

Disrespect and Distrust: the external origins of contemporary Chinese nationalism

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With the rise of China, the importance of understanding Chinese nationalism increases. Assessing Chinese nationalism, many people claim that it has grown stronger and more intense in recent years. Some believe that this is the case because the Chinese Government deliberately promotes nationalism to serve its own purposes. This paper argues that the reality with Chinese nationalism is much more complicated than many assume. It has grown stronger in some respects but weaker in others. The role of the Chinese Government is at best mixed. In explaining the development of Chinese nationalism, one needs to look at external as well as internal and historical causes. Only by doing so can one gain a fuller and more balanced understanding of this intriguing phenomenon.

It is now a cliché in the Western discourse on China that Chinese nationalism is both strong and on the rise. Moreover, it is often alleged that the Chinese Government has been actively promoting nationalism as a substitute for its communist ideology. Even some more sophisticated scholars take these views for granted although they admit that the Chinese Government is sometimes cautious in promoting nationalism because it finds it a double-edged sword. That is to say, while nationalism can be used to rally popular support, it can also direct its pent-up frustration and fury onto the state itself when the latter cannot meet the aroused nationalistic expectations. Explaining the origins of contemporary Chinese nationalism, people tend to focus on domestic factors such as historical memories, social psychology and political expediency. Little attention is paid to the external factors as if the outside world only reacts to the sizzling nationalism in China.

This paper wishes to discuss these views. Specifically, it argues that: (1) it is problematic to say that Chinese nationalism is strong or on the rise; (2) the Chinese

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Government's attitude toward nationalism is far more complex and ambiguous than people generally assume; and (3) while domestic factors are important in shaping contemporary Chinese nationalism, external factors are equally if not more important in that regard.

The state of Chinese nationalism

Measuring the strength of nationalism is perhaps an impossible task. To begin with, popular mood fluctuates over time. For example, Chinese nationalist feelings went through a drastic change before and after the US bombing of the Chinese Embassy in Belgrade in May 1999. The contrast between American nationalism before and after the terrorist attacks on 11 September 2001 is even more striking. In the second place, nationalism is often expressed in different ways and gets mixed up with ideology and interests. At the height of Chinese ideological fervor as during the period of the Cultural Revolution, for example, revolutionary ideology masked intense nationalist feelings in China.¹ When McCarthyism was rampant in the US during the 1950s, those who questioned the extreme anti-Communist practices were also regarded as un-American or unpatriotic.² The annual debate of the US Congress on whether to suspend China's most favored nation status throughout the 1990s threatened Chinese economic interests and led to strong Chinese reactions against it. The well-known 'Buy American' campaign in the US during the 1980s was also largely a reflection of the intense concerns on the part of many Americans for their economic welfare.

Finally, it is hard to distinguish the nationalist rhetoric from genuine nationalist passions. Some Chinese may enjoy talking about patriotism. However, when it comes to dealing with real life, they have no problem with purchasing foreign goods, watching foreign movies, sending their kids to study in the West, or working for foreign companies. Some passionate nationalists even try to migrate to the West or are themselves seeking to become foreign nationals.

In light of all this, one may never be able to develop a definitive criterion to assess the state of nationalism in a given country. However, this does not mean that one cannot get a rough idea about the intensity of nationalism at a given time and the trend of its development. According to Professor Richard Rosecrance, nationalism is 'fundamentally the creation of "we-feeling" among members of a nation to the point where national loyalties take precedence over most other obligations'.³ In reality, such a feeling is generally manifested in three ways. The first way is found in xenophobia, that is, undue fear and contempt of strangers or foreigners, especially as reflected in his or her political or cultural views. The second is manifested through chauvinism, which is militant devotion to and glorification of one's country. The third is shown in patriotism, which means love, support and defense of one's country.⁴ With this

1. Before the Japanese Prime Minister visited China in 1972, the Chinese Government took pains to explain why the visit was necessary and urged people not to react to it too emotionally. Obviously, it felt this to be necessary because it anticipated strong anti-Japanese feelings among the Chinese people at the time.

2. Jia Qingguo, *Weishixian de hejie: zhongmei guanxi de gehe yu weiji* [Unmaterialized Rapprochement: Conflicts and Crises in Sino-American Relations] (Beijing: Wenyi Publishing House, 1998), pp. 79–82.

3. Richard Rosecrance, *International Relations: Peace or War?* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1973), p. 16.

4. The definitions of the concepts are derived from *The American Heritage Dictionary* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1979).

understanding, one can make some broad assessment of the intensity of nationalism of a given country in terms of the way people of the country view foreign contacts and projection of their country's power and influence abroad and/or identity with and support for the state.

Advocates of the rise of Chinese nationalism thesis appear to have ample evidence to make their point. Early every morning, a large crowd of Chinese voluntarily gather in Tiananmen Square to observe the ceremony of raising the national flag amid the Chinese national anthem. The Chinese also enjoy songs, performances and movies celebrating patriotism. Chinese intellectuals are often seen defending China against foreign criticisms on issues ranging from human rights to Taiwan. Angry Chinese youths threw rocks at the American Embassy in Beijing in the wake of the US bombing of the Chinese Embassy in Belgrade in 1999. An overwhelming majority of Chinese people oppose Taiwan independence and support military actions to deter Taiwan separatist attempts and the use force if necessary should the Taiwan authorities opt for *de jure* independence. And one can go on.

If one looks at these phenomena, one gets the impression that nationalism is indeed extraordinarily strong in China. However, if one takes a closer look at the Chinese situation, one finds that it is far more complex than it first appears. It is true that every morning a large crowd of Chinese gather in Tiananmen Square to observe the flag raising ceremony, but it is also true that most people attending the ceremony in Tiananmen Square are not Beijing residents. More likely than not, they come from other provinces. The few Beijing residents are mostly there to accompany their tourist relatives and friends from other provinces.

It is also true that many Chinese love certain patriotic shows. However, this does not tell us very much about how strong their nationalistic sentiments are. It is a fact that the Chinese love some patriotic shows but not others. This is because some are aesthetically more appealing than others. It is also true that Chinese intellectuals in general defend their government against foreign criticisms and pressures. However, they are defensive of their government less because they are patriotic than because they genuinely believe that Western propaganda and pressures on China are not helpful in solving Chinese problems.

Having said all this, one should note that this does not mean that the Chinese are not patriotic. They are. The point is that their nationalism may not be extraordinarily strong and they may not be much more patriotic than their foreign counterparts. Here, a comparison of the situation in China and in the US is helpful. Both Chinese and Americans celebrate their national days. However, the Chinese celebrate 1 October, the founding of the People's Republic of China, by enjoying themselves. They go to parks, do shopping or just relax at home. If they attend some functions to mark the occasion, the state pays for these functions in most cases. Americans, on the other hand, take 4 July, the US Independence Day, much more seriously. They not only do what the Chinese do, but also make efforts to mark the occasion on their own initiatives. Many buy fireworks with their own money to display while having picnics in national parks. Many others go to local celebration functions and make donations towards next year's celebration. Are the Chinese more nationalistic than the Americans? Not in this case.

During the 1980s, the US had a strong ‘Buy American’ campaign. American congressmen were seen hammering at Japanese cassette recorders in front of Capitol Hill to show their patriotism. China has never had this. Americans raise flags in the front yard of their homes and the Chinese do not. And one can find more cases in which Americans appear to be more nationalistic than the Chinese. Of course, there are many cases in which one does find the Chinese to be more nationalistic than Americans. The point is that it is debatable that Chinese nationalism is stronger than in other countries.

If the argument that Chinese nationalism is stronger than that in other countries is questionable, the argument that Chinese nationalism is on the rise or stronger than before is even more suspect. Advocates of this argument point to such cases as the publication of such books as *Zhongguo keyi shuo bu* [*China Can Say No*] in the mid-1990s,⁵ the strong reactions on the part of Chinese students to the US bombing of the Chinese Embassy in Belgrade and the nationalistic verbiage in Chinese Internet chat-rooms.

On the surface, such cases do appear to suggest a rise of Chinese nationalism. However, if one puts them into a historical perspective, one finds that this is not the case. It is true that books like *China Can Say No* do represent an outburst of Chinese nationalism at the time. It is also true that such books and articles are abundant in China’s contemporary history. Remember Jiang Jieshi’s (Chiang Kai-shek) *Zhongguo zhi mingyun* [*China’s Destiny*]? Remember Liu Danian’s *Meiguo qinhua shi* [*History of American Aggression Against China*]? Remember Zhong Zhengxuan’s *Mei diguozhuyi shi women de sidi* [*US Imperialism is Our Enemy*]?⁶ If *China Can Say No* has attracted more international attention now, it is because as a result of China’s rapid and sustained development during the past 20 years, the international community has become more sensitive to Chinese nationalism now than in the past.

Chinese students’ angry demonstrations against the US bombing of the Chinese Embassy in Belgrade in 1999 should not be construed as a manifestation of the rise of Chinese nationalism either. In contemporary Chinese history, such demonstrations are nothing new. Remember the May 4 student demonstrations against international injustice against China in 1919? Remember the December 9 student demonstrations against the Japanese invasion of China in 1935? Remember the burning of the British charge d’affaires during the Cultural Revolution in 1967? They were all spontaneous demonstrations against real and perceived foreign aggression and affront against China. And they were no less intense than the demonstrations against the US in 1999.⁷

5. Song Qiang *et al.*, *Zhongguo keyi shuo bu* [*China Can Say No*] (Beijing: Zhonghua Gongshang Lianhe Publishing House, 1996).

6. Liu Danian, *Meiguo qinhua shi* [*History of US Aggression Against China*] (Beijing: Renmin Publishing House, 1954); Zhong Zhengxuan, *Mei diguozhuyi shi women de sidi* [*US Imperialism is Our Enemy*] (Beijing: Zhongguo Qingnian Publishing House, 1962).

7. For a brief discussion of the May 4 Movement and the December 9 Movement, please refer to: Jonathan Spence, *The Search for Modern China* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1990), pp. 310–312, 420–421; for a discussion of the burning of the British charge d’affaires, see Jin Ge, ‘Zai waijiaobu “duoquan” qianhou’ [‘Before and after “power seizure” incident of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs’], in An Jianshe, ed., *Zhou Enlai de zuihou suiyue: 1966–1976* [*The Last Years of Zhou Enlai: 1966–1976*] (Beijing: Zhongyang Wenxian Publishing House, 1995), pp. 234–236.

The Internet chat-room nationalist rhetoric does not by itself equal stronger nationalism either. China did not have the Internet before the early 1990s. Therefore, we do not know how the Chinese would have expressed themselves in a freer and anonymous manner before and there is really no realistic basis for comparison. However, what we do know is that during the Korean War, millions of Chinese youth volunteered to join the PLA to fight in the war at the risk of their lives. What we also know is that before the 1980s the Chinese used to take great pride in things made in China such as the Wuhan Yangtse River Bridge, the ten thousand ton hydraulic press and the ten-thousand ton ocean ship.⁸ Chinese students who went to study in the US in the early 1980s also remember that in the early 1980s most Chinese students did not feel comfortable to say that they wanted to remain in the States after graduation instead of returning to China to serve their country. Many so-called Internet chat-room nationalists may also be the same people trying their best to migrate to the US or other developed countries. At least many do not have any objection to their family members and relatives migrating to the West.

In a word, the thesis of the rise of Chinese nationalism is flawed. A more balanced view is that the Chinese are more nationalistic than in the past in some ways and less so in others. The Chinese are more nationalistic in their reactions to foreign criticisms and condemnations of China. Few in the world like to hear foreigners criticizing let alone condemning their country. However, except for a few political dissidents, the Chinese appear to have taken this more seriously. They may have grave reservations about and are openly critical of what is going on in China. However, they appear to be more easily offended than their foreign counterparts when the foreign press or governments talk about China's problems. Many believe that the US and some other Western countries are hostile to China. They would do anything to smear China's image and create troubles in China. They want to split Taiwan from China and contain China.⁹ The Chinese have to respond in kind to defend China's national interests.

Moreover, the Chinese are more nationalistic in that they take greater pride in China's achievements today than before. Since China adopted the policy of reform and opening, the Chinese economy has experienced sustained high-speed growth. As a result, China has developed a dynamic market economy and the Chinese people's standard of living has improved significantly. Look at Chinese cities: one does not only find the glistening high rises of Pudong but also better and cleaner streets and buildings in most other Chinese cities. Look at Chinese stores: they are full of colorful commodities with ever more variety and better quality. Look at the Chinese people: they are healthier and better dressed than at any time in Chinese history. Despite all the problems in Chinese economy and politics, many Chinese see a real hope for modernization in modern history. They begin to feel the rise in China's status in world affairs. This is especially true for those who have contacts with

8. In January 1988, I met a group of Chinese engineers from Wuhan on route to the airport in New York. A member of the group said to me that times had changed. In the old days, when foreigner visitors went to their factory, they showed them machinery made in China with great pride. Now, they showed them the imported machinery to impress them about the technological sophistication of their factory.

9. Many Chinese share the views expressed in Li Xiguang and Liu Kang, *Yaomohua Zhongguo de beihou* [*Behind Efforts to Demonize China*] (Beijing: Zhongguo Shehui Kexue Publishing House, 1996).

the outside world. As Chinese, they are proud that China is getting more attention, Chinese products are increasingly found in foreign department stores, more and more Chinese can afford to travel to other countries, the RMB is increasingly accepted in China's neighboring countries, etc. Too many Chinese even the talk about the China threat reflects the rise of China and more weight of China in world affairs. In contrast to what has happened to many other developing countries and the former communist countries, China has been doing quite well.

The Chinese are more nationalistic also in the ways in which they approach international affairs. As the influence of ideology fades, they have rediscovered the Realist language to address their concerns. Accordingly, one hears more and more people using such terms as national interests. Not only people in the Internet chat rooms talk about national interests; even some serious scholars also advocate national interests. Thus in the 1990s, Hans Morgenthau became a major frame of reference for Chinese scholars as well as officials to analyze international politics. This new approach has resulted in the publication of books and articles with a realist perspective such as Yan Xuetong's *Zhongguo guojia liyi fenxi* [*An Analysis of China's National Interests*].¹⁰ According to the new rhetoric, every country pursues national interests. It is only natural for China to do so. It is wrong for China to avoid the concept just to be consistent with Marxist ideology, as in the past.

In many other ways, however, the Chinese are less nationalistic than before. To begin with, in the past, many Chinese used to believe that it was inappropriate to import foreign consumer goods and at times even equipment and technologies. The idea was that China should be independent and self-reliant. It was politically incorrect to be '*cong yang mei wai*' ('worship foreign things').¹¹ Now people appear to be less and less concerned about this. To Chinese state and consumers alike, the criterion is not where a product is made; rather whether it is a good buy. In fact, to the distaste of some Chinese, many of their countrymen have developed an unwanted bias against Chinese products. They believe that foreign products are of better quality. Accordingly, given the same price and sometimes even a somewhat higher price, they tend to opt for foreign products.¹²

In the second place, the Chinese used to harbor suspicion about those with foreign connections, that is, those who had either studied abroad or who had relatives and friends overseas. Some believed that such connections would somehow make these people less patriotic. Today, things have changed significantly. While the old suspicion lingers, the Chinese appear to be more and more tolerant about this. They welcome overseas Chinese to visit and make investments. They welcome Chinese students with foreign degrees to come back to serve their country, at least in principle

10. Yan Xuetong, *Zhongguo guojia liyi fenxi* [*An Analysis of China's National Interests*] (Tianjin: Tianjin Renmin Publishing House, 1996).

11. During the Cultural Revolution, even Premier Zhou Enlai was attacked for failing to adhere to the principle of self-reliance when he advocated promotion of China's foreign economic relations. Zhou Qingtong, *Zhou Enlai zai 'wenhua da geming' zhong* [*Zhou Enlai during the Cultural Revolution*] (Beijing: Zhonggong Dangshi Publishing House, 1998), pp. 146–151.

12. In recent years, as increasing foreign brand name products are made in China, many consumers are disappointed to find the goods bearing foreign brand names are locally made. Zhang Shengwen, 'Xuan beitou caidian bimian sanda wuqu' ['Avoid three traps when selecting back projection TVs'], *Beijing qingnian bao* [*Beijing Youth Daily*], (16 November 2001).

and when their own personal interests are not directly affected by it. They send their own children to study abroad.¹³ Against this backdrop, teaching how to take the TOEFL and GRE tests has become big business in China.¹⁴

Finally, the Chinese are also less troubled by international marriage than before. The first Chinese who applied to marry a foreigner after the Cultural Revolution had a hard time. In fact, the story goes that Deng Xiaoping himself had to approve the marriage personally. Now marriage between Chinese and foreigners is commonplace. No one appears to raise an eyebrow about it any more.¹⁵

In sum, in modern history Chinese nationalism has been there all the time. It may or may not be stronger than nationalism in other countries. It has waxed and waned over time. In some aspects, it has become stronger and in others weaker. The picture is much more mixed and complex than that captured by simple, linear and unidimensional descriptions.

External origins

The prevailing explanations of Chinese nationalism have focused on historical, psychological and domestic political factors. Some argue that China's humiliating experience with foreign oppression and aggression in modern history, the so-called 'century of humiliation', has been largely responsible for the development of Chinese nationalism. They believe that the contrast between the historical glory of the Chinese civilization and modern history of domestic backwardness and international contempt has generated a strong psychological imbalance among the Chinese and made them nationalistic. Others claim that the Chinese Government's nationalistic indoctrination through education and public media is responsible for Chinese nationalism. According to this view, the Chinese Government drew its legitimacy largely from the Communist ideology in the past. As the ideology declined over the years, the Chinese Government had to replace it with nationalism as a way to shore up its legitimacy.¹⁶

All these explanations may be true to some extent. However, the role of external factors in shaping Chinese nationalism has not been given due attention. This paper argues that external factors are at least as important as historical, psychological and political factors in shaping the development of contemporary Chinese nationalism. If one accepts constructivism's argument in international relations, i.e. that a state's

13. China now ranks among the top countries in terms of the number of students studying abroad. Meng Jing, 'Zhongguo yijing chengwei liuxue daguo' ['China has become a major state in terms of the number of students studying abroad'], <http://news.sina.com.cn/c/2002-09-17/1052728721.html>.

14. Xin Dongfang, a private school specializing in helping Chinese students prepare for the TOEFL and GRE tests, has been a spectacular business success in China. Lu Huan, 'Xin dongfang chengzhang zhong de yinyou' ['The potential problems of Xin Dongfang'], http://www.beijngtimes.com.cn/new/bjtimes_new/detail.php?newsid=10051.

15. Wu Yu, 'Shewai hunyin: cong "hongyan baifa" dao "qingchun zuoban"' ['International marriage: from "young bride and old groom" to "young bride and young groom"'], <http://202.84.17.73:7777/Detail.wct?RecID=3&SelectID=2&ChannelID=4255&Page=1>.

16. Yongnian Zheng, *Discovering Chinese Nationalism in China: Modernization, Identity, and International Relations* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), pp. 14–19; Lichade Boensitan and Luosi Mangluo, *Jijiang daolai de zhongmei chongtu* [Richard Bernstein and Ross Munro, *The Coming Conflict with China*] (Beijing: Xinhua Publishing House, 1997), pp. 51; 2–3.

behavior is in part a product of the interaction between nation-states, current Chinese nationalism is also in part a product of the interactions between China and the outside world.

Conceivably, external influences on Chinese nationalism can assume different forms. The more obvious and also more important include international acceptance of China, international media coverage of China and international respect for China's core interests.

It is assumed that (1) the more China is integrated with the international community, the weaker some aspects and the stronger some other aspects of Chinese nationalism will be; (2) the more biased international media coverage of China is, the more intense Chinese nationalism will become, and vice versa; and (3) the more respect the international community shows for China's core national interests, the less intense Chinese nationalism will become, and vice versa.

The situation with China's international integration has changed tremendously since the founding of the People's Republic of China. During the first two decades of the People's Republic, the US led and pressured much of the world to contain and isolate China. As a result, only a handful of countries recognized the PRC diplomatically. The UN refused to restore China's seat there. While the US maintained a trade ban against China, many other countries had to abide by strict trade sanctions against China sponsored and promoted by the US. The US also posed a serious military threat to China especially from Korea, Japan, Indochina, and Taiwan. Under these circumstances, the Chinese were indeed living in 'angry isolation' as former US President Richard Nixon put it in an article in 1967.¹⁷ If nationalism represents a sense of 'we' feeling within a nation to enhance one's security, such a situation could only make such a feeling among the Chinese more intense.

Confronted with such a situation, Chinese believed that the outside world was hostile to China and the only way for China to survive and gain its due international status was to build itself into a strong and prosperous country through a policy of independence and self-reliance. It was during this period that nationalism was most intense in China. At the time, the Chinese people generally supported their government's rejection of the international political and economic system. They regarded China's relations with the outside world as a zero-sum game, that is, what was good for the West must be bad for China and vice versa. During the Cultural Revolution, Chinese nationalism went to the extreme, as symbolized by the burning of the British charge d'affaires in Beijing in 1967, and the flat rejection of anything foreign.

Sino-American rapprochement in the early 1970s led to normalization of diplomatic relations between China and the outside world during the 1970s and China's adoption of the policy of openness in the late 1970s has found China increasing in international economic integration since then. These two developments have changed China's relationship with the outside world. As a permanent member of the UN Security Council and an important member of major multilateral inter-governmental organizations, China has been increasingly able to make itself heard. With the rapid and sustained growth of China's foreign trade and economic relations

17. Richard M. Nixon, 'Asia after Vietnam', *Foreign Affairs* 46, (October 1967), p. 121.

with the outside world, the Chinese economy has experienced rapid and sustained growth. As China develops an increasing stake in the international system, Chinese begin to see China's relations with the outside world from a positive-sum perspective rather than as a zero-sum game. Consequently, they are more and more supportive of international organizations, especially the UN. It is interesting to note that increasingly the Chinese are concerned about the situation in which some Western countries, especially the US, show disrespect for international organizations such as the UN and violation of the international law as in the case of the Kosovo war and trade protectionism. Many Chinese scholars as well as officials are urging such countries to respect international organizations and international laws in conducting foreign relations in recent years.¹⁸ This process has weakened Chinese nationalism significantly.

While China's international integration with the outside world has weakened Chinese nationalism in some ways, it has also enhanced it in some other ways. Increasing contacts with the outside world have generated more conflicts of interests and priorities. More international participation in international affairs has brought China closer to the problematic reality of the Western, especially the US, domination of world affairs. China's increasing international competitiveness in production has threatened, or generated the perception of threat to, the jobs of many in the West.¹⁹ The efforts on the part of Western countries to employ policy measures to restrict Chinese exports have in turn hurt Chinese businesses and workers.²⁰ This has led to a stronger identification on the part of the Chinese with the Chinese state.

Western, especially US, media coverage of China has been another important external source of Chinese nationalism. Many Chinese complain that the Western media has treated China unfairly by being preoccupied with the negative things happening in China.²¹ It is true that the Western media does not like to dwell on good news in general as some analysts in the West argue. However, it is also true that the tone of news coverage about the West and about China is very different. When the Western media talks about negative things in China, it often links these things with the intention of the Chinese Government and the Chinese political system as if the latter are the culprits of all bad things. Meanwhile, when they report on negative things in their own countries, they rarely make the connection between the bad things and the integrity of their governments or the nature of the political system of their own respective countries. For example, when reporting a corruption case, the Western media would say that this is a case involving a Communist official and suggest that the communist system is responsible for that. When it covers a corruption case in a Western country, the Western media would never say that this is

18. See President Jiang Zemin's written response to a French newspaper's questions: <http://202.84.17.73:7777/Detail.wct?RecID=480&SelectID=1&ChannelID=4255&Page=25>; also Luo Renshi's comments on US international behavior, *Jiefangjun bao* [Liberation Army Daily], (20 May 1999).

19. David M. Lampton, *Same Bed, Different Dreams: Managing US-China Relations 1989-2000* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001), pp. 116-130.

20. Shen Haixiong and Zhang Ran, 'Qingxiao yu fan qingxiao' ['Dumping and anti-dumping'], *Xinhua News Agency*, (5 June 2002); Chen Fang and Zhang Heping, 'Shuping: jingti "jishu bilei" zu'ai shangpin chukou' ['Analysis: watch out for "technical barriers" in exports'], *Xinhua News Agency*, (21 April 2002).

21. Chen Tiejuan, 'Xifang meiti you duo, kepa zhongguo jiu you duo "kepa"' ['How "terrible" China is up to how terrible the Western press is'], *Zhongguo qingnian bao* [China Youth Daily], (22 July 2002).

a case involving a democratic or capitalist official as if the political system has anything to do with it. The ideological tone is obvious.

This practice is clearly seen as unfair by many Chinese. To them, corruption is corruption. It can happen to both democracies and non-democracies. There are clean non-democratic states (for example: Singapore) and corrupt democratic ones (for example: the Philippines). The political system may have nothing to do with it. It has even less to do with government intentions. The truth is that no government, whether democratic or not, wants corruption because it hurts the government's legitimacy. More often than not, it is a matter of the capacity of governance. By dealing with China in a special way, the Western media allocates China to an international pariah status. Chinese who identify with their country naturally feel insulted.

This frustration on the part of the Chinese was expressed with the popularity of such books as *China Can Say No* and *Demonizing China* a few years ago. The fact that many people bought books has little to do with the quality of the books. In fact *China Can Say No* is by no means a rational and in-depth description and analysis of the reality of US–China relations. Many Chinese people knew that. However, despite this, they did share the general sentiment expressed in the book, that is, the US media coverage of China was completely biased against and hostile toward China during the 1990s. This led many in China to the belief that the US harbored ill-intention on China and thus prepared them for the angry outburst against the US in the wake of the US bombing of the Chinese Embassy in Belgrade.

The Western, especially US, apathy to what the Chinese view as China's core national interests has been another major source of Chinese nationalism. Caught in the midst of drastic transformations, i.e. modernization, systemic transformation from a centrally planned economy to a market one and leadership transition from a generation of charismatic leaders to one of techno-bureaucrats, China's political and socioeconomic institutions are facing tremendous challenges. At this junction, many Chinese share their government's concern for political stability. They agree that without political stability, China cannot sustain economic development, let alone political progress. However, the constant Western condemnation of China on a whole range of issues and its efforts to push for changes in China according to its values and priorities undermine the Chinese Government's authority and threaten to jeopardize China's political stability. This situation is in part responsible for the rise of Chinese resentment toward the US and some other Western countries. Accordingly what many people in the West believe to be well-intentioned efforts to help the Chinese people have become an important source of Chinese resentment.

Similarly, the US policy on Taiwan has been another source of Chinese nationalism. During the century following the Opium War, Western powers repeatedly invaded and plundered China. Some forced the Qing (Manchurian) Government to cede large chunks of Chinese territories. This process contributed to the rise of nationalism in China in modern history. Against this background, Chinese people are particularly sensitive to sovereignty and territorial issues. Most Chinese regard maintaining territorial integrity and sovereignty as China's core national interests. National reunification thus has been a perennial aspiration of Chinese people in their quest for national prosperity and dignity.

The US, however, has become increasingly supportive of the Taiwan authorities, which have stepped up their efforts to promote Taiwan independence since the 1990s. Dishonoring the previous commitments made over the years by US administrations, the US has increased arms sales to Taiwan. Moreover, it has vowed to help defend Taiwan whatever it takes and tried to develop and upgrade security as well as official ties with the Taiwan authorities.²² These and other efforts on the part of the US Government have frustrated and angered the Chinese people. They believe that the US has no respect for China and has tried to support Taiwan independence as a way to put China down. And they believe that the only way for China to maintain China's territorial integrity is to enhance China's defense capabilities while continuing to push for peaceful reunification of China.²³

Conclusion

With the rise of China, the importance of understanding Chinese nationalism increases. As discussed in the previous passages, the reality of Chinese nationalism is much more complicated than many assume. In recent years, nationalism has grown stronger in some respects and weaker in others. In explaining the development of Chinese nationalism, one needs to look at the external causes as well as the internal and historical ones. Only by doing so can one gain a fuller and more balanced understanding of this intriguing phenomenon.

22. 'Bush vows Taiwan support', *ABC News*, (25 April 2001), <http://abcnews.go.com/sections/us/DailyNews/taiwan010425.html>.

23. Ding Gang, 'Zhongguo conglai bupa weixie' ['China never bows before threat'], *Huanqiu shibao* [*Global Times*], (1 May 2001); Zhuo Fang, 'Bush xiang gan shenme?' ['What does Bush want to do?'], *Xinmin wanbao* [*Xinmin Evening News*], (25 April 2001), p. 1.

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