

Social Change, Collective Action and Nationalism



Three Waves of Nationalism in Contemporary China: Sources, Themes, Presentations and Consequences⁺

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Abstract

After China's defeat in the Opium War of 1839-42, Chinese elites began to develop a mind-set of "Saving the Chinese Nation". In their struggle with imperialism, both Western and Japanese, and building a new nation-state, Chinese elites have effectively employed this mind-set to mobilize the Chinese. After the establishment of the People's Republic of China (PRC) in 1949, the CCP government continued to utilize nationalism to mobilize the Chinese for various campaigns. Since it has initiated its reform and open door policy, China has experienced three distinctive waves of nationalism. The first wave of nationalism, liberal nationalism, was active during the 1980s. The second wave of nationalism, patriotic nationalism, appeared during the 1990s. The current and third wave of nationalism appeared at the turn of this century. This latest wave of nationalism represents the voices of the marginalized. Its backbone is made up of Internet savvy youths known as "Fen Qings" (愤青).

Keywords: Nationalism, Fen Qing, Unhappy China, Internet

1. Introduction

With the publication of the bestseller *Zhongguo Bu Gaoxing* 中国不高兴 [Unhappy China] in the summer of 2009, the world witnessed the rise of yet another wave of Chinese nationalism. Given the fact that the *Fen Qings* (愤青, literally, "angry youth") are the main driving force behind this new wave of nationalism, there are growing concerns about the future of China in international affairs. Many questions can be raised. What role will China play in international politics with the growth of an increasingly confident young generation? What will their world view be? And what attitude will they have towards other countries? The fact that China is now an integral part of the international community and whatever happens inside China will have a major external impact justifies these concerns on Chinese nationalism.

The rise of Chinese nationalism following the country's reform and opening policy in the late 1970s has been regarded as one of the most important events in international relations in late 20th century and beginning of the 21st century. Over the years, the scholarly community has closely watched the wax and wane of Chinese nationalism and accordingly there is a fast growing body of literature on this subject. There are scholarly works with a focus on the historical development of Chinese nationalism.¹ Some scholars have attempted to spell out the domestic implications of rising nationalism, particularly, in terms of nation-identity building and democratization.² There are scholars who have attempted to spell out the manners in which Chinese nationalism has affected China's foreign policy³ and others that have demonstrated the linkages between domestic development, nationalism and international relations.⁴

All these previous studies are helpful in improving our understanding of Chinese nationalism. However, one important link is missing in many writings on Chinese nationalism is how nationalism are presented in different time and space. While there is an abundance of historical and contemporary materials on nationalism, it is the manner in which nationalism is organized and presented that determines its relevance in both domestic and international politics. By exploring this aspect of nationalism, two issues become important. The first is to identify the organizers and presenters of nationalism and the second is to identify the manner in which nationalism is organized.

This paper attempts to explore Chinese nationalism in the context of state-society relationship by focusing on the development of nationalism in the contemporary era. We argue that the significance and implications of nationalism is dependent on the state and society's interaction. We have divided Chinese nationalism into three periods based on different patterns of state-society interaction. In other words, we believe that China has experienced three waves of nationalism since its reform and opening policy with each wave having its own distinctive features. The first wave of nationalism took place between the late 1970s when China began its reform and opening policy and the government's crackdown on the pro-democracy movement in 1989. The theme of this wave of nationalism is to seek China's rise by learning from the West. We call it "liberal nationalism". The second wave of nationalism took place during the era of Jiang Zemin 江泽民 (1989-2002). During that period, the communist regime initiated a regular campaign of patriotism movement in the aftermath of the June-Fourth crackdown while Chinese intellectuals sided with the regime in the face of international sanctions against China. We name this "patriotic nationalism". The third wave of nationalism started since Hu Jintao 胡锦涛 came to power. This third wave of nationalism distinguishes itself from others in that its targets are not just foreign entities. The Chinese youths are, in fact, unhappier with the domestic

situation of China than with the foreign entities. Specifically, the unhappy youths have resented the various social ills (for e.g. income disparities, eco-pollution and social polarization) brought about by the neo-liberal economic policies implemented since the 1990s. Hence, the greatest characteristic of this wave of nationalism is its clash with China's neo-liberal economic policies. While nationalism in the 1990s had a complementing effect on China's foreign policy, the current nationalism reflects the differences between the public and government on both domestic and foreign policies. We call this latest wave of nationalism "social nationalism" due to two main factors. First of all, the popularity of the Internet has facilitated Chinese nationalism to reach out to a broader social base and various sector of the society can now take part in any nationalistic expressions. Secondly, this wave of nationalism has set the society on a collision course with the state regime.

One important caveat needs to be added here. Today's China is a multi-facet society with a variety of ideologies and nationalism is merely one of the many voices of the country. While the velocity in which nationalistic sentiments surge recently demands closer attention into its causes, this does not mean that nationalism is dominant in China's ideological realm. In fact, different discourses are contesting for influence. By focusing on nationalism, this paper aims to show, first, dynamics of ideational changes in contemporary China in the context of state-society relations; second, the changes that have taken place in the context of nationalism from one stage to another; and third, the implications of Chinese nationalism for state-society relations in China and international relations.

From the perspective of state-society relations, we have three main arguments on the dynamics of Chinese nationalism. First, the state and society are rational actors in pursuing their materials and non-material interests. They promote and employ nationalism as a political source to serve their aims and purposes. The state and society however, may not necessary always share common goals. Second, when the goals of the state and society overlap, nationalism tends to be reinforced and become powerful. So when the two actors have common interests in promoting and employing nationalism, nationalism becomes influential in China's domestic and international affairs. And, third, when the goals of the state and society conflict with one another, nationalism tends to be constrained. In other words, the state and society's effort to promote or employ nationalism to pursue their different goals will restrict each other.

After the introduction, this paper is divided into five sections. The first section (Section 2) gives a brief discussion of the development of Chinese nationalism since China began its reform. The subsequent three sections focus on three waves of nationalism, respectively, and to examine our main arguments in the context of the evolution of nationalism. And the concluding

section spells out implications of the changing patterns of state-society relations for the future of Chinese nationalism.

2. The Three Waves of Nationalism

After China's defeat in the Opium War of 1839-42, Chinese elites began to develop a mind-set of "Saving the Chinese Nation" (*jiuguo tucun* 救国图存) and "Rich Nation, Strong Army" (*fuguo qiangbing* 富国强兵) among the Chinese. National survival is the theme of Chinese nationalism proposed by Dr Sun Yat-sen 孙中山. For Sun, nationalism's chief concern was to ensure the survival of the Chinese nation because it had suffered from foreign aggression. In their struggle with imperialism, both Western and Japanese, and building a new nation-state, Chinese elites have effectively employed this mind-set to mobilize the Chinese. During the 20th century, nationalistic answer to the call of "Saving the Chinese Nation" could be observed in events such as the 1911 Revolution, the May-Fourth Movement, China's resistance against Japanese aggression and the Civil War between the KMT (Nationalist Party) and the CCP (Chinese Communist Party). To a great degree, the Communists won the civil war not because they have utilized communism as an effective mechanism for mobilization, but their self-portrayal of being more nationalistic than the Nationalists. After the establishment of the People's Republic of China (PRC) in 1949, the CCP government continued to utilize nationalism to mobilize the Chinese for various campaigns. Examples include the Korean War in the early 1950s and Mao's mobilization of the Chinese to "surpass UK and US" (超英赶美) in the late 1950s; the call for self-sufficiency and resisting "America's Imperialism and Soviet's Revisionism" in the 1960s. In all these waves of nationalism, the targets were always foreign countries and the purpose was to serve domestic development.⁵ Even during the thirty years of China's reforms (1978-2008), nationalism remains one of the prime motivating forces behind the country's rapid development.⁶ Therefore, while concerns over nationalism have been raised, the key issue for the scholarly community is not whether Chinese nationalism will continue or not, but what role it has played and what changes have taken place and will continue to take place in the context of nationalism in its march into the future.

While nationalism has been in existence throughout China's modern history, its sources, forms of presentation, themes and consequences differ from each period as the domestic and international situation at a given time and space changes. Since it has initiated its reform and open door policy, China has experienced three distinctive waves of nationalism. These waves of nationalism share a common lineage and the common aim of strengthening China, but they are different from each other.

The first wave of nationalism, liberal nationalism, was active during the 1980s. It represented China's thirst to "learn from the West" and the nationalists were especially pro-West. During this wave of nationalism, there were identical goals between the Chinese reformist leadership and the society to engage in domestic reform and open China's door to the West. Both parties were very friendly to the West. Reciprocally, the American-led Western countries also displayed a great amount of goodwill to China. The Chinese media scheduled various programmes, introducing Western politics, economy and society to the Chinese audience. At the same time, re-examining and reflecting China's established institutions systems became a popular theme in the Chinese media and scholarly community. Both the CNN and BBC became important windows for the Chinese youths to glimpse into democratic experiences in the West. This wave of nationalism cumulated into a pro-democracy movement and ended in the Tiananmen 天安门 crackdown of 1989.

The second wave of nationalism, patriotic nationalism, appeared during the 1990s. The rise of this wave of nationalism was largely caused by the sudden changes of the West's China policy, leading to a change in China's external environment, China's domestic economic development and the rise of the New Left in China. During this wave of nationalism, the government and people were on the same page with regards to China's foreign policy but differ on domestic issues. The government-led patriotic movement became the main driving force of nationalism.

The current and third wave of nationalism appeared at the turn of this century. This latest wave of nationalism represents the voices of the marginalized. Its backbone is made up of Internet savvy youths known as "Fen Qings" (愤青). The Fen Qings' proficiency in the Internet technology gave the nationalistic movements an extra shot of vitality and resulted in the coordination of like-minded participants both in and outside of China. The entities of worship during the first wave of nationalism such as the CNN and other major foreign media now became targets as the wave of nationalism is notorious for its anti-West attitude. The nationalists also resent the CCP government's pro-Western policies and other mainstream neo-liberal economic policies. On the other hand, the government's interaction with the West generally remains friendly. Therefore, there is a widening gap between the government and society. While the Internet has widened the social base of nationalism, the purpose of nationalism is no longer identical between the government and society. We thus call this wave of nationalism "social nationalism."

Generally speaking, liberal nationalism is characterized by its openness; patriotic nationalism by its defensive approach and social nationalism is offensive in both international and domestic front. The different characteristics of

each wave of nationalism were due to China's changing domestic environment and its interactions with the West. Changes in China's domestic environment and its interaction with the West lead to changes in the interaction pattern between the state and society. Nationalism can thus be regarded as outcomes of the interaction between the state and society.

3. The First Wave of Nationalism: Learning from the West

The first wave of nationalism is characterized by a desire to learn from the West, particularly the United States. Reforming China with western methods became a common pursuit of the reformist leadership and liberal intellectuals in the 1980s. To the vast majority of the intellectuals, to reform China following the western model was the only means for China to become a strong nation state. Such a pro-western attitude was very much related to the international and domestic environment that China was in at that time. In other words, the rise of liberal nationalism is due to the friendly China policy on the part of liberal democracies in the West.

In the 1980s, China's external environment was in favour of the rise of liberal nationalism. The 1970s was a turning point for China's international environment. Following US President Nixon's visit to China, the two countries established diplomatic relationship. Soon, Sino-Japanese relationship was also normalized, various friendly agreements were signed between China and western countries, and the PRC replaced the Republic of China as the permanent member in the UN Security Council. All these foreign relationship breakthroughs for China took place within that decade. This provided China with a benign external environment for its "reform and open up" policy. Between the periods in which China decided to open up and the Tiananmen crackdown of 1989, western societies had adopted a very friendly attitude toward China. China's opening policy led the western societies to believe that economic liberalization and development could cause China to walk the path of democracy. Despite US's arms sale to Taiwan continuing to be a thorn in the flesh, the general trend of China-US relationship's development has been encouraging. This is especially true in the mid 1980s when China-US leaders had frequent exchanges and the US placed more items on the list of technology transfer to China. China-US economic cooperation and civil use of technologies were also increasing. By 1988, the US became China's third largest trading partner (Xie, 2004: 371). The third wave of democratization which spread across the globe at the same time had hyped up the Western societies' expectation of China to democratize.

The domestic environment also tended to be supportive of liberal nationalism. In the 1980s, the reformists were the mainstream voice within the Chinese government despite the existence of opposing conservative

forces. In the mid-1980s, Deng Xiaoping 邓小平 began to actively promote political reforms and he raised the idea that the core of political reform is to separate Party from Government (Chen, 1990: 102). Subsequently, the central government established a political reform discussion group, headed by then General Party Secretary Zhao Ziyang 赵紫阳, and various subordinate offices to discuss the issue of China's political reform. In addition, relevant research topics were assigned to different research institutes to be looked into and large numbers of officials were sent overseas to observe and learn from foreign experience (Chen, 1990: 106-112)⁷. The rapid institutional built up of reformists facilitated the growth of the reform campus, and a heated debate on democratization soon followed within the government. The 1980s can be said to be an era when political discussion on political reforms was the most comprehensive and most daring in the history of the People's Republic of China. Such top-down reform initiatives effectively mobilized social forces which were in favour of fast political changes in China. The pro-western attitude of the nationalism then was as much caused by the government's attempt at political reform as the people's general desire to learn from the West.

The liberal nationalism of the 1980s was also partially caused by attempts on the part of the reformist leadership to learn from the mistakes of the Maoist leadership during the Cultural Revolution. The idolization of western societies and the sense of national crisis of the intellectuals of the 1970s and 1980s bear great similarities to intellectuals in the late 19th century and early 20th century. Once China opened its doors, the Chinese quickly realized that during the times in which China was undergoing "class struggles" and other political campaigns under the Maoist rule, the perceived "decaying and soon to be replaced by Communism capitalist countries" such as Japan and the US were developed to a stage unattainable to China and their notion that "socialist system and Communism would be the ultimate system for humanity" was nothing more than a self-comforting myth. The scepticism toward their present state and anxiety over the backwardness of their nation caused the Chinese intellectuals, much akin to their predecessors of the late 19th century and early 20th century, to place their hope toward the West. They hoped that by learning from western technologies and political thoughts, they could save China and build a strong nation again.

At the societal level, two types of intellectuals led this wave of nationalism. The first were those who experienced hardship during the Cultural Revolution in their middle age. All kinds of authoritarian measures against the people and the degradation of human rights during the Cultural Revolution led them to voluntarily choose western democracy and freedom as their goal. The other type was youths who grew up during the Cultural Revolution years. They were ideologically indoctrinated from a young age to believe that socialism was the supreme system. Yet, when the doors opened, reality proved

otherwise. Their scepticism and resentment led them to naturally look towards the West. The eagerness of Chinese liberals to learn from the West is reflected in the emergence of various cultural fads during that decade.

Fascination with western ideas. During the 1980s, numerous Western classics such as Nietzsche, Kant, Weber and Kafka were translated into the Chinese language and introduced to the Chinese audience. At the same time, Chinese intellectuals produced enormous publications, focusing on western politics, economy, society and culture. The series of book, “Marching towards the Future Series” (*Zouxiang Weilai Congshu* 走向未来丛书), edited by a liberal scholar Jin Guantao 金观涛, published 74 volumes within a period of 5 years from 1984 to 1988. For his role in introducing various western modern thinking, especially on the three theories (Theory of Control, Theory of Information and Theory of System), incorporating humanities and science, Jin was regarded as the vanguard of China’s enlightenment movement in the 1980s.⁸ Also, the book series “Culture: China and the World” (*Wenhua: Zhongguo yu Shijie* 文化: 中国与世界) and magazines such as “Reading” (*Dushu* 读书), edited by Gan Yang 甘阳, another then liberal scholar, also played a major role in China’s enlightenment movement. The Shanghai-based “World Economy Herald” (*Shijie Jingji Daobao* 世界经济导报), which daringly discussed China’s political and economic reforms, had a circulation volume of 300,000 in its heyday.⁹ These publications replaced the old standard communist media and became the best selling publications. In the midst of a great debate mood and under the slogan of “No Restriction Zone in Reading” (*Dushu Wu Jinqu* 读书无禁区), China was engulfed in a reading frenzy for almost 10 years. Books were being sold at volume unimaginable today.

The university forum craze. Since China began its reforms, the influence of pro-western intellectuals grew fast. These intellectuals experienced the Maoist dictatorship which reached its peak during the Cultural Revolution and they developed a deep sense of anxiety for the widening gap between China and the West on all fronts. They believed that the only remedy was to reform China’s political and economic system. The university forums were outlets in which they would express their dissatisfaction with the current situation, criticize their country’s current policy situation and promote “economic liberalization and political democratization” (经济自由化和政治民主化). Liberals such as Liu Binyan 刘宾雁, Yan Jiaqi 严家琪 and Fang Lizhi 方励之 were popular public intellectuals in these forums who had influenced a generation of youths. In the 1980s, active institutes such as Beijing University would have multiple forums within a single day. The thinking of these intellectuals and the cultural fad of that period influenced vast numbers of youths of the day (Zhao, 2007: 45).

A dream for democracy. During the 1980s, what Samuel Huntington called the “third wave of democratization” swept across the globe and

affected many countries (Huntington, 1991). China's neighbour South Korea was democratized; Taiwan lifted its ban on political parties and the media; and Eastern Germany and the Soviet Union were also democratizing. The globalization of democracy also affected the Chinese government and people, especially during the mid 1980s when there were heated debates over China's political reforms in both the governmental and private sectors. The "World's Economy Herald" raised the idea in 1988 that if China failed to reform its political system, it would be stripped of its earth citizenship (*qiujī* 球籍) (Huntington, 1991: 43). The heated discussions on China's earth citizenship successfully mobilized Chinese nationalistic feeling. The siege mentality of the intellectuals set in and had once again become the focal point of China's politics and the slogan of "Saving the Chinese Nation" resurfaced. Many active tertiary institutes became the saloon¹⁰ for talks on democracy and discussions on western democratic systems were the central topic.

An obsession for the Voice of America. The 1980s was a special period in which new ideas clashed with China's own tradition, be it its grand imperial tradition or little communist tradition. On one hand, many western ideas and thoughts were being introduced into China and social forces were mobilized to pursue political changes. On the other hand, the old traditional system was still influential. The domestic media, being the voice of the ruling party, was regarded as incapable of bearing the social responsibility of promoting reforms and as having lost credibility among the people with its "false, exaggerating and empty" propaganda style of reports. Hence, foreign broadcasts which covered China such as the Voice of America and BBC became the main source of information for those who cared about politics and contemporary events outside China. These foreign media also actively promoted democratic ideas among the Chinese and played an important role in facilitating China's "peaceful evolution" (*heping yanbian* 和平演变) to democracy.

With the inflow of western ideas into China, they influenced both the state and society in China. As one China scholar points out, "at the beginning of China's reform and opening policy, western social and institutional structures and its value system had an important impact on our line of thinking about China's future." (Sun, 1996: 17) Up to the mid-1980s, most Chinese showed their strong preference for western culture. According to a national survey in 1987, 75 per cent of the Chinese welcome the inflow of western ideas, and 80 per cent of CCP members showed a similar attitude. (Zheng, 1999: 50) Understandably, while their identification with western ideas increased, their loyalty towards the existing regime declined. Throughout the 1980s, individuals' loyalty to the socialist state was weakened seriously and the ruling Party was criticized. For example, while 30 per cent of the Chinese believed that the CCP's performance was satisfactory, 62 per cent thought

otherwise (Zheng, 1999: 50). Popular dissatisfaction exerted increasingly high pressure on the reformist leadership to engage in political reforms and make the Chinese state more democratic.

However, precisely because the liberal intellectuals' pro-western views were built on their resentment against their present system and their isolation from the rest of the world, their knowledge about the rest of the world was rather limited and their understanding of the western society were somehow idealistic. These had a major impact on their views and stands. For example, in the late years of the 1980s, economic reforms came to a standstill and political reforms were not making progress, while inflation, income disparities, corruption and other social ills caused widespread resentment. The conservatives within the Party believed that these were caused by the pro-West reforms, while the pro-western liberal intellectuals believed that these were due to the lack of thorough reforms. Hence, the reformists pressured the government to make further reforms (Chen, 1990: 145-148). The combination of the reformist leadership and liberal social forces produced a powerful force moving China's political reform forward.¹¹ The "learning from the West movement" or the enlightenment movement eventually led to the rise of the pro-democracy movement in 1989.

4. The Second Wave of Nationalism: China Can Say No

In contrast to the first wave of nationalism, the second wave of nationalism was basically anti-Western. It was a reaction against the changed attitude of the West toward China in the aftermath of the June-Fourth crackdown and the reflection of their idolization of western democracy on the part of Chinese intellectuals during the 1980s.

In 1996, a book which best represents the second wave of nationalism, "China can say No" (*Zhongguo Keyi Shuo Bu* 中国可以说不), became an instant bestseller and caught the attention of the international community. The authors were a few youths born in the mid or late 1960s and were then in their 30s. The book prophesized the rise of anti-Americanism among the people and clearly announced the end of their generation's idolism of the US in the 1980s. There were signs that the second wave of nationalism was already active in the early 1990s, years before the book was published. The "Yinhe" (银河) incident of 1993 had provoked nationalistic sentiments among the Chinese. The accidental bombing of the Chinese Embassy during the Kosovo War in 1999 pushed nationalistic sentiments to their peak causing a nationwide anti-America protest.

Unlike the pro-West liberal nationalism of the 1980s, the second wave of nationalism is characterized by patriotism which was promoted by the state and followed by social forces. In the first wave of nationalism, both the

state and society had common interests in their learning from the West. But in the second wave of nationalism, both the state and society had an identical goal of resisting the influence of the West. Like the first wave of nationalism, the rise of this second wave was also due to China's changing external and internal environments.

Externally, changes to western states' China policy led to the rise of nationalism hostile to the West. After the 1989 Tiananmen crackdown, the US and other Western nations took a harder stand against China and enforced various sanctions against China. Facing the increasingly high pressure from the West, the Chinese government initiated a long nationwide campaign of patriotism. After the crackdown of the 1989 pro-democracy movement, the Chinese government repeatedly emphasized the use of patriotism to oppose the West's strategy of "peaceful evolution" toward China, a strategy that was perceived to have led to the pro-democracy movement. Jiang Zemin, then CCP General Secretary, argued that patriotism was mainly manifested in devotion to building and safeguarding the course of socialist modernization and the motherland's unification and that patriotism could be transformed into an efficient weapon against "peaceful evolution". The government also initiated a campaign against the West's "peaceful evolution."¹² The Chinese were told that the international bourgeois hostile forces headed by the US had adopted an undisguised and evil strategy against China. In October 1991, Yang Shangkun 杨尚昆, State President, speaking at the meeting commemorating the eightieth anniversary of the 1911 Revolution, emphasized not only the importance of patriotism in promoting socialist development, but also its effectiveness in resisting any external pressure or difficulty. In September 1994, the CCP's Propaganda Department issued an important document titled, "The Outline of the Implementation of the Education of Patriotism". At the same time, the Party also published a collection of major leaders' speeches on patriotism to popularize the movement.¹³ In many occasions, Jiang called for both Party cadres/government officials and the general public to use "political means" to resist political pressure. He argued that "western hostile forces want to westernize and divide us and to impose their type of 'democracy' and 'freedom' on us." The leadership believed that only by promoting patriotism within could China resist political pressure without and that patriotism could provoke and strengthen people's confidence toward the government in dealing with the outside world.¹⁴

China's worsening external environment also led the Chinese intellectuals to identify with the government in resisting the influence of the West. In the 1990s, not only was China's human rights issue heavily criticized by the West, China's bid to enter the World Trade Organization (WTO) was also obstructed by the US on many occasions. China's 1996 bid to host the Olympic Games was also met with opposition from the US. On the Taiwan issue, the US was

perceived to have supported Taiwan's pro-independence faction and sold armament to Taiwan. All these developments contributed to nationalistic resentments among the Chinese youths. The US's refusal to negotiate with China on intellectual property issues because it deemed China as a "rogue country" was especially hurting to many youths in China who once held the US in very high regard (Song *et al.*, 1996: 318). Various versions of "China threat" theory circulating in the West during the 1990s further pushed Chinese youths from US lovers to US haters.

Meanwhile, China's rapid economic development and domestic success created an internal condition which was in favour of patriotism. After Deng Xiaoping's southern tour in 1992, China not only did not halt its pace of reform, but had in fact accelerated the process. The continuous growth of China's economy provided the CCP with the legitimacy to rule. At the same time, the failure of Russia's political reforms also led Chinese intellectuals to rethink about China's political reforms. The improvement in the standard of living also justified the government's strategy of "economic reform first and political reform later". At the same time, many intellectuals also benefited from the economic development. While many liberal intellectuals were forced into exile in different parts of the West, many others who had previously promoted market economy and democratic politics turned to actively support the government's strategy of the reform. Frequent travels also broadened the people's knowledge of the world and they started to re-assess their understanding of the West. Furthermore, the return of Hong Kong and Macau drastically boosted national pride. The humiliation from US's hard-line China policy and the fast rising national pride of China's achievement became the catalyst for this wave of Chinese patriotism.

An even more important intellectual development was the rise of the New Left. The New Left is a collective term for intellectuals advocating for more socialistic reforms. Leftist intellectuals were marginalized following China's decision to shift to a market economy in the 1980s. Following the Tiananmen crackdown of 1989, however, the New Left began to draw most of its ranks from society. In the 1990s, following a surge in various social issues in China, the New Left called to put a halt to China's capitalistic reform and recentralize power to the central government.¹⁵ Their views attracted a number of followers and they were able to debate heatedly with mainstream liberal intellectuals on China's future policies. These New Leftists were the primary organizers of many protests and social movements against the West during the 1990s, including the nationwide protest against the US following the accidental bombing of the Chinese embassy in Kosovo. Today, the New Leftists have recouped much of their lost prestige and while they are still marginalized by most mainstream intellectuals and are not well represented in the government, they are a prominent voice on the Internet. The website,

Utopia, is a popular gathering place for New Leftists and has more than 100 million hits every day.¹⁶

Generally speaking, the second wave of nationalism is a defensive form of nationalism. This defensive pose is a response to China's setbacks in the international arena. To the pro-America youths of the 1980s, the very fact that they were being criticized by their idol – the West – was enough reason to turn anti-West. The development of their country's economy and its eventual victory in the WTO negotiations gave encouragement to these youths who were egoistically hurt by the West. During this second wave of nationalism, the government and social groups had an identical goal in terms of China's foreign policy, namely, resisting the influence of the West, especially in the aftermath of the Tiananmen crackdown. Their joint forces were equally powerful, just as in the case of the liberal nationalism in the 1980s. Of course, the purposes of these two waves of nationalism differed, with liberal nationalism being pro-West, and patriotic nationalism anti-West. Nevertheless, the government had to adopt a flexible approach toward nationalism, taking advantage of it and suppressing it at times. In other words, while the government was able to employ patriotic nationalism to resist pressure from the West, it had to control and even suppresses nationalist movements when the latter affected social stability. The goal of the state and society in promoting and employing nationalism began to diverge when China was increasingly integrated into the international community. This is reflected in the rise of the third wave of nationalism.

5. The Third Wave of Nationalism: The Unhappiness of “Fen Qings”

The main participants of the current third wave of nationalism are the “Fen Qings”. Since the late 1990s, the Fen Qing has become an often used phrase on both newspapers and Internet. In China, the Fen Qing refers to youths born after the 1980s who possess both a cynical and critical view of the world and express them freely on the Internet. As some of these Fen Qings were also actively involved in nationalistic movements, the term “Fen Qings” evolved to refer to nationalistic youths (Wu, 2007).

The Fen Qing-led nationalism was already catching attention in the early years of the current century. The examples include the anti-America protests following a China-US military plane collision incident in Hainan province in 2001 which resulted in the death of a Chinese pilot; the nationwide anti-Japanese protests around the same period; and anti-Korea movements following a dispute over the ownership of the Dumpling Festival. However, it was their massive worldwide protests over biased reports on the Tibet issue in the West in 2008 and perceived unfriendly actions toward China's Beijing Olympics that shocked the world. For example, the “anti-CNN” website,

set up by a 23-year-old graduate of Qinghua University Rao Jin 饶谨, has used convincing pictures and videos to refute biased reports by mainstream Western media such as CNN, Fox, BBC, Times, RTL and N-TV. This website effectively united Chinese both inside China and overseas to jointly pressurize the western media. Eventually, some foreign media had to correct their reports and some of them officially apologized.¹⁷ This immensely powerful and influential force enticed the foreign media and research institutes to study the Fen Qings in greater details. Many questions have been raised: Will the Fen Qings be able to influence China's domestic and foreign policy? How has the western countries' policies invited such dramatic response from these Fen Qings? And what can the West do to pacify these Fen Qings?

The third wave of nationalism is facilitated by a number of factors. There existed two psychological gaps among the Chinese, especially the youth. The first psychological gap is the imbalance between the Fen Qings' expectation of China's international status and the actual prestige awarded to China by the international community, especially the West. China's economic growth had boosted the national pride of its people. The Fen Qings, mostly of the post 1980s generation, have grown up when China was experiencing exponential economic growth. They are the generation that has witnessed China's preparation for the Olympics. Throughout most of their growing-up years, China was experiencing double-digit growth. They share similar consumption pattern with their western counterparts, some of them were even enjoying a higher standard of living than that of the average in western societies. Furthermore, events such as the hosting of the Olympics and the successful launch of Shenzhou 7 demonstrated the growth of China's comprehensive strength. Growing up in such an environment, the Fen Qings have less reason than their two generations of predecessors to idolize western societies or feel inferior. Given China's achievements, the Fen Qings feel that China deserves a relatively high international status. Yet, in reality, many western societies were not psychologically prepared to rationally award China with that prestige. For more than a century, the Chinese had accepted this treatment because China was weak. Today however, the Fen Qings feel justifiable to demand more respect from the international community. When this respect is not given, the psychological gap between the expectation and reality stimulated nationalistic sentiments.

The second psychological gap is related to the first, but different. It is a psychological gap between the Fen Qings' idealistic understanding of the international community and reality. To the average Chinese, the significance of hosting the Olympics is extraordinary. Hosting that event signifies the departure of the term, "sick man of Asia," bidding farewell to a century of humiliation and rejoining the international community as an equal major power. The Olympics bear the dreams of several generations of the Chinese.

One of the main motives of hosting that event was to raise the international status of China. The Fen Qings mistakenly believed that the world would share its joy of fulfilling their Chinese dream. So when massive anti-China protests broke out in many western societies, these anti-China voices became one of the most powerful sources of provocation.

Apart from these two psychological factors, the euphoric factor also plays a role. After the US-induced subprime crisis spread across the globe, many people in China believed that the “Washington Consensus” is finally to be replaced by the Beijing Consensus.¹⁸ Some also believed that thenceforth the US economy is going downhill and China will become the next hegemony. The perceived US downfall has generated a strong euphoric moment among Chinese youth. *Unhappy China* clearly demonstrates this arrogance. For example, the book proposed that China should “rid the world of bullies”, “manage more resource than China currently possess and bring about happiness to everyone in the world.” (Ramo, 2004: 77)

Moreover, this wave of nationalism is also associated with globalization. As with the second wave of nationalism, nationalists are often against globalization of their country. While globalization becomes inevitable, the globalization of China has changed the country’s relationship with the rest of the world and impacted immensely on Chinese nationalism. While China’s entry into the WTO has brought about economic opportunities and benefits to China, the country has also officially become a trade competitor to many other countries. As trade volume increases, so do the conflicts of interests between China and others. A conflict of trade interests can often arouse nationalistic sentiments among the people. Also, globalization has also been regarded as a major factor widening income disparities in China. In these cases, nationalists, especially the New Left, often cite the negative effects of globalization to justify their nationalistic course.

Also important is the long period of marginalization of the Fen Qings and the New Left after the mid-1990s. The marginalization has caused deep resentment among these social groups. To achieve rapid development, the Chinese government under Zhu Rongji 朱榕基 implemented some radical reform policies such as corporatization and privatization. The government also made great efforts to promote the country’s integration with the world economy and globalization (e.g., China’s entry into WTO). In the course of these reforms, the government had marginalized the New Leftists. The Fen Qings may have reasons to be unhappy with external entities, but they are more resentful about being marginalized.

Needless to say, the rise of youth nationalism is due to rapid changes in China since the reform and opening policy. The new generation has grown up in a completely different environment from their father’s generation and as such, the nationalism that they are leading possesses very different

characteristics. Compared to the previous two waves of nationalism, the third wave of nationalism possesses many unique characteristics.

Internet savvy youths as the most active nationalists. For example, in the protest against biased reports on the Tibet issue, many web masters were only youths in their 20s. The producer of the youtube video, “Tibet WAS, IS, and ALWAYS WILL BE a part of China” (the hit rate reached a million in two days and there were more than 10,000 comments)¹⁹, is a 22-year-old student studying in Canada and goes by the nick “NZKOF”. A young student studying in Germany was responsible for the youtube video, “Riot in Tibet: true face of the western media” (the hit rate reached a million within a very short time and there were more than 30,000 comments)²⁰ and the producer of the video, “2008 China stands up” (hit rate reached 1 million in one and half weeks and more than a million positive comments)²¹ was CTGZ, a 28-year-old philosophy doctorate.

Effective coordination of Fen Qings in China with their overseas counterparts. From the 2008 protests, we can also observe that the nationalists overseas are in communication with their counterparts in China. They were able to exchange messages via the Internet, provide mutual support and even organize transnational activities. According to Rao Jin’s reply to an interview by the *People’s Daily* (人民日报), his website received huge support from overseas students and the main forces in the Internet were overseas students.²² While the Fen Qings in China turned up in numbers in many of the protest in 2008, young overseas Chinese students were also able to make a great impact due to their linguistic abilities and accessibility to western media. When the western media first produced inaccurate reports on Tibet, it was the overseas students who responded first on the Internet. During the relay of the Olympic Torch, Chinese students in various countries took to the streets to protect the torch, reflecting the trans-national nature of this wave of nationalism.

The Internetization of protests. The Fen Qings are made up of people from all walks of life with different educational backgrounds, experiences and computer literacy levels. Generally speaking, however, the Fen Qings are Internet savvy and use the Internet as their common platform. In China, the Internet is fast evolving into a virtual reality public forum with effects similar to that of a real one. This can be observed from two points. First, the Internet has become the *de facto* public speech platforms (e.g., www.anti-cnn.net, www.fenqing.net, www.wyzxx.com and www.tianya.net). Second, while going to the street is still the main form of protest, the E-social movements in recent years have grown to deliver an immeasurable impact.²³ Many protests in 2008 were executed entirely on the net. Examples include the anti-CNN signatures protest and the MSN red heart patriotism movement. Since its establishment, the anti-CNN net had already organized many

online protest movements. One of the most common methods of protest was to get every participant to send a protest email to the target.²⁴ In Internet protests, opposing forces may debate heatedly over an issue and may resort to Internet violence such as flaming and hacking into a rival's webpage to edit or obstruct opposing websites from functioning. For example, *www.anti-cnn.com* was hacked by an unknown hacker.²⁵ In April 2008, Internet wars of various scales could be observed in both China and overseas Internet forums.

The Fen Qings' protests were not limited to the cyberspace; their street protests were often planned and organized via the Internet. For example, the boycott of Carrefour was organized and mobilized by using instant messaging and SMS. Hence, the popularity of modern communication technology, namely the Internet and mobile phone, plays a crucial role in the rise of these Fen Qings. The Internet and SMS are able to increase both the efficiency and size of the mobilization by breaking space and time restriction. Not only has it become easy for the movements to become transnational, the use of the cyber space platform has also greatly lowered the cost of these protest movements.

The ability and willingness to utilize China's growing economic power. Judging by the actions of these Fen Qings, such as the boycott of Carrefour, it can be observed that they have fully utilized the growing economical influence of China. The West enforced a hardline economic and foreign policy against China in the aftermath of the Tiananmen crackdown. The Fen Qings today are also actively proposing that China exploit its economic advantages in coping with international pressure and in advancing its national interest on the international stage.

It is important to point out that during this wave of nationalism, Fen Qings are not just unhappy with western societies, they are also unhappy with their domestic situation. The book, *Unhappy China*, clearly shows that while the Fen Qings are unhappy with the perceived unfair treatment of China by the West, U.S. hegemony and monopoly of multi-national companies, they are also dissatisfied with the Chinese government's adoption of a pro-West orientation in its policy making and the country's rapid integration with the international system. The Fen Qing therefore is also against the neo-liberalism economic policy which they believed to have guided China's reforms and open door policy. They advocate a stronger stand on "doing business with a sword in hand" and believe that income disparities within China are caused by over-marketization and commercialization (Song *et al.*, 2009). *China Can Say No* of the 90s was written for foreign readers; it expressed the authors' discontentment with western societies. In contrast, *Unhappy China* was meant for domestic readers, specifically the government and mainstream intellectuals. One of the authors, Wang Xiaodong 王小东, had explicitly said

on the Phoenix TV programme, “Yihu Yixi Tan 一虎一席谈”, that the book was written for the domestic intellectual elites. The book was meant to convey the authors’ dissatisfaction of China’s domestic situation.²⁶

6. Nationalism and Its Future in China

The three waves of nationalism are unique but share a common lineage. Chinese youths’ nationalism has evolved from a desire to “learn from the West” to being “anti-West.” Both China’s domestic development and its external environment such as the growing sense of national pride due to the increasing comprehensive strength of China and the unfair treatment of China by Western nations, especially the perceived “demonization” of China by western media, have contributed to this evolution. To a certain degree, the current anti-West sentiment in China is a direct product of the western media. In this sense, while this new wave of nationalism has been offensive, it is also reactive, responding to the perceived unfair treatment of China by the West.

Since the Tiananmen crackdown, the western media has become biased in its reporting of China. While China has made tremendous efforts to learn from the West, the western media has continued to stand on perceived moral high ground in criticizing China. This becomes increasingly unacceptable to the educated and learned Chinese audience. Western journalists would criticize China on human rights issue at every given opportunity. This is especially obvious on minority issues in China. The reports on Tibet in 2008 were ridiculously inaccurate and had incurred the wrath of the Chinese. In the reports following the Xinjiang incident on 5th July, the western media had learned not to make the same mistakes but their stand is still largely the same.

Meanwhile, the Chinese, especially the youth, are increasingly proud of their country. For the past thirty years, China’s economy had developed at an amazing speed. In the course of such a major shift, relationships between China and the West will have to be continuously redefined and recognition of China’s status on the part of the West will have to be adjusted to match the changing relationships (Deng, 2009). To a great degree, the evolution of nationalism in China reflects the evolution of relationship between China and the West-led international community. To China, the western society represents modernity and is a role model. But in the process of integration, the Chinese have found that their country will have to face rejection and discrimination by the West. On the other hand, it seems that western societies have yet to reach a consensus on whether to regard a fast rising populous China as a threat or an ally. Essentially, western societies are also undergoing a phase of psychological adjustment. China’s youth nationalism

is a reaction to the friction encountered in this integration. The development of nationalism will hence depend on the continuous interactions between China and the West.

So, what influence will nationalism have in the foreign and domestic policies of China? Just like previous waves of nationalism, the third wave of nationalism will inevitably have an impact on China's policies. Nationalism is the materialization of one sector of public opinions. As China's economy and society develop, the Chinese government will find it increasingly difficult to disregard public opinions. The Internet-based nationalism is more capable of mobilizing and arousing public sentiments. Chinese leaders, including Hu Jintao 胡锦涛 and Wen Jiabao 温家宝, had shown their concern for Internet discussions on many occasions. They had even personally participated in Internet discussion with their people as it is becoming very difficult for them to ignore the voices on the Internet.²⁷ On every occasion, nationalism claims to fight for the national interest of the country, thus providing nationalism with some moral currency. In the Chinese political context, if the government pays attention and addresses the issue seriously, nationalism might be a contributing force to social stability. However, if the leadership ignores these voices, their legitimacy to rule will be questioned.

Nevertheless, the power of nationalism should not be overestimated. With its rapid development, China is fast becoming an increasingly pluralistic society. Nationalism is only one of the voices. Also, different social groups motivated by various social interests might appeal to nationalism for different purposes (Shen, 2007). These different social forces acted against each other in their dealings with nationalism.

The Chinese government serves a more serious and institutional constraint on nationalism. As mentioned earlier, when the goals of the state and society are identical, the power of nationalism tends to be strong. But when their goals are different, the power of nationalism will be constrained. Nationalism does not always complement the interest of the government. The government and social forces might perceive and define China's national interest differently. If the government does not control or guide various nationalistic forces with care, the greatest impact will be dealt on China's domestic policies rather than on the external front. From the point of view of international relations, while nationalism has the effect of forcing China's hard-line critics to restrain themselves, it is unlikely to have a major impact on China's overall strategy. After its reform, while China has experienced many waves of nationalism, there has been no major shift in China's foreign policies. Due to globalization, China is already integrated with the international system. While China can no longer close its door, it has been greatly "socialized" by the West (Johnston, 2007). An over-zealous nationalism will hurt the interest of China. China can only be solved problems with the international community within the

framework of the international system. In this context, Chinese nationalism only serves as a “voice” to rather than an “exit” from the international system (Zheng, 1999).

Similarly, on the domestic front, China is facing multiple issues during the course of its reforms. The discontentment demonstrated by the nationalists is understandable. Yet, these problems can only be solved by continuing its reform. Without social stability, China’s sustainable development will become problematic. Once nationalism begins to have a negative impact on social stability, China’s development will be obstructed. Hence, in the long run, nationalism is against China government’s interest.

As in any other country, nationalism in China will not go away despite globalization. Nationalism and the government will continue to interact with each other. Cooperation between the two is necessary, but tension is also inevitable. What is crucial to the Chinese government is to effectively manage nationalism. Over the years, the Chinese government has become increasingly experienced in managing nationalism. Hence, while nationalism will prevail, its impact on China’s domestic and foreign policies will continue to be limited.

Notes

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2. For example, Edward Friedman, *National Identity and Democratic Prospects in Socialist China* (Armonk, New York: M. E. Sharpe, 1995); Baogang He and Yingjie Guo, *Nationalism, National Identity and Democratization in China* (Aldershot and Sydney, Ashgate, 2000); Yingjie Guo, *Cultural Nationalism in Contemporary China* (London: RoutledgeCurzon, 2003); and Leong H. Liew and Shaoguang Wang (eds), *Nationalism, Democracy and National Integration in China* (London: RoutledgeCurzon, 2004).
 3. For example, Peter Hays Gries, *China's New Nationalism: Pride, Politics, and Diplomacy* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2004); Simon Shen, *Redefining Nationalism in Modern China: Sino-American Relations and the Emergence of Chinese Public Opinion in the 21st Century* (New York: Palgrave, 2007); Yong Deng, *China's Struggle for Status: The Realignment of International Relations* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2009); and Yanan He, *The Search for Reconciliation Sino-Japanese and German-Polish Relations since World War II* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2009).
 4. For example, Yongnian Zheng, *Discovering Chinese Nationalism in China: Modernization, Identity, and International Relations* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1999); and Christopher R. Hughes, *Chinese Nationalism in the Global Era* (London: Routledge, 2006).
 5. For example, see, Liao Kuang-sheng, *Anti-Foreignism and Modernization in China, 1860-1980* (Hong Kong: The Chinese University of Hong Kong Press, 1984).
 6. For example, see, Wang Gungwu, *The Revival of Chinese Nationalism* (International Institute for Asian Studies, Leiden, 1996)
 7. For the role of Zhao Ziyang in China's political reform in the 1980s, see, Guoguang Wu and Helen Lansdowne (eds), *Zhao Ziyang and China's Political Future* (London and New York: Routledge, 2008).
 8. <<http://xiaoyaoa.blogbus.com/logs/1884260.html>>.
 9. <<http://www.hudong.com/wiki/%E3%80%8A%E4%B8%96%E7%95%8C%E7%BB%8F%E6%B5%8E%E5%AF%BC%E6%8A%A5%E3%80%8B>>.
 10. The democracy saloon at Beijing University often invited liberal scholars to speak on western political systems. The saloon played an important role in the Tiananmen Incident.
 11. For an examination of the reformist leadership and liberal forces, including intellectuals in the 1980s, see Merle Goldman, *Sowing the Seeds of Democracy in China: Political Reforms in the Deng Xiaoping Era* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1994).
 12. *People's Daily*, 2nd July 1991, pp. 1-3.
 13. *People's Daily*, 7th September 1994, p. 3.
 14. *People's Daily*, 17th January 1996, p. 1.
 15. There is a growing body of New Left literature in China. For the New Left reflections on the reform policy and globalization, for example, see Wang Hui, *China's New Order: Society, Politics, and Economy in Transition*, edited by Theodore Hutters (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2003); Wang

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16. <<http://www.wyzxsx.com/Article/Class22/200909/102601.html>>.
17. <<http://www.anti-cnn.com/track>>.
18. “Beijing Consensus” refers to an alternative economic development model to the “Washington Consensus”, which was a United States-led plan for reforming and developing the economies of small, third-world countries. While the term had existed for some time in the 1990s, its inclusion to the mainstream political lexicon was in 2004 when the United Kingdom’s Foreign Policy Centre published a paper by Joshua Cooper Ramo titled *The Beijing Consensus*. In this paper, he laid out several broad guidelines for economic development based on Chinese experience (see Joshua Cooper Ramo, *The Beijing Consensus*, London: The Foreign Policy Centre, 2004). In China, the New Left has welcomed and accepted this term and has often employed it in forming its discourse on China’s reforms. However, the liberals have raised serious questions about this term.
19. <<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=x9QNK34cJo>>.
20. <<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uSQnK5FcKas&feature=related>>.
21. <http://www.newyorker.com/reporting/2008/07/28/080728fa_fact_osnos?currentPage=all>.
22. <<http://www.anti-cnn.com/forum/cn/thread-124384-1-1.html>>.
23. The rapid development of modern communications technologies such as the Internet and mobile phones has effectively changed the interaction pattern between the state and society. These new forms of technologies have served platforms of public discussions and facilitated Internet-facilitated protests, including nationalism (see Xu Wu, *Chinese Cyber Nationalism*; Yongnian Zheng, *Technological Empowerment: The Internet, State and Society in China*, Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2008; and Xiaoling Zhang and Yongnian Zheng (eds), *China’s Information and Communications Technology Revolution: Social Changes and State Responses*, London: Routledge, 2009).
24. <<http://www.anti-cnn.com/track>>.
25. <<http://www.anti-cnn.com/track>>.
26. <http://www.openv.com/play/PhoenixTV1prog_20090411_7025583.html>.
27. In June 2008, the CCP General Secretary Hu Jintao fielded questions from Chinese netizens through the Strong China Forum (强国论坛), an online bulletin board of the *People’s Daily*. In February 2009, Chinese Premier Wen Jiabao participated in his first online chat jointly hosted by the websites of the Chinese government and the official Xinhua News Agency. See, Lye Liang Fook and Yang Yi, “The Chinese Leadership and the Internet”, *EAI Background Brief*, No. 467, East Asian Institute, National University of Singapore, 27th July 2009.

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