countries are firmly perceived as the key factor that has disrupted China's economic development, undermined the historical glory of the Chinese civilization, and humiliated the Chinese nation.

<sup>2</sup> The notion of "victim mentality" is connected with China's painful experience of the "century of humiliation" (note 1). It has affected the Chinese consciousness in its relations with the West since the founding the People's Republic in 1949. Despite the passage of time, the scars of memory still remain and have in many ways shaped China's foreign policy and international relations.

effort by both Chinese and foreigners to squeeze a civilization into the arbitrary, constraining framework of the modern state, an institutional invention that came out of the fragmentation of the West’s own civilization. (Pye 1990, p. 58)

Accordingly, Pye points out the paradoxes when applying the Western concept of “nationalism” to the Chinese context:

[In] spite of the greatness of Chinese history, in spite of the manifest durability of everyday Chinese culture...the historical pattern of China’s modernization has left China with a relatively inchoate and incoherent form of nationalism.... although China produced one of the world’s greatest civilizations and still has a powerful and tenacious culture, it now has in modern times a relatively *contentless* form of nationalism. ... the Chinese political class, in spite of such a formless nationalism, has been able to exploit the mystique of patriotism to neutralize politically the very Chinese who have been the most successful in modernizing. (Pye 1993, pp. 107–108. *Italic added*)

The above “contentless form of nationalism” clearly implies an approach to conceptualize “Chinese nationalism” that cannot be based on a “nation+state” framework. The central features of *China as a civilization state* are characterized by the social and political culture under the “mandate of heaven” order (天下). This order predetermines the acceptance of a mono moral- and socio-political arrangement, in which Confucianism as an overall philosophical and ethical guideline had been the ruling ideology for Chinese empires for centuries. Under this order the Chinese imperial state enjoys “absolute” power and “natural” authority, and it permits no challenge. The state is seen as the guardian, custodian and embodiment of the imperial civilization. The duty of the state is to protect imperial China’s unity and integrity—unity is its first priority, while plurality is the condition of its existence.<sup>3</sup> Therefore, it is too fluid and content less to apply the Western nation-state framework of “nationalism” to the Chinese context.

Understanding the characteristics of China as a “civilization state” provides a framework of understanding the Chinese constant endeavours to “fill in the content”, willingly or unwillingly, by displaying the capacity of absorbing foreign ideas and influences, and sinicizing and transforming them into an integral part of native value systems. Historically, China has experienced the sinicization of Buddhism and Marxism-Leninism. Today, the success of “Chinese capitalism” (in China it is politically correct to call it “socialist market economy”) and its integration with the capitalist world system demonstrates how China has been able to ideologically and culturally transform and sinicize a free market capitalism into a state capitalism with Chinese characteristics (Li 2004), despite the fact that these terms “socialist market economy” or “market economy with Chinese characteristics”, and “Confucian businessman”, are politically and culturally contradictory.

<sup>3</sup> Despite the historical rise and fall of different dynasties, “national unity” has always been the priority for Chinese rulers. This can be offered as an explanation for why China could offer Hong Kong and Macau “one country two systems”, a formula alien to the Western nation-state framework of understanding. This can also be seen as indicative of why “the separation of Taiwan from the Mainland” has always been an issue of great controversy, embedded with political risks, regardless of the gap between the two sides of the strait.

This discrepancy is caused by modern Chinese history, where the multicultural Qing Empire formed the basis upon which the later development of a modern Chinese nation state was founded, thereby creating a difficult task for later rulers of China, who faced the challenge of transforming a civilization into a unified nation. After the 1949 Revolution, the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) created a political view of the nation in which China was defined as a unified but multi-ethnic nation. Chinese history was presented as the history of the Chinese Nation (Zhonghua Minzu 中华民族) originating in the Yellow River Basin and retaining its unique cultural characteristics throughout China's long history while incorporating various ethnic groups. This version of Chinese history serves to present a picture of a multiethnic yet culturally unified nation, held together by loyalty to the unique Chinese culture since time immemorial.

This discrepancy between the actual modernity of the nation state and the alleged ancient nature of the nation is not unique to China. The modern nation state is inextricably linked to a period of human history where modern mass media and mass participation in the political arena created an “imagined community” ideally delimited by national borders. Two classic definitions of the nation presents rather different yet related explanations of what a nation is:

“[A nation is]... a named human population, sharing an historic territory, common myths and historical memories, a mass, public culture, and common legal rights and duties for all members” (Smith 1995, p. 43)

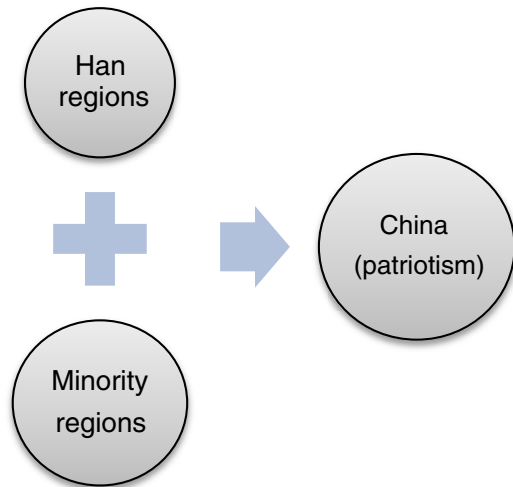
“...it [the nation] is an imagined political community – and imagined as both inherently limited and sovereign” (Anderson 1991, p. 6)

While the above definitions differ in their approach to the concept of the nation—Smith presents a Weberian ideal-type definition that can serve to determine whether a given state is actually a nation-state, while Anderson takes a social-constructivist approach—they have in common an emphasis on *community*, or in Smith's words: mass culture and common rights and duties. Nationalism can then be defined either as a political ideology that holds that “ethnic boundaries should not cut across political ones” (Gellner 1996, p. 1), as a cultural object along the lines of gender and religion (Anderson) or as “an ideological movement aiming to attain or maintain autonomy, unity and identity for a social group which is deemed to constitute a nation” (Smith 1991, p. 51). This emphasis on unity, community, and the cohesive strength of the abstract concept of the nation helps explain why nationalism is so important in China today and why care has to be taken in translating “nationalism” into Chinese.

### Conceptual scrutiny: patriotism or nationalism?

While many Western scholars use the terms patriotism and nationalism interchangeably (and when they *do* distinguish there seems to be a tendency to conclude that “we” are patriots while “the others” are nationalist zealots (Billig 1995), there is a great difference in the connotations of the Chinese translations of the two terms. The Chinese word for patriotism, *aiguo zhuyi* [爱国主义], literally means *love-*

**Fig. 1** China (中国), a historically evolved and imperial entity (civilization state)



*country-ism* and is used to describe both the current wave of popular nationalism in China (see for instance Pang 2009) and the state sponsored ideology promoted in school curriculums, while the official translation of nationalism, *minzu zhuyi* [民族主义] (a literal translation would be *nation-ism* or *ethnic-group-ism*), is rarely used to describe the current wave of loyalty to China. The explanation for this has to be sought in the particular character of Chinese history.

The above Fig. 1 shows that the geographic size of China had been expanded throughout the history bringing a variety of cultures and ethnic groups into its imperial reign—a cultural civilization consisting of the Han nation as the pivotal majority together with multiple ethnic cultural entities as “minorities” (少数民族). What is interesting and important to notice is the fact that actually most of the expansions were historically carried out during the periods when China was once conquered and ruled for centuries by powerful minority groups such as the Mongols and the Manchus. Despite the fact that they might want to change China’s (Han nation) fundamental character, but they realized the absolute imperativeness of accepting Han culture and mode of governance due to the size of the Han population. Gradually, the ruling groups were themselves changed and sinicized. Therefore, historically and culturally speaking, the central connotation underlining “patriotism” in China, especially after the founding of the People’s Republic of China, has been embedded in the acceptance of China’s territorial integrity.

Figure 2 indicates the conceptual inter-connectedness to Fig. 1 in the context of China. The clear difference between China and the West in the conceptual notion of “nationalism” manifests the differences between what Pye intends to imply by contrasting “civilization state” vis-a-vis “nation state”. In line with the principle of nation state logic, China has 55 non-Han ethnic minority groups, and even if not all of them can be entitled to be a “nation”, at least the large minority groups, such as Tibetan and Mongolian, are culturally and ethnically nations. Whereas, the Chinese conceptual notion of “nationalism”—Chinese nation (中华民族)—is a holistic

civilization-oriented notion combining Han nation (汉族) together with all ethnic minority groups (少数民族). Thus, to speak of or to criticize the rise of “Chinese nationalism” is a paradox, because the conceptual content of “Chinese nationalism” is obviously different in China and the West.

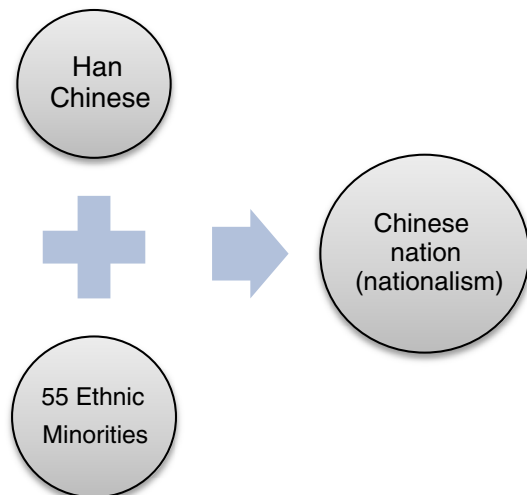
China has been indeed facing many challenges after it was forcefully brought into the West-led capitalist world system, willingly or unwillingly. After the emergence of the Westphalian “nation state” as a concept and a unit of international relations, the basic principle in inter-state affairs is based on sovereignty and ethnic identity on the one hand, and on ideas and values of self-determination, federalism on the other. China now claims to be a member of the world nation-state family, but its national identity is still rooted in a historical “empire” framework of understanding. This is why, one Chinese scholar argues, it is so difficult to establish “nation-state democracy” in China, because the logic of democracy is “associated with far more political divorces than marriages” (He 2003, p. 74, 85).

With 92 percent of the Chinese population belonging to the Han majority, and the remaining 8 percent ethnic minorities living in some of the more contested areas of China (Tibet, Xinjiang, Mongolia, Yunnan, Guangxi, Guizhou, etc.), any ideology that stresses the ethnic component of nationalism would be dangerous to the unity of China. Today, *minzu zhuyi* (nationalism) is often used to refer to historical versions of nationalism or to ethnic nationalisms in other countries, while *aiguo zhuyi* (patriotism) is consistently used to describe contemporary Chinese nationalism.

### Patriotism and state nationalism in China: two sides of the same coin

Thirty years ago, Lucian Pye argued that China was suffering from a superiority and an inferiority complex at the same time (Pye 1990). The feeling of superiority was based on the indisputable former greatness of the Chinese civilization, and the expectation that it was simply a matter of time before China was yet again ready to

**Fig. 2** Chinese nation (中华民族), a historically evolved and politized notion



assume its natural status as a great power. The inferiority complex was caused by the many defeats suffered at the hands of those nations that were previously hardly deemed worthy of notice by the Chinese imperial state. Today, as China comes ever closer to realizing its dream of attaining former greatness, this dichotomy is still very apparent. The “victim complex” causes what Wu Jiaxiang calls “morbid nationalism” as seen in the bestseller *China is Unhappy* (中国不高兴) from 2009 (Song et al. 2009), written by some of the authors of the likewise hugely popular *China Can Say No* (中国可以说“不”) (Song et al. 1996) that expressed China’s disillusionment with the West in the nineties (Wu 2011). While Wu is very critical of the unhealthy nature of this morbid nationalism, he at the same time advocates the necessity of a benign liberal nationalism, that safeguards national interests while allowing room for discussion and criticism. He argues that whereas morbid nationalism is oriented towards past wrongs and the need to right these wrongs a liberal nationalism is oriented towards the future. The argument that China needs nationalism as an important element in nation-building is something that Wu shares with many intellectuals in China and with the Chinese government as well.

Nevertheless, as mentioned above, due to the historical and cultural facets of both the Chinese state—the historical formation of the Chinese empire (中华帝国), now People’s Republic of China (中华人民共和国)—and the Chinese nation (the multiple cultural and ethnic constituent parts of the Chinese nation 中华民族), few Chinese people including the intellectuals can either define or provide a good and applicable notion of “Chinese nationalism” (中国民族主义). If the notion only covers the Han nation, then it bears the negative connotation of “Great Hanism” (大汉族主义), which is politically incorrect. However, if the concept of Chinese nationalism refers to “Great China” (大中华) covering not only the internal ethnic minorities but also the overseas Chinese of all over the world including Hong Kong, Macau, Taiwan and East and Southeast Asia, then it creates an image of the historical and cultural “imperial China” that brought most part of the region into a web of tributary relationships.

Throughout China’s modern history, there have been several attempts to imbue Chinese nationalism with a sinicized content suitable to the particular conditions of the current situation. The largest and most recent state-sponsored attempt is the so-called *patriotic education campaign* instituted in the aftermath of the student demonstrations in 1989 by the Chinese government in order to instill proper values in the students who had been fascinated by Western democratic ideals. The campaign has since evolved into one of the largest mass campaigns in China’s history using various platforms to further its patriotic message (Wang 2012). Patriotism consists of, apart from learning and memorizing the historical narratives of the “century of humiliation” and China’s modern revolutionary history, the conceptual integration in the Chinese state and nation (中国+中华民族) and the strong belief in China’s rise to its previous historical and cultural glory.

One of the most important effects of the campaign has been to change the focus of history education in schools all over China. Whereas history textbooks published before the campaign told the history of CCP struggles and victories against the Nationalist Party (GMD) and foreign powers and the importance of class struggle, the newer history textbooks focus more on the humiliations suffered at the hands of Japan and other invaders casting China in the role of victim rather than victor (Wang





**Fig. 3** Patriotic education posters

2012). A course in Chinese history has replaced the earlier obligatory course in Marxism-Leninism and Mao Zedong thought, thereby providing a very vivid illustration of the use of state nationalism to fill the ideological vacuum left after socialism. As an illustration of the content of the Chinese state's version of nationalism, we will take a look at three posters created for the patriotic education campaign in the 1990s (Fig. 3).<sup>4</sup>

We already have

One of the important sources of pride for current nationalism is China's long history and former status as one of the earliest ancient civilizations. The poster on the left is the first in a series of four<sup>5</sup> posters designed to be used in the patriotic education campaign in Chinese schools in 1995. It shows symbols of imperial power, a column standing in front of the Forbidden City in Beijing against a background of a dragon, a symbol of the Chinese nation (龙的传人), as well as smaller pictures illustrating the ancient nature of Chinese culture. At the bottom of the poster one see the Great Wall, always a symbol of imperial greatness and of the repelling of encroaching foreign powers. The main caption says "We already have" and from the pictures we can conclude that what China already has is an ancient culture, imperial greatness and a long history.

How can we forget

The second poster in the series shows another column, but this time it is one of the broken remnants of the so-called Old Summer Palace, the Yuan Ming Yuan, which was destroyed by the Anglo-French army during the second Opium War in the

<sup>4</sup> Source: <http://chineseposters.net/themes/patriotic-education-1994.php> (Accessed May 3).

<sup>5</sup> For reasons of space, we have left out the third of the four posters in the series. The theme of the missing poster, the great victories of the communist revolution, is not central to the argument in this paper, as it plays a minor role in modern cyber-nationalism.



nineteenth century. The palace has never been rebuilt and today serves an important role as a reminder of the result of China’s first clashes with the modern Western nation-states. The Opium Wars (1839–1842 and 1856–1860) mark the beginning of the period known as the *Century of Humiliation* (百年国耻) in China. This period witnessed the transition from the self-contained Middle Kingdom, where the Chinese civilization was dominant in Asia, to the modern world order where China is one nation-state among many—albeit a very powerful nation today. The smaller pictures within the posters present more symbols of past humiliations; the Boxer Rebellion, the *Unequal Treaties*<sup>6</sup> ending the Opium War, and the Nanjing Massacre perpetrated by Japan. The 100 years of humiliation ended in 1949 with the communist revolution, but is still kept very much alive in Chinese history teaching—as the main text on the poster reminds us: *How can we forget!*

### We are creating

The final poster shown here refers to the bright future that lies ahead for China. We see a rocket against the background of the Altar of Heaven in Beijing as well as smaller pictures of Deng Xiaoping, the architect behind China’s economic reforms, Hong Kong, which would be returned to China 2 years after the creation of these posters, a modern skyline from a coastal city, and the Great Hall of the People. The caption reads *We are creating*. Even in this poster, where the main theme is China’s bright future, symbols of former greatness (the Altar of Heaven) and past humiliations (Hong Kong, a British colony until 1997) have made their way into the imagery.

Taken together, the three posters very nicely illustrate the sources feeding the present patriotic wave in China, and they also emphasize the very important role played by historical memory in the patriotic education campaign. Wang (2012) has called the campaign the largest social movement in Chinese history, as it has now been in effect since 1991 and is not limited to school children, but also affects the rest of Chinese society through a very sophisticated use of entertainment and media platforms, including for instance the opening ceremony of the Olympic games, television shows, online gaming, and the establishment of patriotic education bases on historical sites through all of China.

The effect of the campaign has been debated. The young generations in China are often quite skeptical about political propaganda (Wang 2012) and are quite capable of identifying the government’s efforts at political indoctrination as exemplified by a recent movie on the communist hero Lei Feng, which sold a grand total of zero tickets during its opening weekend in Nanjing.<sup>7</sup> But some studies indicate that the

<sup>6</sup> “Unequal treaties” refer to a number of treaties China had to sign after its defeat in the Opium Wars. One of them is, for example, *The Treaty of Nanjing*, which was signed on August 29, 1842. It was the first unequal treaty in the history of China’s foreign relations following its defeat in the first Opium War. The Treaty forced China to pay a huge indemnity to Britain for the cost of war and imposed China a tariff on all imported goods. It allowed Hong Kong to be given to the British on a 99-year lease. The treaty also stated that the coastal ports of Xiamen, Guangzhou, Fuzhou, Ningbo, and Shanghai should be opened to foreign trade. What was most damaging to China was the loss of its sovereignty: the fixed tariff, extraterritoriality, and the most favored nation provisions.

<sup>7</sup> <http://e.weibo.com/1642088277/zmaacb1bc>. Accessed April 10 2013.

patriotic education campaign has been quite successful in influencing the young generation. Comparing the current young generation in China with their parents, Du Ruoxi finds that the generation born during and after the 1980s is more likely to be proud of being Chinese, but less supportive of state nationalism (Du 2010). In another study, Tang and He finds that the Chinese educational system has been quite successful in instilling patriotic values in students from all parts of China, including ethnic and religious minorities. For minority children, their ethnic identity remains important, but they express a consistent loyalty towards the Chinese nation, even when asked under conditions guaranteeing anonymity (Tang and He 2010).

Zhao Suisheng explains this success by pointing to the timing of the campaign. During the 1980s, Chinese intellectuals and students alike had been fascinated by Western ideals ultimately leading to the democracy movement and the demonstrations in Tiananmen Square in 1989. But the increased contact with the West, the perceived hostility of the international system, a system essentially driven not by values and norms but by profit and self-interest, as well as the internal and external threat of the disintegration of China led to a disillusionment with Western values and a search for Chinese values to replace them (Zhao 2004). While Zhao uses globalization to explain the increased need for a Chinese cultural essence, Wang Zheng points to the Chinese government's sophisticated use of many different media platforms in promoting patriotic values and the successful attempt to replace socialism with patriotism as the ideological content of political education in college (Wang 2012). Patriotism has become institutionalized through movies, education, tourism, and everyday discourse in a way that ensures that patriotic values penetrate all aspects of Chinese society today.

Hence, the Chinese conceptual constitutions of “state” and “nation” and the underlining implication of its patriotic substances actually make Chinese nationalism and patriotism two sides of the same coin. Today's state nationalism/patriotism in China is needed on three counts: First of all, loyalty to the abstract entity of “China” is needed to unite the 55 officially recognized ethnic minorities with the dominant Han majority. Secondly, the version of state nationalism promoted by the CCP, predicates that loyalty to the nation equals loyalty to the CCP as symbolized by China's national flag where the stars represent the party as well as the different groups of citizens in China. Therefore, nationalism/patriotism plays a very important role in legitimizing CCP rule in China. Finally, the cohesive effect of nationalism is used to replace socialism as the glue that holds China together. As shown above, the patriotic education campaign has been quite efficient in spreading patriotic values in the Chinese population, and while similar campaigns in Japan has created division, as intellectuals oppose the nationalist curriculum in Japanese schools (Kondo and Xiaoyan 2011) patriotism in China has been accepted to the degree that China suffers from what Fang Lizhi has called *the problem of patriotism*: An argument that a certain position is unpatriotic will make that position instantly untenable (Pye 1990). However, even though patriotism is quite widespread in China, there are many different varieties of nationalism—not all of them equally welcome to the Chinese government.

Today, many of China's contradictions in its external relations especially in its relations with the West and the US particular lie in Beijing's two conflicting faces of

China: entering the world capitalist market while preserving its “national identity”—a contradiction between China’s patriotism+nationalism against the West and Japan because of historical experiences, and its intense desire to join in the club of the core of the capitalist world system and to borrow, learn and participate in trade, technology transfer, etc. With its three-decade high economic growth and its rising military strength, China wants the US-led international order to acknowledge its “Chinese characteristics” in the process of joining the existing order. However, externally, such “Chinese characteristics” are being interpreted by the West as part of Beijing’s intention and endeavor to use its accumulated power to influence and modify the established international rules toward its desired direction. Whereas internally, the current mixture of economic “neo-liberalism” and cultural-political “nationalism” in China has caused ambiguities in value- and norm-setting and in policy-making.

Today, Chinese people are divided over the definition and content of “patriotism”. According to a recent online questionnaire survey<sup>8</sup> conducted by China’s popular media *Global Times*, the results show that although people generally regard themselves as patriotic, and they think that patriotism should be respected and promoted, however, people are equally divided over the question whether “love-the-country” and “patriotism” are the same thing (49.8 % Yes and 41.4 % No). There are more people who recognize the fact that patriotic atmosphere in current China is declining (10.3 % strong, 40.5 % normal, and 43.2 % declining). What is most interesting is the answers to the question “how can one be patriotic toward his/her own country”; 31 % regard “working hard and having a good and positive life” is the same as being patriotic, while 36.7 % consider “being patriotic” to be safeguarding national interests and supporting the national government. The above indicates that Chinese people are more divided today than before over the questions related to values, norms and identities both at the national, societal and individual levels.

## Conclusion

Lucian Pye claimed that Chinese nationalism was contentless. As we have demonstrated above, this is no longer the case. But the actual content of modern Chinese nationalism is, to a large extent, a cultural and political construct, i.e. constructed in the nexus between the needs of the Chinese state for a unifying ideology, the particular shape of Chinese imperial and modern history, and the Chinese experience of joining and shaping the global world order in the era of the rise of China. As so many other foreign imports to China, nationalism has also been sinicized in China, resulting in the application of patriotism as a form of utility to express nationalism, thus keeping the country united. Understanding modern Chinese nationalism is complicated by the lack of congruence between western and Chinese conceptualizations of the word nationalism. “Nationalism” (*minzu zhuyi*

<sup>8</sup> The survey questions and answers can be retrieved from [http://opinion.huanqiu.com/opinion\\_china/2013-09/4411566.html](http://opinion.huanqiu.com/opinion_china/2013-09/4411566.html). Accessed Oct 4 2013.

民族主义), as a concept derived from the historical context of the West, does not meet the needs of the multi-ethnic Chinese nation state. Therefore, the word patriotism (aiguo zhuyi) is used to describe the very deep loyalty to the Chinese nation that is omnipresent in China today. The Chinese government has taken great care in imparting the previously contentless notion of nationalism with content suitable for nation-building by embedding patriotic elements (pride in the imperial past and Chinese culture, unforgettable humiliations during the transition from empire to nation-state, and pride in the current reemergence as a global power) in popular culture and education through the patriotic education campaign and by joining loyalty to the Chinese state (Zhongguo 中国) to loyalty to the Chinese nation (Zhonghua Minzu 中华民族) in the same notion.

Benedict Anderson claims that “nation” is an imagined community. In China, the modern nation is not so much imagined as it is being continuously constructed in order to facilitate China’s entrance into the modern world order. The accompanying nationalism has also been shaped by the Chinese state as well as by particular historical circumstances. Whether we use the term nationalism or patriotism, a thorough understanding of the phenomenon is needed in order to understand China’s role and behavior in the emerging new global world order. The exploration of the cultural and political facets of Chinese nationalism provided in this paper is intended to further a cross-cultural analysis of the term thereby bridging the gap between Western and Chinese conceptualizations.

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