THE REVIVAL OF CHINESE NATIONALISM: CHALLENGES TO AMERICAN IDEALS AND INTERESTS IN EAST ASIA

LONG TERM STRATEGY GROUP
JONATHAN WALTON

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Executive Summary

This monograph reconsiders the relationship between post-Mao China's 'crisis of legitimacy' and the revival of Chinese nationalism.

The Cultural Revolution (1966-1976), the deaths of Mao Zedong and Zhou Enlai (1976), the dramatic changes of Deng Xiaoping's 'reform and opening' (1979-1989), and rising internal opposition to Communist regimes around the world (1987-1991) raised doubts about the long-term prospects of the ruling Chinese Communist Party (CCP) regime.

However, the post-Mao legitimacy crisis is best understood as the recent incarnation of a much older crisis: the decline of previously strong forms of traditional Chinese identity and the rise of modern Chinese nationalism in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. During that earlier period, contact with the West led a number of Chinese leaders to desire:

- a shared national identity – a modern Chinese nationalism – that would unify the diverse peoples of the former Qing Empire into a single 'Chinese nation,' and

- a modern nation-state that would promote and protect their collective national interests.

In the absence of a unified central government, China's political crisis dominated discussions of the future of the Chinese nation, creating a concurrent identity crisis over

- what it meant to be Chinese;

- the relative merits of Chinese tradition and experiences in the face of Western scientific, economic, political, and military success;

- the responsibilities and values of the Chinese nation-state (or states); and

- the historical narrative of the Chinese people and the bright future towards which they were advancing.

The military dominance of the CCP on the mainland and the Nationalist Party (GMD) in Taiwan enabled those two regimes to temporarily suspend the crisis by dictating their own answers to these questions, but the end of the Cold War and a variety of domestic factors led to the decline of authoritarian controls and a resumption of the unresolved crisis of national identity.

Following popular protests and a general loss of political direction, the CCP and GMD attempted to reconfigure relationships with their respective citizenries. Both parties sought to shore up legitimacy by more closely embodying popular conceptions of the nation – while also seeking to shape those conceptions. Taiwan's attempt led to a transition to democracy, but adjustments on the mainland have led to a consolidation of the Communist Party's authoritarian rule even as the CCP has become more nationalist than communist.

The CCP has embraced and attempted to shape the development of a nationalist revival that originated among intellectuals and within the general population. Separating nationalism from other elements of mainstream political thought is difficult, since there are not pro-nationalist and anti-nationalist factions. Instead, diverse opinions coexist under the label of nationalism, making Chinese nationalism the banner under which conversations about China's future take place.

Late nineteenth and early twentieth century Chinese nationalism was often simultaneously

- both anti-China (opposing the 'backwards' elements of Chinese culture that were preventing the nation from developing) and pro-China (valuing certain aspects of traditional Chinese culture, such as Confucian morality, and wanting to find a fittingly 'Asian' or 'Chinese' solution to China's unique problems); and

- both anti-West (opposing loose Western morals, the 'chaotic' nature of Western life and politics, Western imperialism, and perceived attempts to take advantage of developing nations) and pro-West (admiring and aspiring to the economic, military, and cultural success that developed nations enjoyed).

However, globalization has shattered many idealized preconceptions of the West, particularly the United States, as many Chinese receive a negative impression that has made them more sympathetic to the party-state's propaganda. This impression, combined with CCP manipulation of the Chinese media, means that the anti-Western and pro-China strands of nationalism are the ones most frequently voiced in contemporary China.

While the student protestors of the late 1980s saw themselves as agents of the people, serving the Chinese nation by challenging an out-of-touch state leadership, their contemporary counterparts no longer believe in the promise of liberalism and frequently declare that China is too soft on its liberal, Westernized opponents – the United States, Japan, and Taiwan. Additionally, post-colonialist rhetoric, which has tended to support minority interests and progressive politics in the West, most often supports anti-Western and pro-authoritarian political stances in China.

Attempts to revitalize 'traditional' or more identifiably 'Chinese' culture have led to renewed interest in Confucianism and the rule of an educated moral elite. Terms such as 'democracy' and 'human rights' have had their context heavily altered in Chinese, supposedly in order to better suit China's specific situation. This dissimilarity in meaning, however, obstructs honest discourse about what the West considers to be 'universal' principles.

Marxist ideology remains alive among the peasantry, who often draw on older rhetoric to demand that the state keep its historical promises to the people. Citizens who are not able to successfully compete in the market frequently claim that the state has abandoned them. Maintaining peasant support is important to the CCP, so a smattering of otherwise anachronistic language remains.

In the next five to fifteen years, these developments are likely to lead to:

- further decline in support for a shift to multi-party, liberal democracy, though 'inter-party democracy' and local village elections are likely to grow;

- a Chinese Communist Party that increasingly tries to address popular, nationalist concerns by resolving some problems and attempting to demonstrate its compassion and diligence in regard to problems it is not willing or capable enough to resolve;

- an environment in which American opposition to the actions of the current CCP regime will be viewed as attempts to prevent the Chinese people from rightfully reasserting themselves on the world stage; and

- a widening split between China's 'haves' and 'have nots' over what to do with the remnants of Chinese socialism, whether to discard them as outdated or strengthen them to help cope with increasing disparities.

However, in the event of a major disruption of current trends, such as a rapidly deteriorating domestic economy, the Chinese people might decide that the current regime is insincere or ineffective in looking out for their collective interests, opening the door for a renewed, urgent crisis of legitimacy.

Other outcomes may also be possible if future American administrations decide to engage in a 'war of ideas,' speaking convincingly of the universal value of individual human liberties and demonstrating the leadership of the United States in addressing issues that concern the majority of Chinese citizens.

INTRODUCTION: THE CRISIS OF LEGITIMACY

Throughout the first few decades of the reform era, the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) was dispirited, lacking sufficient political capital or determination to regain the people's trust and acquiescence while still preserving its Marxist heritage. The disastrous Cultural Revolution (1966-1976), the deaths of Mao Zedong and Zhou Enlai (1976), the dramatic changes of the first decade of Deng Xiaoping's 'reform and opening' (1979-1989), and rising internal opposition to Communist regimes around the world (1987-1991) caused many people, both in China and abroad, to question the long-term prospects of the CCP.

In 1979, party elder Chen Yun reportedly made dire predictions at internal meetings, warning that the Chinese people had lost confidence in the Communist Party, confidence that must be regained if the party's leadership was to be preserved.[1] Likewise, Western scholars worried that "pronouncements in [Beijing] will carry little weight in the provinces unless they happen to suit a particular constituency or… are enforced by direct power of the police or military."[2]

However, the 'crisis of faith' (*xinxin weiji*) "was not merely a loss of faith in communism but a loss of faith in Chinese culture and tradition as well."[3] Paraphrasing one scholar, Chinese communism represented the culmination of a century of national struggle and, as such, the transition to post-communism also dismantled the orthodox understanding of modern China's national identity.[4] The decline of Chinese communism could engendered a loss of faith in Chinese tradition because, divorced from the patriotism and ideology of the past 50 years, the larger questions of nationalism remained.

The currently legitimacy crisis, dating to the late 1970s, is commonly misdiagnosed as simply a product of the post-Mao era. However, it is best understood as the contemporary incarnation of an older crisis: the decline of previously strong forms of traditional Chinese identity and the rise of Chinese nationalism in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. That crisis is what has been exposed by the decline of Chinese communism on the mainland.

This monograph refers to 'Chinese nationalism' in the value-neutral sense, indicating the patriotism and devotion to the preservation and betterment of the Chinese people that leads

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[1] X. L. Ding, *The Decline of Communism in China: Legitimacy Crisis, 1977-1989* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 111-112.

[2] Allen S. Whiting, "China After Mao," *Asian Survey* 17, no. 11 (1977), 1029-1030.

[3] Yingjie Guo, *Cultural Nationalism in Contemporary China: The Search for National Identity Under Reform* (London: Routledge Curzon, 2004), xi.

[4] Xudong Zhang, "Nationalism, Mass Culture, and Intellectual Strategies in Post-Tiananmen China," *Social Text* 55, no. 2 (1998), 115.

citizens (and even non-citizens) to attempt to strengthen or reform the Chinese nation-state. In this sense, both the 1989 student protestors and Deng Xiaoping – who ordered the clearing of Tian'anmen Square – were operating according to a nationalist impulse to 'save China.' Deng and the protestors disagreed quite dramatically about what form China's future should take and how people should work to achieve such a future, but such disagreements are not at all uncommon among the diverse viewpoints that exist under the banner of Chinese nationalism.

THE CRISIS DEVELOPS

During the final decades of imperial rule (1861-1911) and the long disintegration of the first Chinese republic under various warlords, political parties, and puppet governments (1911-1949), educated Chinese experienced an identity crisis. The Qing dynastic regime and, moreover, the imperial system and the value of Chinese civilization itself were called into question by domestic collapse and the superiority of Western economic and military might. While China had been internally divided or humiliated by foreign military forces on multiple occasions in its 5000-year history, contact with the West brought a new explanation for China's current weakness – Social Darwinism – which emphasized that China would continue to be weak until it was able to compete successfully with the West in this clash of civilizations.

Educated Chinese familiar with the Western political tradition began to believe that the diverse ethnic and regional factions that inhabited the former Qing Empire constituted 'the Chinese people' and that this nation of people deserved a modern nation-state to promote and protect their collective interests. In such a nation-state, the people – not the rulers – would ultimately be sovereign, a belief which "remains the single most important source of legitimacy [for] the nation-state."[5] Furthermore, in the minds of these early Chinese nationalists,

> there is an implicit yet unmistakable assumption that the state should be congruent with the nation… This desired congruence, however, is not just the congruence between ethnic boundaries and political ones, or between the state's territorial boundaries and the nation's 'homeland'; it also means that the purpose of the state matches the will, interests, and cultural tradition of the nation and expresses the nation's identity.[6]

However, while many people began to see themselves as 'Chinese' (*zhongguo ren*, *zhonghua ren*, or simply *hua ren*), the citizens of a future Chinese nation-state that did not yet exist, there were many differing interpretations of this new national identity. Deciding which interpretation to follow – which version of the national identity the state should be congruent to – was highly contested and, in fact, one source of the Chinese Civil War (1927-1950). Furthermore, during times of social upheaval – and this formative period for Chinese nationalism was certainly such a period – people experience rapid shifts and confusion as they are displaced from their normal

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[5] Prasenjit Duara, "De-Constructing the Chinese Nation," *The Australian Journal of Chinese Affairs* 30 (1993), 12.

[6] Guo, 136-137.

ways of operating. How could people reach a shared understanding of their identity when changing circumstances led them to change their answers to these fundamental questions:

- What does it mean to be Chinese?
- What are the relative merits of Chinese tradition and experiences in the face of Western scientific, economic, political, and military success?
- What are the responsibilities and values of the Chinese nation-state?
- What historical narrative best describes the experiences of the Chinese people and the future they are advancing towards?

The answers to these questions were directly connected to the legitimacy of the various political parties and regimes that battled for control of the former Qing territories. Any regime that was unsuccessful in convincingly representing some interpretation of the Chinese national will – or whose interpretation of the nation was insufficiently appealing – could be called illegitimate. In contrast, regimes that understood the mandate of the modern nation, rather than simply the brute tools of power, were more likely to gain popular support or, at the very least, acquiescence.

Recognizing a legitimate national government was especially urgent since "China was facing an internal crisis and needed some overarching metanarrative, whatever it might be, to save it."[7] The search for a narrative that might 'save the nation' (*jiuguo*) led to a diverse flowering of Chinese political thought during this period, from fascism to liberal democracy to extreme egalitarianism. Educated elites were involved in the process of revitalization, "a deliberate, organized, conscious effort by members of a society to construct a more satisfying culture,"[8] in this case, a culture that was capable of rising to the challenges of the modern world.

If "the essence of modernization is a blending of parochial cultural values and the universal norms associated with the world culture,"[9] that blending was certainly the most controversial aspect of revitalization. In searching for a narrative of loss and salvation, an ideology that would explain Chinese civilization's fall from grace and present a program for national success, educated Chinese were frequently divided – often within a single individual – over whether the solution lay in importing foreign culture or reviving traditional culture. Western political philosophers from Plato to Marx were frequently invoked, due to the widespread perception that

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[7] Rana Mitter, "Contention and Redemption: Ideologies of National Salvation in Republican China," *Totalitarian Movements and Political Religions* 3, no. 1 (2002), 53.

[8] Anthony F. C. Wallace, "Revitalization Movements," *Revitalizations and Mazeways: Essays on Cultural Change*, Robert S. Grument ed. (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2003), 10.

[9] Lucian W. Pye, "How China's Nationalism Was Shanghaied," *The Australian Journal of Chinese Affairs* 29 (1993), 108.

the Chinese cultural tradition was bankrupt or at least highly suspect. However, calls for full-scale Westernization were frequently tempered by xenophobic, anti-Western sentiments reflecting the colonialism and predation that China had recently experienced. Efforts to revive Confucianism or 'traditional Chinese values' clashed with efforts to replace the Chinese writing system with a Western alphabet and destroy the 'superstitions' of folk religion.

The most dominant ideological perspective to emerge from this revitalization – "the secular, progressivist, Enlightenment-derived modernity of both Communism and Nationalist (*guomindang*) nationalism"[10] – was clearly a product of foreign ideas. But Mao's populist Leninism and the mix of liberalism, socialism, Confucianism, and fascism presented by Sun Yatsen's inheritors both represented localized, China-oriented implementations of those ideas. Nationalist pride and pragmatism led the most successful social reformers to adapt foreign ideas to better fit the distinctive characteristics of Chinese society, claiming a place for 'Chineseness' in the plan for national salvation.

THE CRISIS SUSPENDED

China's national identity crisis was suspended when the Nationalist Party and Communist Party became able to forcibly impose their own answers on the questions of national identity. Chiang Kaishek and Mao Zedong both thought of themselves as warrior-philosophers in the classical mold, their political thought backed by military force. Military success allowed them to dictate the identity of the Chinese nation as a reward for victory. Indeed, multiple scholars have argued that by 1950 Chinese nationalism was still immature and amorphous, that its development into a mature understanding of the nation-state – a consensus on how the Chinese people should be ruled – was interrupted, first by decades of war and insecurity and then by the imposition of a surface-deep patriotism designed to support the new regimes in Mainland China and Taiwan. This incompletely developed national identity leads John Fitzgerald to call China "a nationless state"[11] and Lucian Pye to claim "China is really a civilization pretending to be a nation-state."[12]

In the pre-modern era, traditional understandings of Chinese identity "linked being Chinese to a firm consciousness of participating in a nationwide system of political, social, religious, and symbolic relationships."[13] The challenge facing China's new political leaders was crafting a national consciousness that penetrated as thoroughly into the daily lives of local people. Traditional forms of Chinese identity had been greatly disrupted by the violence, displacement,

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[10] Mitter, 47.

[11] John Fitzgerald, "The Nationless State: The Search for a Nation in Modern Chinese Nationalism," *Chinese Nationalism*, ed. Jonathan Unger (Armonk, NY: M.E. Sharpe, 1996), 57.

[12] Pye, 130.

[13] Myron L. Cohen, "Being Chinese: The Peripheralization of Traditional Identity," *Daedalus* 120, no. 2 (1991), 123.

and social changes of previous decades. Furthermore, many educated Chinese considered traditional culture highly suspect and at least partially responsible for China's weakness. Consequently, both Communists and Nationalists worked to build new systems of identity atop the tattered remnants of tradition, weaving new political, social, religious, and symbolic relationships to support the legitimacy of their respective regimes.

Under Mao's tenure, Chinese Communism's tale of a society defined by class background, common ideals, and shared enemies became "a story people told themselves while they lived it and provide[d] an uncommonly interesting example of beliefs becoming so powerful that they changed the way people acted, thought of themselves, and responded to others, at least for a time."[14] Of course, professed belief in Communist ideology was also mandatory, creating a social environment in which it was nearly impossible to escape the illusion that no other version of Chinese nationalism existed. In Taiwan, the harsh authoritarian rule of the Nationalist Party demonstrated that Chiang Kaishek and his son Chiang Chingkuo were no more willing to tolerate forms of nationalism that did not support continued one-party rule.

These relatively superficial and politically mandated definitions of Chinese identity lasted as long as 1) the domestic and international environment offered clear benefits to adhering to these definitions and 2) they were actively backed by the coercive capabilities of the party-state, including propaganda, clear incentives to cooperate, and the activities of internal security forces. However, the end of the Cold War in Asia, beginning with the warming of Sino-US relations in the early 1970s, meant the end of both of these supporting factors in Taiwan. US support of the Nationalist Party began to ease or be more contingent on democratic transitions and an end to forceful suppression.

In mainland China, all the events previously mentioned – the Cultural Revolution (1966-1976), the deaths of Mao Zedong and Zhou Enlai (1976), the first decade of Deng Xiaoping's 'reform and opening' (1979-1989), and the fall of Communist regimes around the world (1987-1991) – led to few domestic or international incentives for adhering to the CCP-imposed, superficial definition of Chinese national identity. The inconsistency of the regime's propaganda and the inconsistent implementation of force were external demonstrations of the heated disagreement within the Chinese Communist Party over the future of the nation. Despite party leaders' attempts to forcibly declare an end to these internal debates after the Tian'anmen Square crackdown of June 1989, they could not prevent the crisis of national identity from reemerging and, with it, complaints regarding the state's inability to live up to popular expectations.

THE CRISIS RETURNS

Under Deng Xiaoping's tenure as the unofficial leader of the Chinese Communist Party and PRC government, economic and political reforms brought sweeping changes, transforming China's sluggish market into one of the fastest growing economies in the world and gradually dismantling

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[14] David E. Apter and Tony Saich, *Revolutionary Discourse in Mao's Republic* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1994), 9.

the radical ideology and totalitarian controls of the Mao Era. When educated Chinese began to explore other answers to the questions of nationalism – moving beyond the dogmatic, reflexive answers that they had been socially conditioned to repeat during the Mao period – the crisis of national identity returned. Once again educated elites began debating the same questions:

- What does it mean to be Chinese?
- What are the relative merits of Chinese tradition and experiences in the face of Western scientific, economic, political, and military success?
- What are the responsibilities and values of the Chinese nation-state?
- What historical narrative best describes the experiences of the Chinese people and the future they are advancing towards?

The first decade of reforms, 1979-1989, was characterized by a struggle between reformers who favored Westernization and liberalization (Hu Yaobang, Zhao Ziyang) and more moderate 'neo-authoritarian' reformers who preferred working within the established political system (Chen Yun, Jiang Zemin). While both pro-Western and pro-establishment reformers described themselves as patriots – nationalists pressing the government to more closely embody the values they considered most important for national success – pro-Western reformers criticized their opponents for restricting the people's freedom and self-determination while pro-establishment reformers painted their adversaries as pawns of Western anti-China forces.

Throughout the 1980s, educated Chinese – including party leaders – were very much aware of the legitimacy crisis, which was variably described as:

- an *ideological crisis* connected to the downfall of Marxism-Leninism, the lack of a state ideology to replace it, and the incongruity between the state's market-based political reforms and continued references to Marxism;
- a *moral crisis* or *crisis of tradition* connected to the decline in the authority of the moral elite, rampant corruption, and a general lack of trust in government officials;
- an *institutional crisis* connected to the lack of transparency in government and the absence of the rule of law, civil society, and other elements critical to the preservation of amicable state-society relations in the West;
- a *pragmatic crisis of results*, in which the people have lost trust in the party-state because of its failure to deliver practical results and increase their personal well-being and standard of living.

However, "the intellectual contingents of neither set of the contending political elites could fashion a coherent, compelling, and ideologically acceptable framework to serve the interests and

policy preferences of their patrons and, at the same time, satisfactorily put the Maoist era behind them,"[15] leading to a lack of clear leadership and no guiding ideology for the reform process. As the economic inequalities of reform became more apparent in the late 1980s, Party leaders were increasingly forced to call on the internal security apparatus to suppress popular unrest in both urban and rural areas. After the most public of such suppressions, the violent dispersal of the remaining Tian'anmen Square protesters on 4 June 1989, the post-Deng party leadership consolidated around a pro-establishment approach to 'incremental reform,' sidelining Zhao Ziyang and other remaining pro-Western reformers.

In the immediate aftermath of 1989, voices advocating Westernization and liberalization were silenced. Additionally, as many Western governments turned hostile or more cautious about China, educated Chinese became more resentful of Western criticism and efforts at containment. Consequently, in the post-1989 period under Jiang Zemin and the Hu-Wen administration, those who advocate liberal democracy are on the far right and those who seek to revive Chinese Marxism are on the far left, both marginalized by the party-state and the allied intellectual mainstream. Meanwhile, the centrist majority includes a diversity of perspectives that nonetheless presuppose, at a minimum, that 1) the Chinese Communist Party should maintain control of the state and 2) the transition to a market economy should not being reversed.

Consequently, the contemporary political environment has played host to a lively flourishing of conservative, authoritarian, nationalist, and traditionalist strains of Chinese political thought. The recent conservative trend goes under a variety of names – 'new Nationalism,' 'new Confucianism,' 'Chinese neo-conservatism,' 'the new May Fourth Spirit,' and the like – representing the lack of a single, overarching ideology tying everything together, despite the party-state's best efforts to harness and direct this movement.

Many of the elements of this recent cultural revival – modernism, socialism, nationalism, and Confucianism – have an anti-Western association in mainland China. Just as the China Threat rhetoric in the United States draws power from presenting China as an opposing force, so the revival of 'traditional' Chinese values gains support by presenting itself in opposition to 'hegemonic' Western values (ultimately, a straw man). While the CCP regime's articulation of those values is presented in 'harmonious' and 'peaceful' terms, to maintain beneficial relationships with foreign nations, the new Chinese nationalism is certainly intended – by its popular, intellectual, and official articulators – to be antagonistic to the social and political goals of the West, especially the United States.

Since the United States and other Western powers have demonstrated a lack of passion for the 'war of ideas,' the ongoing global struggle for ideological salience, they have achieved limited success attempting to refute authoritarian regimes and sympathetic intellectuals who question the value of liberalism and representative democracy. Many people in China have, for the last two decades, been seeking an alternative to the example of the United States, which no longer holds

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[15] Kalpana Misra, *From Post-Maoism to Post-Marxism: The Erosion of Official Ideology in Deng's China* (New York: Routledge, 1998), 14.

the same attraction or appears as unproblematic as it may have in the past. Consequently, Chinese nationalism has found an audience very open to its message and the CCP party-state has been able to use its vast domestic resources and international political capitol to manipulate the new nationalism for its own purposes.

REVIVING THE NATION

The CCP's shift towards traditionalism and cultural nationalism is demonstrated by a shift in the tone of rhetoric and propaganda since 1989. Less than a year after he ordered soldiers to clear Tian'anmen Square, Deng Xiaoping gave a speech on 'Reviving the Chinese Nation,' conferring his official blessing on an embrace of the new nationalism begun by lower ranking officials and intellectuals. Deng remarked that "I am Chinese and understand the history of Western aggression towards China. When I heard that the West's G7 [now the G8] had decided to sanction China, I immediately drew the connection to the Eight Nation Alliance of 1990,"[16] among the most commonly invoked examples of Western imperialism. Nearly twenty years later, the only Chinese character to prominently grace the Opening Ceremonies of the 2008 Olympics was 'harmony' (*he*), formed in three dimensions by giant blocks representing moveable type. Surrounded by 810 dancing 'disciples of Confucius,' the character was depicted three times, in its bronze-age version, in seal script, and in its modern incarnation, illustrating its centrality to Chinese cultural and political thought over thousands of years.

In the two decades since Tian'anmen, three characteristics of Chinese political culture are commonly misunderstood in the United States:

1. Many Western scholars and politicians continue to hold on to the outdated idea that China is vexed by an obsolete, discredited, and morally bankrupt Communist ideology that is incapable of providing legitimacy to the current regime. In fact, "the crisis of legitimacy, far from preventing the state from responding to outside pressure and internal change, instead supplied it with a new and urgent motivation to broaden the base of its rule."[17] Consequently, "[t]here are already sufficient signs to suggest that the CCP is shifting its ground" and attempting "to transform itself into a 'national party,'"[18] one that traffics more in populism than Leninism.

2. Increased economic and cultural contact with the United States and other nations is not driving China towards Westernization or liberal democracy. In fact, a mixture of state pressure, the domestic and international environment, and negative reactions to contact with the West among Chinese students and intellectuals has led "the prevailing Westernization discourse of the 1980s [to lose] discursive legitimacy and influence on government. Meanwhile… interest in traditional culture in society at large has increased to a level unprecedented since 1949, and there has never been more emphasis on

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[16] Deng Xiaoping, "Zhenxing Zhonghua Minzu" [Reviving the Chinese Nation], trans. Jonathan Walton, speech given on 7 April 1990. For the official English translation, see *The Selected Works of Deng Xiaoping, Volume III (1982-1992)*.

[17] Zhang, 134.

[18] Guo, 143.

'theoretical indigenization' and cultural protectionism since 1919." [19] China is increasingly looking to its own traditions – and not to the West – for a model of its future.

3. The revival of Chinese nationalism is partially due to CCP propaganda and media controls but also "stems from the public's anger over perceived foreign aggression, as well as the public's sense of crisis over domestic issues."[20] While the party-state attempts to manipulate the new nationalism for its own purposes – such as in the 'patriotic education' campaign – Chinese nationalism is an independent force that challenges the regime to improve the quality and consistency of government. At the same time, it remains generally supportive of continued CCP dominance. Additionally, popular nationalism spreads anti-American sentiment even among people who are less satisfied with the current regime.

THE TWILIGHT OF CHINESE MARXISM

The central debates of the 1980s occurred between incremental reformers, conservative Marxists, and more radical reformers pushing for a full transition to liberal democracy. Deng Xiaoping referred to the Marxist and the radical reformist factions as left and right deviations, respectively, preferring the incremental reform path. While there were several political campaigns during this era aimed at resisting radical reform – campaigns to 'eliminate spiritual pollution' (1983) and 'oppose bourgeoisie liberalization' (1987) – Deng attempted to rein in such campaigns, arguing that "our greatest danger is leftism,"[21] a return to radical Marxism and the Red Terror. After Tian'anmen, the Westernizing reformist faction was purged, but the Jiang Zemin administration that eventually emerged remained, like Deng, opposed to a return to Marxism and strongly invested in making market reforms work.

Concurrently, the widespread social changes that accompanied reform began altering the relationship between the party-state and its citizenry. Whereas the CCP had previously been an isolated elite, far removed from and largely immune to the problems and concerns of local populations, that has been gradually changing over the past two decades. The Communist Party "has now lost much of its autonomy and its immunity from social influences and demands"[22] and must now make a reckoning of itself to the people, in order to preserve its legitimacy and because the concerns of party members and average citizens increasingly converge. Issues like crime,

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[19] Guo, 134.

[20] Lee Jung Nam, "The Revival of Chinese Nationalism: Perspectives of Chinese Intellectuals," *Asian Perspective* 30, no. 4 (2006), 142.

[21] Su Shaozhi, "A Decade of Crisies at the Institute of Maxism-Leninism-Mao Zedong Thought, 1979-89," *The China Quarterly* 134 (1993), 349.

[22] Guo, 137.

unemployment, the development of the interior, and China's ascendance to the world stage concern everyone.

Though largely invisible to Westerners who rarely venture outside urban areas, Marxist ideology remains alive among the peasantry, who often draw on older rhetoric to demand that the state keep its historical promises to the people. Poorer Chinese citizens who are not prepared to compete in the new economic environment often feel that the party-state has abandoned them to the mercies of hostile market forces pushing for their impoverishment and obsolescence.[23] In the face of peasant concerns, the Hu-Wen administration has reflected "a heightened political urgency to formulate a new national culture that will serve the popular struggle for a more just distribution of the national wealth (which used to belong to all the Chinese people and which is now subject to the grasping of the privileged)."[24] The abolition of the agricultural tax – unnecessary for financing the party-state in an increasingly wealthy China – is an example of peasant concerns being taken seriously in the capitol.

However, as national party leaders continue to shift away from Marxism, the Marxist rhetoric of the peasantry sounds increasingly anachronistic and naïvely idealistic to urban residents. Jiang Zemin invited wealthy capitalists to join the party and there are signs that the CCP is attempting to broaden its membership base further (e.g. automatically inducting top graduates from China's best universities), to better represent the economic and social elites whose support is critical to its continued rule. However, despite the more satisfied or competitive portions of Chinese society easily abandoning Marxism, unlike preceding generations, they are not embracing Western values and pushing for a transition to liberal democracy.

THE REJECTION OF WESTERN LIBERALISM

Perhaps the most obvious indication of the power of China's new nationalism is a dramatic shift in views of the Western liberalism, from the hagiography of the 1980s to the skeptical views that seem increasingly common in the late 1990s and the present. Faith in Western liberalism has eroded or been successfully challenged due to a mixture of negative interactions with the West and CCP propaganda and media controls. These two elements are mutually reinforcing, since negative encounters with the West lead people to be more susceptible to the anti-Western message of the party-state, while the CCP's efforts at spin make Chinese citizens more likely to harshly judge the West for its mistakes or inability to measure up to expectations. For example, the party-state works hard to ensure that a large percentage of China's educated citizenry

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[23] Kevin J. O'Brian and Lijiang Li have built up a substantial body of work on rural protests and the concerns of the peasantry, including *Rightful Resistance in Rural China* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006) and "Protest Leadership in Rural China," *The China Quarterly* 193 (2008).

[24] Zhang, 136.

> interprets the constant US pressure on China over human rights, nuclear proliferation, the trade deficit, and Taiwan as nothing more than the expression of the United States' self-interest and power diplomacy.[25]

Such a negative view of American policies towards China was reinforced by recent international incidents that have put China and American at odds, most prominently the 1999 NATO bombing of the Chinese Embassy in Belgrade. The CCP's ability to encourage certain perceptions of events even applies to the supposed American 'victory' in the Cold War. A large number of Chinese people "are bitterly disillusioned with the 'Western myth' and the 'myth of democracy' in the wake of the Soviet disintegration. Democracy might have prevailed, they say, but the Soviet Union is no more, and its demise has been followed by ethnic strife, wide-spread poverty, starvation, and chaos."[26] Consequently, the current lack of true democracy in post-Soviet Russia has become an indictment of liberal democracy, while the break up of the Soviet Union fuels primordial, irrational Chinese fears of territorial disintegration.

In the last few decades, Chinese students and intellectuals were also able to travel abroad and experience life in Western nations for themselves. Contrary to the common belief that increased communication inevitably leads to greater understanding,

> [t]his situation helped narrow a marked gap between the Chinese official propaganda and the popular portrait of the West. For years, many Chinese were so disillusioned by the official propaganda that they assumed the truth must be just the opposite of what the propaganda said. However, after Chinese people had their own sources of information… and even had chances to visit Western countries in person as contact with the West widened in the 1990s, there was a convergence in perceptions about the West because many Chinese people found the behavior of the West similar to the portrait [painted] by the official propaganda.[27]

While a few Chinese scholars have argued that this "heightened degree of international exchange separates the blatant realism of the 1990s from the naïve and fantastic cosmopolitanism of the 1980s," extensive credit for a more skeptical interpretation of the West must go to the growth and increasing sophistication of Chinese media outlets. In recent decades, China's urban population has grown increasingly fluent in international issues relevant to the PRC, educated by the state-restricted media to be sensitive to foreign attempts to curtail China. "As a result, geopolitics, the national interest, and sometimes cultural conflict have become handy terms of reference for the average Chinese urban dweller," but the media explosion has also helped changed perceptions of America, the previously idolized land of freedom and wealth. In recent decades, the United States

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[25] Zhang, 112-113.

[26] Guo, 36.

[27] Suisheng Zhao, "A State-Led Nationalism: The Patriotic Education Campaign in Post-Tiananmen China," *Communist and Post-Communist Studies* 31, no. 3 (1998), 300.

was frequently presented as being hostile to post-Tian'anmen China or, at least, insufficiently appreciative of the progress that had been made.

Western scholars critical of China are often held up as exemplifying this lack of appreciation. Two Western scholars "especially citied by Chinese intellectuals" in the last 20 years are Francis Fukuyama, who declared America's Cold War victory a triumph for Western liberalism, and Samuel Huntington, who envisioned a future 'clash of civilizations' between East and West.[28] Similar worldviews have quickly become popular among educated Chinese, likely because of their congruence with the strong tradition of social Darwinism, historical teleology, and xenophobia in modern Chinese political thought. While Chinese people clearly feel that their own cultural values should ultimately triumph in the seemingly inevitable conflict, "[t]here is a shared elite and public consensus that the Cold War opposition between communism and capitalism is now replaced by differences of tradition, values, and social reality among nation-states."[29]

Nationalist intellectuals and the media also disparage the Western hope that China will gradually develop into a democratic, multi-party state, which David Shambaugh suggests has been the goal of American foreign policy towards China since 1979.[30] Many Chinese view a 'peaceful evolution' of the PRC into a liberal democracy – as happened in Taiwan – as a victory for the West and, consequently, a loss for the Chinese people. The zero-sum game of the conflict between China and the West makes a mutually beneficial outcome unimaginable. Despite attempts to direct criticism at the CCP regime, not the Chinese people, educated Chinese generally "interpret these alleged schemes as anti-Chinese rather than anti-Communist and believe that the United States is attempting to Westernize and divide China and make the nation a Western dependent."[31]

Concurrently, Chinese intellectuals – in Hong Kong, Taiwan, Singapore, and the West, as well as Mainland China – have built up an increasingly potent vocabulary of Chinese nationalism that enables Chinese citizens to continue to identify with the Chinese nation, the nation-state, and, consequently, with the current Communist Party regime. Following the argument of Huntington, it has become popular, especially in Asia, to argue that "Asians in general and China in particular have their own set of values different from those of the West. Some extreme nativists even suggest that Asian values are superior to their Western counterparts and should therefore be the

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[28] Suishang Zhao, "Chinese Nationalism and Its International Orientations," *Political Science Quarterly* 115, no. 1 (2000), 22.

[29] Ben Xu, "Chinese Populist Nationalism: Its Intellectual Politics and Moral Dimensions," *Representations* 76 (2001), 123-124.

[30] David Shambaugh, "Peaceful Coexistence vs. Peaceful Evolution," *Issues and Studies* 28, no. 11 (1996), 78.

[31] Zhao, "International Orientations," 12.

basis for the values of the world in the twenty-first century,"[32] an Asian nationalist solution to the 'Rome is burning / decline of Western civilization' scenarios frequently imagined in the West.

In an environment that is increasingly distrustful of Western liberalism, "any criticism of modern authoritarianism from home from a democratic point of view is considered guilty of unduly yielding to the universalism of Western ideology." Consequently, "the negative burden of liberal values comes a priori from their association with the aggressive, humiliating, imperialist West,"[33] making it difficult for the small numbers of Chinese intellectuals who continue to write and speak positively about Western democracy and liberalism. Post-colonialist rhetoric, which has tended to support minority interests and progressive social politics in the West, most often supports Chinese nationalism, anti-Western ideologies, and authoritarian political philosophies in China.

While the break with the West seems largely a political one, many criticisms of liberalism or Westernization articulate pragmatic concerns – that Western liberalism and capitalism simply do not work as well as the US claims or, at least, do not work in a Chinese context. It is difficult to know how to evaluate such arguments because, while it's clear that many educated Chinese have legitimate concerns about the practical implementation of democracy, capitalism, or personal freedoms in China – which is clearly a very different social environment than the United States – it is impossible to separate these pragmatic arguments from the ideological struggle in which they are embedded. While pragmatic concerns may reassure the West that, when it comes to China's rejection of foreign values, 'it's not you, it's me,' it does not change the nature of the rejection or the consequences of declaring Western values inappropriate in Chinese society.

Ben Xu powerfully describes three major consequences of anti-Western sentiment:

1. "First, its xenophobia and political parochialism runs the risk of helping the authoritarian government present outside criticism of its poor human rights record as a threat not only to the party-state authority in China, but also, more fundamentally to the Chinese way of life.

2. "Second, its cultural particularism opens the door for the official ideology to paint this threat as coming not just from Western imperialism, foreign governments, and political forces but also from Western values, cultural heritage, modes of knowledge, visions of history – from, in other words, an absolutely incompatible, unchangeable, alien 'West.'

3. "Third, its complete rejection of the modern political values of freedom, democracy, and human rights as unfit for China because of their Western origins helps the state to

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[32] Zhao, "International Orientations," 11.

[33] Xu, 135.

> vindicate its suppression of demands for democracy as a heroic form of third-world resistance to the first world."[34]

While ideas borrowed from the West are still evident in many reforms currently advocated by the Hu-Wen administration, they are rarely recognized as such within mainland intellectual circles. Chinese scholars based in Taiwan, Hong Kong, Southeast Asia, and the West remain vocal on liberal democracy as an important component of China's future, but the CCP appears to have been relatively successful in creating skepticism about the future of Western liberalism in China, especially among youth who experienced neither the Cultural Revolution or the Beijing Spring of the late 1980s. Among this upcoming generation, the party-state is widely viewed as being too soft on foreign policy towards its liberal, Westernized opponents – Japan, Taiwan, and the United States.

THE NEW NATIONALISM

Western media portrayals tend to focus on the 'angry youth' (*fenqing*) as the main ambassadors of 'the new nationalism' (*xin guojia zhuyi*).[35] However, it is difficult to speak of Chinese nationalism as a distinct faction of voices and interests within Chinese politics. Some individuals do distinguish themselves by the volatility of their nationalist rhetoric, but it is otherwise difficult to separate out nationalism from the other elements of mainstream political thought. Contrary to many Western media reports, "Chinese nationalism is not monolithic and Chinese intellectuals are not divided along the lines of pro-nationalism versus anti-nationalism. Instead of being a dividing force, nationalism brings Chinese intellectuals into direct contact with one another and engages them in the exchange of ideas as probably no other issue could."[36] A wide diversity of nationalist opinions coexist, making Chinese nationalism the unspoken norm under which conversations about China's future take place.

The new nationalism is not a uniquely Chinese social force, alien to the Western experience. Nationalism was a relatively new concept in China when the legitimacy crisis began in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, imported from the West. The new nationalism, like the 'old nationalism' of that era, is clearly indebted to Western ideas, despite the anti-Western tenor of its rhetoric. As an inheritor of nineteenth century political ideas regarding the nation-state,

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[34] Xu, 122.

[35] Literally, 'new country-ism,' a translation more appropriate than other common Chinese terms for nationalism, *minzu zhuyi*, 'people/nation-ism' which is used to describe ethnic nationalism, and *aiguo zhuyi*, 'love country-ism' or 'patriotism.' My usage here follows Xiao Shu; see Liu Jiaying and David Bandurski, "'New Nationalism' adds to the list of pressures facing China's media," *China Media Project* (The University of Hong Kong, 17 October 2008), http://cmp.hku.hk/2008/10/17/1289/

[36] Xu, 136.

modern Chinese nationalism adheres to the basic principles described by Anthony D. Smith as the "core doctrine of nationalism"[37] (paraphrased and slightly modified):

1. the people of the world are divided into nations, each nation having its own homeland, history, destiny, and character;

2. each individual must belong to and give loyalty to a nation, working to maintain its autonomy, unity, and identity;

3. the nation is the sole source of political power, legitimizing the nation-state;

4. to be free, nations must possess maximum autonomy and self-expression;

5. a just and peaceful world must be based on a plurality of free nations.

In fact, China's new nationalism is remarkably similar to other offshoots of nineteenth century Western nationalism, including common forms of American patriotism and protectionism. As in America, in China today there exist competing ideas about how best to fulfill the interests and achieve the aspirations of the Chinese nation, though the path to resolving these disagreements in the two countries may differ due to distinctive characteristics of their political systems and cultures. The competing definitions of the Chinese nation and its priorities are not at all unusual, since nations often exist without necessarily requiring a broad consensus about their nature. As Duara argues:

> …the way in which the nation is imagined, viewed, and voiced by different self-conscious groups can indeed be very different. Indeed we may speak of different 'nation-views' as we do 'world-views', which are not overridden by the nation, but actually define or constitute it. In place of the harmonized, monologic voice of the Nation, we find a polyphony of voices, overlapping and crisscrossing; contradictory and ambiguous; opposing, affirming, and negotiating their views of the nation.[38]

The scholarly understanding of nationalism in the West currently seems to be moving towards viewing nationalism as a discourse, a way of thinking about the world. Nations are communities that draw on the objective similarities (physical traits, language, religion, territory, history, ancestry, culture) and subjective bonds (self-awareness, solidarity, loyalty, interests) of a diverse group of people, creating social structures and institutions that reinforce the boundaries between one nation and another. Though these boundaries are controversial and imaginary, the social and institutional reinforcement of these boundaries makes them very real in practice. Ultimately, then,

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[37] Anthony D. Smith, *The Cultural Foundations of Nationalism: Hierarchy, Covenant, and Republic* (Malden MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2008), 16.

[38] Prasenjit Duara, "Historicizing National Identity, or Who Imagines What and When," *Becoming National*, ed. Geoff Eley and Ronald Grigor Suny (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), 161-2.

nationalism serves to differentiate one nation from 'other' nations, dominate alternative discourses that might compete for members' allegiance, naturalize themselves until members cannot imagine life any other way, and operate mainly through social institutions which reinforce national identity.[39] Chinese nationalism shares all of these characteristics with nationalism in the West and elsewhere.

Late nineteenth and early twentieth century Chinese nationalism was often simultaneously

- both anti-China (opposing the 'backwards' elements of Chinese culture that were preventing the nation from developing) and pro-China (valuing certain aspects of traditional Chinese culture, such as Confucian morality, and wanting to find a fittingly 'Asian' or 'Chinese' solution to China's unique problems); and

- both anti-West (opposing loose Western morals, the 'chaotic' nature of Western life and politics, Western imperialism, and perceived attempts to take advantage of developing nations) and pro-West (admiring and aspiring to the economic, military, and cultural success that developed nations enjoyed).

However, globalization has shattered many idealized preconceptions of the West, particularly the United States, as many Chinese receive a negative impression that has made them more sympathetic to the party-state's propaganda. This impression, combined with CCP manipulation of the Chinese media, means that the anti-Western and pro-China strands of nationalism are the ones most frequently voiced in contemporary China. Consequently, Chinese people tend to define their nation both positively, in terms of the traits that the nation and its members are said to possess, and negatively, in terms of traits foreign or hostile to the nation and its future.

Under this very general rubric, positive definitions of Chinese national identity draw on historical, ethnic, cultural, traditionalist, nativist, Confucian, moral authoritarian, and/or Pan-Asian components. This renewed interest in 'traditional,' 'Chinese,' or 'Asian' identity and culture reflects a general search for self-respect and pride in a period increasingly dominated by 'foreign' capitalism and consumer culture. This is a reversal of nineteenth and early twentieth century tendencies to devalue or criticize China for being culturally backward or less developed than the West. On the other hand, negative definitions of Chinese national identity drawn on xenophobic, anti-Western, anti-American, post-colonial, historical, social Darwinist, conservative, and/or legalist authoritarian components. Nationalists believe that the interests of the Chinese nation should be the primary concern of policymakers and that, even in international disputes, Chinese interests should rightfully come before all those who have harmed the Chinese people in the past (Japan, Russia, the West, criminals, separatists in Tibet, Xinjiang, and Taiwan). Additionally, one source of the renewed interest in authoritarian government is a highly negative fear of the chaos that could potentially come with large-scale change.

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[39] Umut Özkirmli, *Contemporary Debates on Nationalism: A Critical Engagement* (New York: Pelgrave Macmillan, 2005), 32-33.

Several scholars have suggested that nationalism is, in fact, a specialized form of other identity discourses (ethnicity, culture, family, clan), one "more inclusive, more complex, and less tied to its original ethnic base."[40] National identity, consequently, can include a diversity of religions, families, clans, communities, ethnicities, and cultures. In China, Nationalist Party founder Sun Yatsen played a major role in promoting the Han ethnic identity as being crucial to the Chinese nation, rather than the regional identities that had predominated in the past. Sun used the idea of a unified 'Han nation' (*han minzu)* to mobilize the majority of the population against the 'foreign' Manchu government. Sun himself "was Cantonese, raised as an Overseas Chinese in Hawaii. As one who spoke Mandarin with a Cantonese accent… he would have easily aroused traditional northern suspicions of southern radical movements,"[41] but the Han identity allowed him to claim that northern, southern, and overseas Han people were all Chinese.

However, like the Nationalist and Communist leaders who followed him, Sun also realized that, while 'non-Han' people made up a tiny percentage of the population, their native territories comprised 64 percent of the empire[42] and almost all of the strategically important borderlands. If they were not brought into the new Chinese nation, 'China' was liable to get much smaller and more vulnerable. Consequently, after the initial 1911 revolution, Sun shifted to the idea of five Chinese nationalities – Han, Manchu, Mongolian, Tibetan, and Muslim – in an attempt to claim the entirety of the former Qing Empire as 'Chinese.' But different conceptions of Chinese identity continued to be useful in different situations, making it difficult to clearly determine the boundaries of the nation.

Ultimately, then, two contradictory ethnic definitions of the Chinese nation coexist in contemporary times: one a Han ethnic nation composed of all Han people all over the world and the other a multi-cultural, multi-ethnic China composed of all the peoples that live within the borders of the former Qing Empire. Consequently, the contemporary CCP regime "continues to assume or imply that ethnic [Han] Chinese the world over have some special bond or even obligation towards the PRC, albeit of variable intensity."[43] But within China's borders, the party-state attempts to promote a less Han-centric view of Chinese identity that legitimizes its control over non-Han territories while frequently siding with Han citizens over minority citizens in instances of ethnic tension.

There are also cultural dimensions to Chinese identity, which some scholars call the true marker of the Chinese nation, as Han culture has supposedly permeated minority peoples living in close proximity. Traditional Chinese culture is often described as being based in Confucianism, the

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[40] Anthony D. Smith, *Nationalism: Theory, Ideology, and History* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2001), 14.

[41] Dru C. Gladney, "Representing Nationality in China: Refiguring Majority / Minority Identities," *The Journal of Asian Studies* 53, no. 1 (1994), 99.

[42] Zhao, "International Orientations," 25.

[43] Townsend, 118.

moral and political philosophy also credited with sustaining China's long imperial tradition. Several contemporary Chinese scholars, attempting to reconnect with a Chinese identity that predates that modern era, have begun describing a 'new Confucianism' (*xin ruxue*) – not to be confused with late imperial Neo-Confucianism (*lixue / daoxue*). Other scholars, in an attempt to move away from the baggage of historical Confucianism attempt to instead describe a 'new traditionalism' (*xin chuantong zhuyi*), while the Chinese Communist Party – not yet willing to openly embrace Confucianism – prefers to call speak of reviving 'Chinese traditional virtue' (*zhonghua chuantong meide*) and the like.

Confucianism is appealing to the new nationalism because mainstream Chinese political thought is in the process of searching for an educated, moral authoritarianism supposedly grounded in 'traditional' Chinese statecraft and 'scientific' pragmatism, attempting to preserve the current regime – or, at least, political and social stability – without the transition to liberal democracy that would be considered a victory for the West. Confucianism frequently tied the future of the people to the proper leadership and righteous governance of the state, an idea that seems to resonate under the current authoritarian system. However, contemporary authoritarians tend to emphasize the inability of the uneducated, common people to achieve an orderly, prosperous society on their own, without the intervention of a powerful state backed by an intellectual-moral elite.

Many Chinese political theorists, both classical and modern, have emphasized the need for a strong, authoritarian state to impose not just peace but an orderly society in which the basic needs of the people were ensured. Whereas "Locke's views… consistent with mainstream European political thought in his day… saw the state's responsibilities as highly circumscribed… Chinese statecraft since the time of Mencius has envisioned a more proactive role for government – which was expected to promote economic welfare and security."[44] A regime's legitimacy had historically been tied to its ability to protect the people's 'right' to subsistence and economic betterment, and, in attempting to fulfill these fundamental responsibilities, the state was expected to intervene extensively in society, not stand back until there was no other choice but intervention.

In contemporary times, such a top-down approach is also increasingly described as being necessary to prevent excessive individualism and selfishness among the people, Western moral diseases that would otherwise run unchecked in a modern, capitalist society. In the words of one prominent Chinese intellectual, "the state is not always an oppressive beastly regime (as painted by journals such as the Economist). Rather, it is first and foremost an essential protector of opportunity, order, rights, service, and justice in what has rightly been described as a highly competitive, risky, chaotic, often unfair, and outright ruthless scrambling in an emerging national market."[45]

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[44] Elizabeth Perry, "Chinese Conceptions of 'Rights': From Mencius to Mao – and Now," *Perspectives on Politics* 6, no. 1 (2008), 39.

[45] Zhang, 116.

Even many 'democratic' leaders in the Chinese tradition have envisioned a leading role for the educated elite. For example, "Sun Yat-sen (1866-1925), who in this regard was not at all controversial, …pictured democracy as realized by a moral-intellectual elite fusing together knowledge, morality, and political power and then seeing to it that everyone enjoyed what Sun called 'true freedom' and 'true equality.'"[46] Terms such as 'democracy' and 'human rights' have had their context heavily altered by the Chinese political environment, supposedly in order to better suit China's specific situation. 'Democracy' (*minzhu*) is often described as meaning that the government listens to the people and follows their wishes, rather than indicating that the government is in any way chosen or created by the people. 'Human rights' are often understood in terms similar to Sun Yatsen's 'the people's livelihood' (*minsheng*), covering the right to life and 'development' (*fazhan*) but little else. This dissimilarity in meaning continues to obstruct honest discourse about what the West considers to be 'universal' principles.

The negative definitions of Chinese identity and nationalism largely emerge from "a deep bitterness at China's [historical] humiliation" and a determination "to blot out the humiliation and restore China to its rightful place as a great power." While Chinese nationalists have "accepted the norm of the modern nation-state system," they remained "convinced that China ought to stand equal with other great powers and that there was something profoundly wrong with a world that denied it this status."[47] As the national anthem repeatedly reminds citizens, the current moment is always the most dangerous time the Chinese people have ever faced (*zui weixian de shihou*) and the consequences for failing to properly stand up for their nation are dire.

Overall, compared to nineteenth and early twentieth century Chinese nationalism, the diverse perspectives that compose the new nationalism tend to

- downplay Han ethnic identity as a main source of nationalism;
- emphasize instead the cultural and historical traditions of the Chinese people (though these are nearly all Han traditions);
- look to Confucianism and the idea of an educated, moral elite to justify limited but supposedly effective reforms of the imperfect contemporary party-state system; and
- be highly skeptical of implementing Western solutions in a Chinese context.

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[46] Thomas A. Metzger, "The Western Concept of Civil Society in the Context of Chinese History," ed. Sudipta Kaviraj and Sunil Khilnani, *Civil Society: History and Possibilities* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 226.

[47] Zhao, "International Orientations," 4.

STRATEGIC IMPLICATIONS

In the next five to fifteen years, these developments are likely to lead to:

- a Chinese Communist Party that increasingly addresses popular, nationalist concerns, whether it is capable of successfully resolving them or not, spreading a popular form of nationalism that looks to the paternalistic state for solutions; this only becomes a problem if the CCP becomes incapable of delivering those solutions or lax in its attempts to come up with solutions;

- further decline in support for a shift to multi-party, liberal democracy among the general population, though some liberal intellectuals will continue to push in that direction, supported by a more extensive group of supporters in Hong Kong, Taiwan, and elsewhere; additionally, 'inter-party democracy' and local village elections are likely to grow, as the CCP continues to find the trappings of democracy useful in attempting to rally popular support for its continued rule;

- an environment in which American opposition to the actions of the current CCP regime will be viewed as attempts to prevent the Chinese people from rightfully reasserting themselves on the world stage; and

- a widening split between China's 'haves' and 'have nots' over what to do with the remnants of Chinese socialism, whether to discard them as outdated or strengthen them to help cope with increasing disparities in economic status and opportunities in a competitive and potentially contracting market.

However, a major disruption of current trends, such as a rapidly deteriorating domestic economy, might lead Chinese nationalists to decide that the current regime was no longer sincere or effective in looking out for the Chinese people, opening the door for a renewed, urgent crisis of legitimacy. As events are currently proceeding, the party-state and its allied forces in society are making a relatively successful attempt at answering some of the critical underlying questions of Chinese national identity, but if these answers become questionable, the floor would be reopened for other, perhaps more fundamentally different answers that would invite or proceed from a larger reordering of Chinese society.

Other outcomes might also be possible if future American administrations prove more effective at fighting the 'war of ideas,' speaking convincingly of the universal value of individual human liberties and demonstrating the leadership of the United States in addressing issues that concern the majority of Chinese citizens. Actions will speak louder than words in this regard, especially since the interpretive lens created by the state-manipulated media is currently disinclined to favorably portray American intentions towards China.

CONCLUSION

As one scholar perceptively noted,

> [t]here are already sufficient signs to suggest that the CCP is shifting its ground and has taken on board some of the ideas and elements of cultural nationalism. If this trend continues, the CCP will shift further away from Marxism, and China will look more Chinese than in the greater part of the last century.[48]

However, most discussions of contemporary Chinese politics lack adequate descriptions of how these shifts take place, not just on the regional or national level, but on the local level, through interactions between local officials and the citizens they are responsible for. Several historians and anthropologists have documented how local relationships are negotiated between institutions (such as the Chinese state) and the people who abide by or disregard these traditions of authority. The legitimacy and power of local institutions "depends on the market because it must do what its changing audiences expect and will lose out to others if it fails, yet it must also justify (or deny)… innovation in the light of tradition."[49]

The Chinese state – as a forthcoming study of Qing rainmaking rituals has shown[50] – is not immune to these forces, though it possesses a national network that provides it with additional backing and resources in these negotiations with the local populace. Further studies that could illuminate the processes by which the Chinese party-state's will is enacted or resisted on the local level would be very helpful in getting a sense of how the hierarchical relationship between the state and the citizenry is renewed through everyday interactions.

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[48] Guo, 143.

[49] Donald S. Sutton, *Steps of Perfection: Exorcistic Performers and Chinese Religion in Twentieth Century Taiwan* (Cambridge: Harvard University Asia Center, 2003), 11.

[50] Jeffrey Snyder-Reinke, "Spectacle and Power in Qing Rainmaking," seminar given 17 November 2008 at Harvard University, based on his forthcoming book, *Dry Spells: State Rainmaking and Local Government in Late Imperial China* (Cambridge: Harvard University Asia Center, 2009).