

THE POLITICS OF NATIONAL IDENTITY
IN POST-TIANANMEN CHINA:
Cultural Nationalism v. State Nationalism

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MA

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A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Yingjie Guo', written in a cursive style.

Yingjie Guo

May 2001

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Abstract

In much of the existing literature on 'Chinese nationalism', the critical distinction between nation and state is rarely made, and 'Chinese nationalism' is generally treated as a generic concept and an undifferentiated whole. Consequently, nationalism often appears as loyalty to the state rather than identification with the nation, and the state usually predominates in what is presumably national identity, whereas the nation becomes something represented by the state in mute acquiescence. Yet, in a 'revolutionary development' in China's politics of national identity since 1989, both the official configurations of the nation and the state's monopolised right to name the nation have come under rigorous challenge.

This study aims to contribute to a better understanding of 'Chinese nationalism' by exploring one of the critical aspects neglected in the literature - the disjunction of people and state that brings the category of nation and the phenomenon of nationalism into play. It relocates arguments about nationalism outside of the common statist frameworks of analysis and examines the cultural nationalists' challenge to the Party-state by means of discourse analysis. It argues that the challenge centres on the projects of revolution and Westernisation, which cultural nationalists hold responsible for the identity crisis in China and the dissipation of the national ethos. A political frontier is drawn between competing projects based on competing evaluations of China's cultural traditions, the socialist legacy, the official version of patriotism, modernity, and authentic experience and authentic community.

The politics of identity unfolds on three levels in the main. On the first level is the struggle for hegemony in determining what constitutes Chineseness. Cultural nationalists demand that what the state *is* and what it *does* match the nation's will, beliefs, values, interests and its conception of itself. They further seek to reform the Party-state in accordance with their conception of national essence and national will. Their conception calls in question the legitimacy of a Party-state that portrays itself as the sole legitimate representative of the nation. Furthermore, the reconstructed national identity alters existing systems of meaning – the meaning of Chineseness, the hierarchy of values and the vision of historical destiny. In doing so, it transforms the basis upon which the nation makes decisions about its

collective life and thereby influences those decisions. The CCP's compromise with cultural nationalists suggests that it is no longer able to hold its ground or continue to monopolise the right to name the nation.

1 Introduction

The purpose of this study is to examine the politics of national identity between cultural nationalists and state nationalists in post-Tiananmen China. The decision to explore this topic is motivated by two factors. First, national identity has been undergoing a process of intensified contestation and accelerated transformation, in which cultural nationalists figure prominently. Second, there are as yet no synoptic accounts of the cultural nationalists' prominent role in the present contestation and the political implications of their challenge to the Party-state.

These two factors will be elaborated in this opening chapter before I introduce my subject. In section 1, I shall outline the socio-political background of the politics of national identity so as to put the politics in the right perspective. Section 2 will provide a brief survey of the literature with a view to identifying various approaches to 'Chinese nationalism', calling attention to the problems with some of these approaches and to the inspiration to be drawn from others. The following sections will introduce the aims, the methodology, basic arguments, central concepts and the plan of the study.

1. Socio-political Background of the Politics of Identity

Two major socio-political processes mark the broad context of the reconstruction of national identity in post-Mao China: rapid modernisation and the gradual debunking of socialism. The politics of identity came to the fore in China as early as the beginning of the 1980s, hand in hand with the ideological contest between communism and capitalism and the cultural debate on tradition and modernity. As China became increasingly 'derevolutionalised' and modernised, it came up against what was widely known as a 'crisis of faith', which was not merely a loss of faith in communism but a loss of faith in Chinese culture and tradition as well. Under these circumstances, many in China found that much of what the Party-state presented as 'the physical and psychological definitions' of the collective

self of the Chinese people were no longer relevant, let alone acceptable.¹ In other words, 'matters of identity' had become a problem.²

The matters of national identity, however, have been conceptualised in vastly different ways before and after the dramatic events of 1989. Throughout the 1980s, such was the national ethos that the 'correct' view was that nothing except wholesale Westernisation could save China. Hence, 'iconoclasm' dominated the cultural debate. The ideological contest between capitalism and communism goes on today, and as in the 1980s, it continues to tilt in favour of the former. However, 'iconoclasm' has given way to 'cultural conservatism' since June Fourth. In the new game of identity politics, the focus has shifted from the liquidation of 'backward traditional culture' and the 'ugly national character' to the 'reconstruction of national culture' and the rediscovery of 'the national spirit'.

One of the most decisive factors that contributed to this dramatic turn of the tide was the changing of the guard in the CCP leadership. Not only were leading reformers like Hu Yaobang and Zhao Ziyang replaced by the more conservative Jiang Zemin, but Party traditionalists got the upper hand again and took control of a considerable number of key Party and state organs until the mid-1990s. As the conservative leadership moved to contain 'bourgeois liberalisation' within the CCP, the Westernisation discourse was effectively sidelined. Meanwhile, the CCP's nation-wide promotion of 'the excellent traditions of the Chinese nation' introduced to counteract the influence of 'cultural nihilism' opened up the playing field for cultural conservatism and cultural nationalism, giving rise to a 'national essence fever', which soon started to sweep across the country.

¹ According to Lucian Pye, 'In the process of political development a national identity crisis occurs when a community finds that what it had once unquestionably accepted as the physical and psychological definitions of its collective self are no longer acceptable under new historic conditions.' (See Lucian Pye, 'Identity and political culture', in Leonard Binder et al. (eds.), *Crisis and Sequences in Political Development*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1971, pp. 110-11.) Yet, he states elsewhere that the Chinese have been spared an identity crisis. (See Lucian Pye, *The Spirit of Chinese Politics*, Cambridge, Mass.: The M.I.T. Press, 1968, p. 5.) It can be argued, however, that even if one follows Pye's definition of 'identity crisis', one can still reach the conclusion that there is currently an identity crisis in China.

² Erik Erikson, who introduced the term of identity as part of his attempt to apply psychoanalytic categories to social and historical issues, appeared to suggest that when we conceptualise matters of identity, they have become a problem. As he put it, 'and so it comes about that we begin to conceptualise matters of identity at the very time in history when they become a problem.' (See Erikson, *Childhood and Society*, New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 1963, first published in 1950; p. 282.)

China's international environment has changed, too. Of particular impact on China is the sudden disintegration of the socialist Eastern bloc. While the Party is primarily concerned about the potential collapse of its rule as a result of a domino effect, many others are frightened by the possibility of national disintegration, chaos and disorder. Moreover, nationalistic sentiments have been continually stimulated by a concatenation of events throughout the decade. These include, for example, the international sanctions on China after the Tiananmen events, a souring China-US relationship, Sino-Japanese disputes over Japan's reluctance to apologise for its aggression of China and over the *Diaoyu* (Senkaku) islands, and China's unsuccessful Olympic bid.

China-US friction, in particular, has regularly added fuel to the flames. Apart from the perennial exchange of blows over Taiwan, Tibet and human rights, Sino-US relations have been dogged throughout the decade by intermittent outbursts of accusations and hostility. Passions ran high in China over the unfriendly reception of the Chinese team at the Atlanta Olympic games, the search of the Chinese vessel *Yinhe*, calls to 'contain China' and various theories of 'China threat' and 'clash of civilisations', the Li Wenhe espionage case, the bombing of the Chinese embassy in Belgrade and the recent collision of a Chinese F-8 fighter with an US Navy EP-3 spy plane near Hainan.

At the same time, national confidence has risen to a height unprecedented in the previous decade. This is probably attributable to the booming economy, but it also has much to do with the predictions by both Chinese and Western experts that the twenty-first century will be 'the century of the Asia-Pacific' and speculations in both Chinese and Western media about the prospect and global impact of a Greater China stretching over the PRC, Taiwan, Hong Kong, Macau, and ethnic communities in the Chinese Diaspora. Against this backdrop, some renowned Chinese scholars, such as Ji Xianlin, An Zijie, Yuan Xiaoyuan, Tang Yijie and Chen Lai, have declared that the time has come for Chinese culture to reassert itself on the global stage, while some go so far as to claim that the twenty-first century will be a Chinese century.

2. Intellectual Background of the Study

Much has been written in the last decade or so about nationalism in China, contributing greatly to the understanding of many of its essential characteristics in different historical periods. Some of its important aspects, however, have been given little attention, and the overall perspective of 'Chinese nationalism' that comes across in the existing literature looks somewhat tilted. We will have occasion in Chapter 2 to discuss some common approaches to the subject and their merits and problems; my aim in this section is to give an overview of the literature and illustrate why I have chosen to explore this topic and approach it in a different way.

The literature on 'Chinese nationalism' is characterised by several distinctive features. In terms of content, what is most obvious is the preponderance of studies that examine nationalism from a historical perspective, which constitute the majority of the authored and edited volumes and a large proportion of articles devoted to the subject. These include the works of Dikotta, Duara, Fitzgerald, Hoston, Hu Fagui, Li Zonggui, Luo Fuhui, Xiaobing Tang, Wang Gungwu and Fogel et. al,³ while five of the nine essays in *Chinese Nationalism*, half of those in *China's Quest for National Identity* and six of the eleven contributions of *China in Transformation* also focus on national identity and nationalism in pre-1949 China.

Studies of nationalism in contemporary China have concentrated on four areas: official nationalism, anti-Western sentiments, the implications of nationalism for China's foreign policy, and ethnic nationalisms. Only two volumes dwell on the politics of national identity in a context other than ethnic

³ For some representative writings by the authors mentioned, see Frank Dikotta, *The Discourse of Race in Modern China*, Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1992; Prasenjit Duara, *Rescuing History from the Nation: Questioning Narratives of Modern China*, Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1995, and 'De-constructing the Chinese nation', in Jonathan Unger (ed.), *Chinese Nationalism*, Armonk, New York: M.E. Sharpe, 1996; John Fitzgerald, *Awakening China – Politics, Culture, and Class in the Nationalist Revolution*, Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1996, and 'The nationless state: the search for a nation in modern Chinese nationalism', in *Chinese Nationalism*; Germaine Hoston, *The State, Identity, and the National Question in China and Japan*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994; Hu Fagui, *Confucianism and the Patriotic Tradition [Rujia wenhua yu aiguo chuantong]*, Shanghai: Shanghai shehui kexue chubanshe, 1998; Li Zonggui (ed.), *Confucianism and the Cohesion of the Chinese Nation [Rujia wenhua yu zhonghua minzu ningjuli]*, Guangzhou: Guangdong renmin chubanshe, 1998; Luo Fuhui, *A Treatise on Chinese Nationalism [Zhongguo minzuzhuyi sixiang lungao]*, Wuhan: Huazhong shifan daxue chubanshe, 1996; Xiaobing Tang, *Global Space and the Nationalist Discourse of Modernity*, Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1996; Wang Gungwu, *The Chineseness of China*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991; Joshua Fogel and Peter Zarrow (eds.), *Imagining the People: Chinese Intellectuals and the Concept of Citizenship, 1890-1920*, Armonk: M.E. Sharpe, 1997.

conflict - Friedman's *National Identity and Democratic Prospects in Socialist China* and *Nationalism, National Identity and Democratisation in China* by He and Guo. While the former celebrates the emergence of an open, democratic Southern identity as opposed to a conservative, agrarian, chauvinistic, anti-imperialist and anti-democratic Northern identity, the latter examines the challenge that nationalism and national identity pose to democratisation. Still less attention has been paid to the primary role of the cultural nationalists in China's identity politics. Apart from *National Identity and Democratisation in China* and *Discovering Chinese Nationalism in China*, only a few writings have discussed cultural nationalism in contemporary China and very little is said about the politics of national identity.⁴

If we look at the way 'Chinese nationalism' is approached, it is easy to detect a tendency to treat 'Chinese nationalism' as an undifferentiated whole. Nearly all the articles on the topic in *The Asian Wall Street Journal* and *Far Eastern Economic Review*, for example, take this approach.⁵ In addition, certain theoretical positions, value judgements and practical concerns appear to predominate in the literature. In Chinese language studies, for instance, three approaches to nationalism are particularly common. The first is defensive; the second is dismissive and condemnatory; and the third is prescriptive. English language studies are far less polarised and prescriptive. Nevertheless, it is not hard to discern an underlying concern about the actual and potential threat that 'Chinese nationalism' might pose to China's open-door policy, international relations and regional security.⁶

Defenders of 'Chinese nationalism' often justify it on the grounds that it is indispensable for China's national autonomy, unity and identity in the global

⁴ See Chen Xi, 'Nationalism among Chinese intellectuals', *China Strategic Review*, vol. 1, no. 6, pp. 9-14; Chen Xiaoming, 'The rise of "cultural nationalism"' [*Wenhua minzuzhuyi' de xingqi*], *Ershiyi Shiji* 39 (Feb. 1997), pp. 35-43; Chen, Xiaoming, 'The return to tradition and the rise of cultural nationalism' [*Huigui chuantong yu wenhua minzuzhuyi*], *Tianjin shehui kexue* 4, 1997, pp. 64-71; Tao Dongfeng, *Social Transformation and the Contemporary Intellectual* [*Shehui zhuanxing yu dangdai zhishifenzi*], Shanghai: Sanlian shudian, 1999.

⁵ For samples of reports and commentary on 'Chinese nationalism', see, for example, Linda Jaivin, 'Life in a battlefield', *The Asian Wall Street Journal*, 24 Dec. 1993, p. 7; Matt Forney, 'Patriotic games'; Bruce Gilley, 'Potboiler nationalism'; Yu Wong, 'Boy wonder', all in *Far Eastern Economic Review*, 3 October 1996, pp. 22-5.

⁶ This point is made by Baogang He and Yingjie Guo in *Nationalism, National Identity and Democratisation in China*, Aldershot, England: Ashgate, 2000, p. ix. Yongnian Zheng makes a similar point in *Discovering Chinese Nationalism in China - Modernisation, Identity, and International Relations*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999, pp. 2-3.

nation-state system and the current international order.⁷ As is to be expected, nationalists figure prominently among this group of writers. It is expected, too, that the most harsh judgements of 'Chinese nationalism' have come from critics of the Chinese government and from political dissidents. Princeton Chinese history professor, Ying-shih Yu and well-known dissident, Liu Xiaobo, for example, condemned 'Chinese nationalism' as 'fascist' and 'ultra' (*jiduan*).⁸ Other adjectives used to qualify 'Chinese nationalism' in a number of Chinese and English writings include aggressive, anti-democratic, anti-imperialist, arrogant, assertive, bullying, chauvinistic, conservative, dogmatic, expansionist, irrational, irredentist, jingoistic, muscular, narrow, potboiler, reactionary, revolutionary, territorially ambitious, traditionalist, visceral and xenophobic. Even this list is not exhaustive.

Given the negativity associated with nationalism, both in theory and in practice, Chinese scholars are generally disinclined to engage with nationalism empirically, preferring instead to theorise about different types of nationalism or prescribe for 'Chinese nationalism'.⁹ In most cases, those who take this approach

⁷ Song Qiang et al., *China Can Say No* [*Zhongguo keyi shuo bu*], Beijing: Zhonghua gongshang lianhe chubanshe, 1996; Fang Ning et al., *China's Road under the Shadow of Globalisation* [*Quanguohua yinying xia de Zhongguo zhi lu*], Beijing: Zhongguo shehui kexue chubanshe, 1999; Tang Yongsheng, 'Nationalism and the international order' [*Minzuzhuyi yu guoji zhixu*], *Zhanlue yu guanli* 3, 1996, pp. 76-9; Chen Mingming, 'Nation and nationalism from the angle of political development' [*Zhengzhi fazhan shijiao zhong de minzu yu minzuzhuyi*], *Zhanlue yu guanli* 2, 1996, pp. 63-71; Jiang Yihua, 'On Chinese nationalism in the 20th century' [*Lun 20 shiji Zhongguo de minzuzhuyi*], *Fudan xuebao* (shekeban) 3, 1993, pp. 8-13; Cai Xiaoping, 'On the relationship between nationalism and globalisation' [*Lun minzuzhuyi yu quanqiu yitihua de guanxi*], *Qinghai minzu xueyuan xuebao* (shekeban) 3, 1996, pp. 26-31; Zhang Wenbiao, 'National consciousness of China and society development' [*Zhonghua minzu yishi yu shehui fazhan*] *Fujian luntan* (Wenshizhe ban) 1, 1996, pp. 15-21; Cao Yueming, 'Three major currents of thought and nationalist movements in modern China' [*Zhongguo xiandai shi shang de sanda sichao yu minzuzhuyi yundong*], *Tianjin shehui kexue* 1, 1992, pp. 84-9.

⁸ For Ying-shih Yu's views on 'Chinese nationalism', see 'Democracy and nationalism', *Democratic China* 33; also in *Fen Hua Yuan*, fhytk06 (17 May 1996), <http://uwalpha.uwinnipeg.ca/fhyt/>. Liu Xiaobo, 'Chinese ultra-nationalism in the 1990s', in *Beijing Spring*, <http://bjs.org/bjs/44/31>.

⁹ For examples of such theoretical discussions, see Li Xing, 'On the concept of state nationalism' [*Lun guojia minzuzhuyi gainian*] *Beijing daxue xuebao* (zhexue shehui kexue ban) 4, 1995, pp. 74-80; Song Quan, 'On several topics about nationalism' [*Guanyu minzuzhuyi de jige wenti*], *Heilongjiang congkan* 2, 1996, pp. 31-4; Tian Tong, 'Various analyses of nationalism' [*Guanyu minzuzhuyi lilun de ruogan jieshi*], *Shixue yuekan* 5, 1997, pp. 9-13; Xiong Kunxin, 'On several hot topics concerning nationalism' [*Guanyu minzuzhuyi zhenglun zhong de jige redian wenti*], *Guizhou minzu yanjiu* 4, 1996, pp. 1-6. For examples of prescriptive studies, see Zhong Weiguang, 'Nation, nationalism and the China problem' [*Minzu, minzuzhuyi he Zhongguo wenti*], *Modern China Studies* 2, 1997, pp. 128-42; Song Liming, 'Nationalism and the Tibet problem' [*Minzuzhuyi yu Xizang wenti*], *Modern China Studies* 2, 1997, pp. 159-67; Wang Pengling, 'Source of Chinese nationalism – on the transformation from revolutionary nationalism to constructive nationalism' [*Zhongguo minzuzhuyi de yuanliu – jianlun cong*

are motivated by concerns about its negative impact on China's modernisation and Sino-foreign relations and the desire to make it a less destructive force.¹⁰ They have much to say about what 'Chinese nationalism' *ought* to be and *ought* to do but very little about what it *is* and what it *does*. One is left with no doubt that the most preferred nationalisms are constructive, moderate, pragmatic, rational, romantic and wise nationalisms, but one gets very little idea what these actually mean and how they can be put into practice.

Concerns about the actual and potential dangers of 'Chinese nationalism' have certainly contributed to its predominantly negative image in the English language literature. Because of those concerns, few writers find it justifiable in any respect or have anything positive to say about it. Two outstanding exceptions are Wang Gungwu and Yongnian Zheng. In his seminal essay on Chinese 'restoration nationalism', Wang not only discusses its dangers but also its 'validity and justifiability'. He points out emphatically that 'restoration nationalism' 'can be a positive force and feed hopes and bolster confidence when left in its historical frame', although 'it too can generate emotions to match' 'if it is prodded out of place by calls for containment, by latent enmity and by near-hysteria'.¹¹ Elsewhere, Wang raised the challenging question of what to do with a nationalistic China, if it was 'merely stubbornly unbending and self-centred' but not a military and imperial threat to the region.¹² Similarly, Zheng presents a quite different picture of 'Chinese nationalism' from that presented in Western readings.¹³ One of his basic arguments is that, contrary to Western

geming de minzuzhuyi zhuanxiang jianshe de minzuzhuyi], *Modern China Studies* 2, 1997, pp. 101-27.

¹⁰ See Wu Guoguang, 'Responding to "containing China" with rational nationalism' [*Yi lixing minzuzhuyi kangheng 'weidu Zhongguo'*], *Ershiyi Shiji* 34, 1996, p. 30; Tao Dongfeng, 'Nationalism in modern China' [*Xiandai Zhongguo de minzu zhuyi*], *Xueshu yuekan* 6, 1994, pp. 6-9; Jiang Niantao, 'A retortion upon the self-centrism of nationality' [*Dui minzu ziwo zhongxin de fanbo*], *Jiangnan luntan* 3, 1996, pp. 33-5; Ge Hongbing, 'On guard against narrow nationalism' [*Jingti xia'ai de minzuzhuyi*], *Zhongguo qingnian yanjiu* 1, 1998, pp. 32-3; Liu Junning, 'Four dimensions of nationalism' [*Minzuzhuyi simianguan*], *Nanfang wenhua* 6, 1997, pp. 25-8; Wu Chuke, 'Comments on and analyses of the spreading of nationalism in the present age' [*Dui Dangdai minzuzhuyi sichao fanlan de pingxi*], *Neimenggu shehui kexue* (wenxueshi ban) 3, 1996, pp. 6-12; Chen Shaoming, 'Nationalism: the route to renaissance?' [*Minzuzhuyi: fuxing zhi dao?*], *Dongfang* 2, 1996, pp. 74-6; Pi Mingyong, 'Nationalism and Confucian culture' [*Minzuzhuyi yu rujia wenhua*], *Zhanlue yu guanli* 2, 1996, pp. 51-7.

¹¹ Wang Gungwu, 'The revival of Chinese nationalism', IIAS Lecture Series, Leiden, 1996, p. 23.

¹² Wang Gungwu, 'National Choice' (Talk given to the 25th Anniversary Meeting of the Economics Society of Australia on 24 Sept. 1996), *Asian Studies Review*, vol. 20, no. 3, p. 6.

¹³ Yongnian Zheng, *Discovering Chinese Nationalism in China – Modernisation, Identity, and International Relations*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999.

misconceptions, the new nationalism is actually a reaction to the unjustified international order and that it can only be eased by continuous engagement with, not containment of, China. In order to normalise relations between the West and China, Zheng suggests, it is imperative to reinterpret 'Chinese nationalism'.

One may or may not agree with their interpretations of 'Chinese nationalism', but it is fair to say that their arguments provide thought-provoking counterpoints to descriptions of it as a regression or as a threat to the present international order. By this I do not mean that it is more reasonable to justify or defend 'Chinese nationalism' than to condemn it. What I mean, rather, is that our analyses of nationalism can be swayed by theoretical positions, value judgements, practical concerns and methodological choices. Another point I wish to make is that the preponderance of some theoretical positions, value judgements, practical concerns and methodological choices have contributed to a tilted perspective of 'Chinese nationalism', as has the neglect of some of its important aspects. In order to redress the imbalance in the literature and arrive at a better understanding of 'Chinese nationalism', it is necessary to look at the neglected aspects and examine it from different perspectives and in different ways.

3. Aims of the Study

This study primarily aims to contribute to a better understanding of the politics of national identity in post-Tiananmen China by analysing the contest and negotiation between cultural nationalists and state nationalists – a major aspect of the politics that has been largely neglected so far. In doing so, it also aims to redress the tilted perspective of 'Chinese nationalism'. My examination of the politics of national identity is intended to be integrative and attempts to provide a useful synthesis of descriptive information. Its focus is the cultural nationalists' challenge to the official configurations of the nation and the state's right to name the nation, as well as their ambivalence towards state nationalism.

In exploring this politics of identity, I seek answers to four basic questions: What cultural matrices of collective identity are deconstructed and constructed by cultural nationalists? In what ways do they challenge the Party-state? How and why does the Party-state accommodate or endorse the cultural nationalists'

projects, discourses and evaluations? And under what circumstances does cultural nationalism contradict and converge with state nationalism?

The unit of analysis covers the twelve years or so from 1989 to 2000. 1989 is identified as the starting point because the year marks the beginning of a new era, or 'the Post-New era', according to Chinese postcolonialists. The concatenation of factors we discussed in section one has helped to create a very different context from that of the previous decade in which nationalism has come into play. As the context changed, so did the dynamics that drove the politics of identity and the content of the reconstructed identity. For this reason, it is possible and advisable to separate the identity politics in post-Tiananmen China from that of the previous decades while bearing in mind the historical continuities.

4. Methodology

For the aforesaid reasons, I approach my subject quite differently from most analysts of 'Chinese nationalism'. Firstly, I am centrally concerned with what is happening rather than what ought or ought not to happen, and, as much as possible, I try to avoid the traps and snares of intrusive value judgement. In other words, I will not be concerned so much with value as with fact in the study, even though I would not go so far as to claim that I can be value-free. What is most important to me is that nationalism exists and that 'so far as *humanly* possible we correctly understand what goes on in the world of events.'¹⁴

To this end, the study is generally contextualist and highly descriptive. Neither cultural nationalism nor state nationalism will be taken out their contexts but examined in their specific instances. At the same time, it provides a fair amount of descriptive information in order to reveal what cultural nationalism and state nationalism *are* and what they *do* as a solid factual basis for analysis and evaluation. In other words, it does not develop a general theory and then illustrate it with examples; nor does it theorise about nationalism in China on the basis of scanty empirical evidence. Perhaps this will be taken as a safeguard against the

¹⁴ Robert Dahl, *Modern Political Analysis*, Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Yale University Press, 1963, pp. 104-7.

predominance of narrow and vacuous arguments. At the same time, it enables readers to judge for themselves on the basis of the material presented.

Secondly, I will carefully look at 'Chinese nationalism' in its specific instances and relocate arguments about nationalism in China outside of the common *statist* frameworks of analysis. The cultural nationalists' challenge to state nationalism has been given little attention not because state nationalism is non-existent or insignificant but because the challenge is largely obscured in the prevalent practice of treating official and unofficial nationalisms as an undifferentiated whole. If we examine cultural nationalism and state nationalism separately and in their relations with each other, we will be able to identify their conflict as well as their congruence. Such an approach will not only question generalisations about 'Chinese nationalism' but also have the potential to reveal much more about it.

This is an approach of the kind that Richard Madsen¹⁵ has called for. Madsen urges that more attention be paid to community consciousness, as manifested in contests over historical narratives, commemorative ceremonies, arts and literature, and collective memory, to serve as a corrective to the state orientation of much of political scholarship on China. This approach is even more necessary in the inquiry into nationalism in China not just because nationalism is nothing if not particular, but also because disjunction, as well as congruence, does exist between the nation and state. In fact, it is precisely national consciousness that nationalism attempts to generate and enhance, and it is the disjunction between the nation and the state that has given rise to nationalism in the arena of the nation-state relationship as a major site of political contestation.

Thirdly, the study is integrative and attempts to provide a useful synthesis of descriptive information while drawing together relevant threads from a diversity of sources, including official statements, newspaper reports, TV programs, academic writings, public debates, films and literature. These diversified sources are all the more necessary for this study in that central to my understanding of the nation, is Anderson's notion that nations are 'imagined communities' that depend for their existence on an apparatus of *cultural fictions*. It is thus imperative to look

¹⁵ Richard Madsen, 'The public sphere, civil society and moral community: a research agenda for contemporary China studies', *Modern China*, vol. 19, no. 2 (Apr. 1993), pp. 183-98.

into the cultural fictions to be found in a range of cultural sources and examine the ways in which they are produced and reproduced by cultural and state nationalists themselves. This necessitates a break from narrow disciplinary boundaries and requires serious efforts to reach out into other disciplines for insights and enlightenment. To this extent, the study is more problem-oriented than subject-centred.¹⁶

Finally, discourse analysis will be the predominant analytical method in this study, as it has the potential to offer insights that are not available through quantitative methods. This methodological choice is made in consideration of the subject of the study. For what I am centrally concerned with is how systems of meaning or discourses are produced and changed and how discourses shape the way people understand their place in the world. Through a discourse analysis, the study will better be able to reveal how the meaning of Chineseness is articulated by cultural and state nationalists, where they draw their political frontiers, where and how antagonism emerges, how cultural and state nationalists hegemonise certain ideas and elements and exclude others, and to what extent the reconstructed national identity actually and potentially impacts on the CCP's legitimacy and on China's future directions.

It is hoped that, in this way, we will be able to minimise bias and avoid abstractions and overgeneralisations that are not empirically grounded. This will enable us to have a clearer view of nationalism in China from the *inside* and better understand the contrasting subject positions of the cultural and state nationalists as well as what cultural nationalism and state nationalism actually do.

5. Basic Arguments

Conflict and Congruence between Cultural Nationalism and State Nationalism

It is my central argument that Chinese cultural nationalism contradicts state nationalism in the main but does converge with it under some circumstances. I

¹⁶ In taking this approach, I follow Held and Leftwich's suggestion that political science should be less subject-centred than problem-oriented. If the focus is a particular problem, they argue, in order to provide a 'rounded' explanation it is advisable for the researcher to reach into other disciplines rather than becoming trapped in certain branches of the discipline and unaware of relevant and important developments in other branches. (See D. Held and A. Leftwich, 'A discipline of politics?', in A. Leftwich (ed.), *What Is Politics?*, Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1984.

hypothesise that antagonism arises when the two fail to achieve a positive identity as a result of irreconcilable differences, while accommodation between the two obtains when the political frontier shifts in the presence of a common 'enemy' or when common interest overrides their differences.

The conflict and congruence between cultural nationalism and state nationalism will become manifest if we place them on the following spectrums:

Cultural Nationalism		State Nationalism
Nation attachment to cultural nation love of the people instrumental state ascending legitimacy ¹⁷	≠	Party (Party-state) loyalty to the Party-state love of the Party instrumental culture descending legitimacy
Nation essence of nation; civilisation state: accidental popular sovereignty	→	State independent statehood a strong state state sovereignty
Cultural Nation cultural identity national harmony traditional morality	←	Class Nation revolutionary identity class struggle socialist ethics
Ethnic Nation historicist community organic being genealogy primordial expression natural solidarity shared memories shared beliefs shared values participation in cultural practices	↔	Civic Nation political-territorial unit political institutions common laws citizenship popular participation

Note: '≠' denotes an absence of significant reconciliation. '↔' represents mutual reconciliation, where differences are basically a matter of degree. '→' indicates accommodation of state nationalist elements by cultural nationalism and '←', accommodation of cultural nationalist elements by state nationalism. Differences in both these cases are also a matter of degree.

As can be seen at a glance, the conflict between cultural nationalism and state nationalism concentrates on the first spectrum, whereas on the fourth very

¹⁷ According to Calhoun's ascending notion of legitimacy, government is just only when it is supported by popular will, when it serves the interests of the nation and when it expresses the nation's identity. A descending notion of legitimacy does not challenge these arguments but insists that the government define the national will, national interest and national identity. (See Craig Calhoun, *Nationalism*, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1997, pp. 4-5.)

little conflict is to be found between cultural nationalism and state nationalism, even though their common assumption of the Chinese as descendants of the Yellow Emperor contradicts the notion of China as a community of citizens. Their differences on the second and third spectrums are quite obvious, but conflict is reduced as a result of respective compromises, although it is certainly not mutual compromise in equal measure but disproportionately at the expense of the Party-state.

It is clear, too, that their conflict does not centre on independent statehood, state sovereignty or ethnic and civic elements of the nation, but on who is the object of national loyalty and what constitutes authentic experience and authentic community. Cultural nationalism thus draws a frontier between 'the nation' and the Party-state as well as between the cultural nation and the class nation, excluding the Party's monopoly on the right to name the nation, love for the Party, class struggle, revolution, and the revolutionary identity. It should be added, however, that cultural nationalism is not by definition hostile to independent statehood or the state, even though it separates the instinctive, emotional attachment to the cultural nation from the formal allegiance to the state. Rather, it challenges the current state formation, which is considered illegitimate in so far as it fails to fit with 'the nation' in terms of its aspirations, cultural traditions and moral values. The discourse of state nationalism, on the other hand, posits the Party as the embodiment of the nation's will and the object of national loyalty and claims the right to name the nation. It is here that state nationalism refuses to compromise, whereas it is ready to accommodate the cultural conception of the nation where it is not opposed to the Party's hegemony.

The congruence between cultural nationalism and state nationalism is still more apparent on the fourth spectrum. We find, for example, that, to varying degrees, both cultural nationalism and state nationalism perceive the nation to be a territorially bounded collectivity and a community of temporal depth, with shared memories, beliefs and values. This should come as no surprise given the dualism to be found at the heart of every nationalism. As Smith observed, conceptions of the nation have come to blend 'two sets of dimensions, the one civil and

territorial, the other ethnic and genealogical, in varying proportions'.¹⁸ National identity, accordingly, 'comprises both a cultural and political identity and is located in a political community as well as a cultural one'.¹⁹

Thus, it is possible for cultural and state nationalists to accommodate each other when the latter see it as advantageous to incorporate elements of cultural nationalism into their state-nation-building project, or when the former need to institutionalise their project through the state. Moreover, cultural nationalists can be driven into alliances with the Party-state when a frontier is drawn between China and a foreign 'enemy', particularly when national autonomy, unity and identity are believed to be in danger.

I must acknowledge, however, that cultural nationalism and state nationalism as used so far are ideal types and the distinction I have made is basically an analytical one. As I have been trying to demonstrate, these alternative discourses and projects do not just contradict and compete with each other, they overlap as well. This makes a clear-cut distinction unfeasible. It is even less feasible to separate cultural nationalists from state nationalists individually in black and white terms. Difficulties arise as cultural and state nationalists come in all sorts of colours; it is hard for a generic term like cultural and state nationalist to take full account of their individuality. Difficulties also arise as their colours change in different degrees in different contexts. In other words, nationalists may have multiple identities and the enactment of their identities may be situational.

What is feasible is to demarcate cultural and state nationalists on the basis of some essential characteristics. By using the four spectrums above as a reference, we can describe a cultural nationalist as somebody who gives precedence to attachment to the cultural nation and love of the people over loyalty to the Party-state and love of the Party, believes in ascending legitimacy and/or rejects the notion of class nation. On the other hand, anybody can be regarded as a state nationalist if he/she believes that loyalty to the Party-state, love of the Party and state sovereignty should precede loyalty to the nation and popular sovereignty, and if he/she is in favour of descending legitimacy.

¹⁸ Smith, *National Identity*, Reno, Las Vegas and London: University of Nevada Press, 1993 (first published by Penguin Books, 1991), p. 15.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 99.

State nationalists mostly come from the ranks of Party and government officials and establishment intellectuals, and they usually rely on centralised apparatuses when mobilising diversified groups towards their goal. In contrast, cultural nationalists are mostly intellectuals and the intelligentsia estranged from the CCP and the Party-state. They typically operate in informal clusters or loose networks in the form of semi-autonomous cultural societies, research groups, journals or editorial committees for the purpose of constructing the cultural matrices of collective identity, of inspiring love of national culture and of educating the community to the common cultural heritage.²⁰ Some of the best known organisations and journals under cultural nationalist influence include the International Confucius Foundation, the China Confucius Foundation, the Chinese Yellow Emperor Association, the Chinese Cultural Society at Beijing University, *Hanzi Wenhua* (*The Culture of Chinese Characters*), *Dongfang* (*The Orient*), *Dushu* (*Reading*), and *Tianya* (*The Ends of the World*).

The Politics of National Identity

The contest between cultural and state nationalists is mainly a politics of national identity. What is at stake includes the content of national identity, the legitimacy of the Party-state and the future direction of China. I make no claim that cultural nationalists have successfully completed the transformation of systems of meaning; nor do I pretend to suggest that their reconstructed identity is already shared by the nation. It appears that Chinese cultural nationalism is still in the early stages of formulation and dissemination. Besides, the cultural nationalists' first priority is to reform the state from the top by changing its belief systems and identity.

Cultural nationalists are set on redefining Chineseness in the matrix of a rediscovered and reinvented 'national essence'. Being Chinese for them entails primarily participation in traditional cultural practices and acceptance of 'Chinese' principles and moral values; it no longer means that one must love the Party or believe in socialism in order to be a patriot. In addition, they are keen to dislodge the concept of class and put culture in its place as the most essential criterion for defining the national community.

²⁰ John Hutchinson, *The Dynamics of Cultural Nationalism*, London: Allen & Unwin, 1987, p. 3.

This in itself is a political action with political consequences. One of the most significant consequences is its implications for the political legitimacy of the Party-state. Another significant political consequence stems from the fact that national identity forms a general basis upon which decisions can be made as to how a nation conducts its collective life.²¹ It is also the endeavour of Chinese cultural nationalists to transform the belief-systems of the community and provide models for political and cultural development to guide China's modernising strategies.

6. Structure of the Thesis

The text consists of eight chapters. Following the Introduction, I will clarify my theoretical position on nationalism and my approach to the subject. Chapter 3 goes on to look at the discourse of state nationalism and examine what it articulates and how it articulates its project, constructs antagonisms and exploits floating signifiers such as 'love of country', 'national interest', and so on. This will pave the way for a concentrated discussion of cultural nationalism as a counter-discourse to state nationalism by making clear what is challenged.

The following four chapters focus on this counter-discourse and examine the articulations of four groups of cultural nationalists – nationalist novelists, nationalist historians, Neo-Confucians and postcolonialists – and their challenge to the Party-state's configurations of the nation, its statist version of patriotism and its monopoly on the right to name the nation. Two complementary threads run through the whole contest. The first is the cultural nationalists' unwavering conviction that China has strayed from its own natural path, as a result of a century of revolutions – the communist revolution in particular – and of Westernisation. Revolutions and Westernisation are also held responsible for the dissipation of the national spirit or the inner degeneration of the nation. Furthermore, Marxism remains the biggest obstacle to the cultural nationalist project of identifying the nation to its own cultural traditions. The second thread is the cultural nationalists' persistent 'search for roots', which aims at authentic

²¹ David Miller, *On Nationality*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995, p. 24 and p. 98.

experience and identity, national revival and moral regeneration by returning to the creative life-principle of the nation.

More specifically, Chapter 4 focuses on the nationalist novelists' search for 'national spirit' in literature. Chapter 5 further pursues the cultural nationalists' 'search for roots' and examines, through a case study of the debate on Zeng Guofan, how nationalist historians reconstruct national identity by rewriting national history. Chapter 6 picks up the thread of Confucian revival as manifested by renewed interest in Zeng - 'the last Confucian' - and analyses the neo-Confucians' discourse of *xutong* (reconnecting with Confucian Orthodoxy). This will be followed in Chapter 7 by a discussion of the nationalist endeavour to reconstruct Chineseness and redefine the Chinese Self via the prism of postcolonialism. In the Conclusion, I will summarise and integrate the central arguments of the study and evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of cultural nationalism with a view to casting some light on the prospect of the politics of identity.

2 Rethinking the Nation and Nationalism: Theoretical Positions, Methodological Issues and Working Definitions

Of all the challenges that I have encountered in my study of nationalism, two have proved the most difficult to handle emotionally and intellectually. One is the 'terminological jungle' and conceptual confusion, the other is the impassioned positions on nationalism. On the one hand, nationalism means so many different things to different people that a sensible discussion is hardly possible when discussants talk about different things in the belief that they are talking about the same thing. On the other hand, value judgements on nationalism can actually dictate our response to it, and probably vice versa. Even methodological choices can influence the outcome of our study to some extent. For these reasons, it is helpful if I clarify my theoretical position and the perspective from which I mean to approach my subject.

There is yet another reason why this must be done. In the course of research, informal discussions, seminars and conferences, I have often had to explain my motives. One question directed at me at a seminar was: 'Why are you making a fuss about Chinese nationalism when there is nationalism all over the world?' On another occasion, somebody commented that I did not seem to be critical of Chinese nationalism, and she asked me if I was a nationalist. More questions and comments are directed at my theoretical or moral position on nationalism than at its content. Quite often arguments are based on value judgements of nationalism rather than nationalism as it exists, driving the discussion into an impasse or an emotional exchange of accusations. Experience has taught me that a clear explanation of my position and perspective can help to avoid vacuous, emotional debates and generate fruitful discussions.

In what is to follow, I will clear the ground by clearing up some of the conceptual confusion and explain the way in which I intend to approach nationalism in post-Tiananmen China. My discussion will concentrate on four basic questions that are especially pertinent to this study: Is nationalism negative or positive? Is the nation objective or subjective? Does 'nation' equal 'state' or 'nation-state'? Does nationalism mean loyalty to the state or identification with

the nation? My perspective of, and approach to, nationalism will become manifest in my answers to these questions.

1. Value Judgements and Distorted Perspectives of Nationalism

I have already mentioned the predominantly negative image of 'Chinese nationalism' in my brief survey of the literature. I have also suggested that the negative image is not always empirically grounded but has much to do with particular theoretical positions, value judgements and practical concerns. I have argued further that negative perceptions of nationalism have adversely impacted upon the study of 'Chinese nationalism' and that we are not likely to get it in the right perspective unless we refrain from value judgements and attempt to see other aspects of nationalism as well as the negative.

It is not just 'Chinese nationalism' that is perceived negatively, of course; nationalism as a whole has a rather bad reputation. In a common view, in China and elsewhere, nationalism is some kind of evil elemental force, and we are its passive victims rather than active participants in it. It is often perceived to be an essentially sub-human or primitive trait, a deformity with which no rational or civilised human being should be associated. These views are most typically epitomised by Hayek, Deutsch, Berlin, Dunn and Kedourie.

Hayek explained nationalism in terms of 'tribal sentiments': 'The savage in us still regards as good what was good in a small group'.¹ Deutsch believed that nationalism produced for a nation and its leaders 'a gain in power and a loss in judgement'.² To Berlin, nationalism is a 'bent twig', a pathological reaction to science and rationalism, and an 'inflamed condition of national consciousness'.³ Dunn condemned nationalism as 'the starkest political shame of the twentieth century'.⁴

¹ See F. Hayek, *Law, Legislation and Liberty*, ii, *The Mirage of Social Justice*, London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1976, Chapter 11; 'The atavism of social justice', in *New Studies in Philosophy, Politics, Economics and the History of Ideas*, London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1978.

² Karl Deutsch, *Nationalism and Its Alternatives*, New York: Alfred a. Knopf, 1969, pp. 32-3.

³ I. Berlin, "'The bent twig": a note on nationalism', *Foreign Affairs*, vol. 51, no. 1, 1972, pp. 11-30.

⁴ John Dunn, *Western Political Theory in the Face of the Future*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979, pp. 55-7.

Kedourie carried the point a step further, charging that nationalists are naive, irresponsible ideologues who destroy political order for the sake of a theory, letting loose civil war, massacre, the creation of refugees and economic collapse.⁵ It should come as no surprise, then, that many who attach value to national allegiances either shy away from 'nationalism' altogether, or search for other terms to express loyalty and commitment to the nation, or make a distinction between 'good' nationalism and 'bad' nationalism or 'good' patriotism and 'bad' nationalism.⁶

I do not intend to take the easy way out by making a theoretical distinction between 'good' and 'bad' nationalisms; nor do I wish to take the safe moral position of defending the good and condemning the bad. I believe that these distinctions are more easily made in theory than in practice. As Calhoun has emphasised, patriotism and nationalism are not different social phenomena. On the contrary, 'Both positive and negative manifestations of national identity and loyalty are shaped by the common discourse of nationalism.'⁷ Attempts to analyse 'good' patriotism and 'bad' nationalism actually make each hard to understand and obscure their commonalities.

It is not my aim in this study either to condemn nationalism or defend it; I simply wish to understand it as it exists. For this reason, I reject the common negative view of nationalism mentioned above. I reject it not because it is totally false but because it is unjustifiably one-sided. It is true that in the name of the nation people have sometimes been willing to sacrifice their liberties and those of

⁵ Elie Kedourie, *Nationalism*, Oxford: Blackwell, 1993, p. 132.

⁶ Berlin, for example, contrasts nationalism with 'national consciousness – the sense of belonging to a nation'. (See I. Berlin, 'Nationalism: past neglect and present power', in H. Hardy (ed.), *Against the Current*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1981, pp. 341-5.) Kohn distinguishes between 'rational and liberal' Western nationalism and 'backward-looking and mythical' Eastern nationalism based on an exclusive, quasi-tribal understanding of national identity. (Hans Kohn, *The Idea of Nationalism*, New York: Macmillan, 1994, ch. 8.) Plamenatz claims that while Eastern nationalism is that of peoples whose cultures are relatively primitive and who must create a new identity in order to be competitive in the modern world, Western nationalism is that of the peoples with strong cultural identities capable of competing on equal terms with other national identities. (See John Plamenatz, 'Two types of nationalism', in E. Kameka (ed.), *Nationalism: the Nature and Evolution of an Idea*, London: Edward Arnold, 1976.) Some make a distinction between 'good' nationalism and 'bad' nationalism. See, for example, Walker Connor, 'Beyond reason: the nature of the ethno-national bond', *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, 16, 1993, p. 376; Morris Janowitz, *The Reconstruction of Patriotism*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1983, p. 194; Daniel Bar-Tal, 'Patriotism as fundamental beliefs of group members', *Politics and the Individual* 3, 1993, p. 48 and p. 51.

⁷ Craig Calhoun, *Nationalism*, Minneapolis: University of Minneapolis Press, 1997, p. 3.

others. It is also true that inter-ethnic and inter-state relations have suffered when culture-communities are pitted against each other. It is equally true that nationalism has undermined the attractive idea of a single humanity.

Yet, there is another side to nationalism. As Smith has argued, 'We can, equally, catalogue the benign effects of nationalism: its rescue of "lost" histories and literatures; its inspiration for cultural renaissance; its resolution of "identity crisis"; its legitimization of community and social solidarity; its inspiration to resist tyranny; its ideal of popular sovereignty and collective mobilisation; even the motivation of self-sustaining economic growth'.⁸ Given the complexity of nationalism in specific instances, no blanket condemnation of nationalism can be justified morally, let alone academically. We need to look at what a particular nationalism is and does before we can decide what is to be condemned.

It is not hard to imagine what sort of conclusion one would reach if one approached nationalism with a preconceived negative view of it. In that case, it would appear appropriate to ignore or condemn nationalism; there would certainly be no point in attempting to see nationalism from the inside, nor to finding out what meaning national identities have for those who share them. Thus, we, who are immune to the virus of national sentiments, must persuade our less enlightened fellow-beings to abandon them, or design some mechanisms which will prevent the virus from taking hold, or better still, eliminate it altogether. It is little wonder that there are more descriptive studies of 'their' nationalism than of 'ours', and that descriptive studies of 'our' nationalism are sometimes suspected of demonising it and the people associated with it.

A second reason for rejecting the negative view of nationalism is that it often results in a refusal or failure to recognise the relevance of nationalism to most people in most areas of the world and to engage with it. It tends to forget that nationalism is 'embedded in our entire view of the world - organising citizenship and passports, the way we look at history, the way we divide up literatures and cinemas, the way we compete in the Olympic Games'.⁹ It also tends to forget that 'deeper patterns of collective identity and pride are given form by nationalism as a

⁸ Anthony Smith, *National Identity*, Reno, Las Vegas and London: University of Nevada Press, 1993 (first published by Penguin Books, 1991), p. 18.

⁹ Margaret Canovan, *Nationhood and Political Theory*, Cheltenham, UK: Edward Elgar, 1996, pp. 1-2.

way of talking and thinking and seeing the world' - a world at a basic level made up of nation-states.¹⁰ It may well be that this way of talking and thinking and seeing the world turns out to be flawed or problematic, but that should be a conclusion that emerges from an empirical examination of the facts, not one that is foreordained by the adoption of a particular theoretical position or approach to the problem in question.

Moral reservations about nationalism are, probably more than anything else, responsible for the scanty attention to the nation in the social sciences, especially in political theory, until recent years. As one example, Robert Goodin and Philip Pettit's *A Companion to Contemporary Political Philosophy*, which is intended to provide a 'synthesis of the "state of play" in contemporary political philosophy',¹¹ includes articles on such ideologies as anarchism, conservatism, feminism, liberalism, Marxism and socialism, but none on nationalism. The editors' simple explanation of the omission is that 'Nationalism - still less racism, sexism or ageism - does not figure, on the grounds that it hardly counts as a principled way of thinking about things.'¹²

Value-laden as it may be, there is nothing unusual about Goodin and Pettit's omission of nationalism; there has been a general lack of interest in the nation amongst political theorists until a few years ago. As Canovan has noted, 'Historians have chronicled the struggles of nationalist movements and sociologists have offered explanation for their success in attracting support, but at least for the past half century most anglophone political theorists have turned their backs on the whole business and gone on talking about the preferred topics - democracy (for example), social justice, freedom, rights, even community - as if nations were an irrelevance.'¹³

The condemnation of nationalism and the indifference to it apparently have much more to do with value than with fact and are based on some aspects of nationalism rather than nationalism as a whole. If we focus on the world of events, we will find that nationalism comes in a multitude of forms and colours, some

¹⁰Ibid.

¹¹Robert Goodin and Philip Pettit, 'Preface' to *A Companion to Contemporary Political Philosophy*, Oxford and Cambridge, MA: Blackwell, 1993, p. ix.

¹²Robert Goodin and Philip Pettit, 'Introduction' to *A Companion to Contemporary Political Philosophy*, p. 3.

¹³M. Canovan, op. cit., p. 1.

defensible and desirable, others abominable and terrifying; it is both positive and negative, quite often *at the same time*. 'Trans-empiricist' approaches that emphasise value have prevented many an analyst from seeing nationalism and 'Chinese nationalism' as they are. A better understanding of nationalism and 'Chinese nationalism' is more likely to emerge if we focus on the phenomenon and refrain from making excessive value judgements. While critical intellectuals could exert a moderating influence on indefensible and undesirable nationalistic sentiments, it is academically unjustifiable if their values bias their empirical findings, or if their commitments to an *ought* distort their views of what *is*.

2. Objective and Subjective Aspects of the Nation

Even for the most disinterested analyst, terms like nation, national identity and nationalism do not have fixed meanings but often have a particular resonance according to how they are employed. This is compounded by the enormous range of theories generated by a large number of theorists, including sociologists, political scientists, historians, anthropologists, political geographers, literary critics, psychologists and so on, who might be of liberal, nationalist, Marxist or other persuasions. Differences in definitions and explanations of the nation and nationalism, however subtle, influence the way in which we approach the subject and present our views.

The objective/subjective polemic deserves particular attention here for three reasons. First, it has all too often driven discussions of the nation into an impasse. Second, subjective and objective definitions of the nations can actually produce quite different outcomes. Third, it is pertinent to the Chinese conception of national identity and the Chinese cultural nationalists' challenge to state nationalism.

What remains a challenge to theories of the nation is how to bring together subjective elements such as will, memory, beliefs and claims and more objective ones like common territory, language and religion. At the subjective extreme, we find Seton-Watson's tautology that 'All that I can find to say is that a nation exists when a significant number of people in the community consider themselves to

form a nation, or behave as if they formed one.’¹⁴ At the objective extreme stands the view that one can objectively identify nations without taking account of self-awareness. Anthony Giddens, for example, structurally defines the nation as a ‘collectivity existing within a clearly demarcated territory, which is subject to a unitary [and uniform] administration, reflexively monitored both by the internal state apparatus and those of other states’.¹⁵

A more balanced picture would recognise that the diffusion of national ideas could only occur in specific social settings. As Hroch noted, ‘Nation-building was never a mere project of ambitious or narcissistic intellectuals... Intellectuals can invent national community only if certain objective preconditions for the formation of a nation already exist.’¹⁶ This is precisely the point that Anderson makes in insisting on taking a historically grounded position. According to him, the nation can only be theorised ‘by aligning it not with self-consciously held political ideologies, but with the large cultural systems that preceded it, out of which - as well as against which - it came into being’.¹⁷

Materialists are right to emphasise that nations cannot just be ‘invented’ or ‘imagined’, that nations are but aggregates of people distinguished by a common homeland, language, religion and a set of common characteristics. It poses the question, however, of whether or not such aggregates of people can automatically become nations without mutual recognition, the common will to belong together, and the belief that they share the relevant characteristics. Besides, each of the objective variables is highly problematic. For one thing, they cannot always be defined objectively. For another, what often matters to national identity is not so much the independent existence of such objective variables as the significance with which they are endowed by large numbers of the community.¹⁸

There is no consensus, for example, even on common language as an essential criterion for a nation. For Kedourie, languages are impossible to define

¹⁴ Hugh Seton-Watson, *Nations and States: An Enquiry into the Origins of Nations and the Politics of Nationalism*, London: Methuen, 1977, p. 5.

¹⁵ Anthony Giddens, *The Nation-State and Violence*, vol. 2: *A Contemporary Critique of Historical Materialism*, Cambridge: Polity Press, 1985, p. 116.

¹⁶ Miroslav Hroch, ‘From national movement to fully formed nation’, *New Left Review* 198, Mar. 1993, p. 4.

¹⁷ Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, London: Verso, 1991, p. 12.

¹⁸ Anthony Smith, *op. cit.*, p. 23.

objectively.¹⁹ According to Fichte, 'Wherever a separate language is found, there a separate nation exists, which has the right to take independent charge of its own affairs and to govern itself.'²⁰ As Weber saw it, 'a common language does not seem absolutely necessary to a "nation"'.²¹ A critical point to make about such markers or differentiae as language, religion, customs and pigmentation is that their 'objectivity' is not unquestionable or indisputable. It is only when they are 'endowed with diacritical significance', as Smith has elucidated, that they come to be seen to be objective, and that is when they really matter.²²

Objective definitions often fail to recognise that 'nations are not things that exist in the world independently of the belief people have about them'.²³ David Miller believes 'national communities are constructed by belief'.²⁴ Renan argues that nations are aggregates of people who will to belong to them.²⁵ According to Anderson, nations are 'imagined communities', as 'all communities larger than primordial villages of face-to-face contact (and perhaps even these) are imagined'.²⁶ From this more subjective point of view, it is misleading to argue that the population existing within the territorial boundaries of a state automatically becomes a nation; it is also misleading to assume that a national consciousness naturally emerges once a unit of population is territorially demarcated.

It thus follows that nations cannot be defined effectively by applying predominantly objective variables like common territory, language, economic life and psychological make-up, as Stalin did. Nor can they be effectively defined by empirical measures of whether or not nations are actually able to achieve sovereignty, to maintain internal unity and territorial integrity, or whether their culture is unified or homogeneous. Since the nation is 'a self-defined rather than

¹⁹ Elie Kedourie, *Nationalism*, London: Blackwell, 1993 (4th edition), p. 73.

²⁰ J.G. Fichte, *Addresses to German Nation*, Chicago and London: Open Court, 1922, p. 215.

²¹ Max Weber, 'The nation', in *From Max Weber: Essays in Sociology*, (trans. and ed.), H.H. Gerth and C. Wright-Mills, London: Routledge & Paul Kegan, 1948, pp. 171-7.

²² Anthony Smith, op. cit., p. 23.

²³ David Miller, *On Nationality*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995 p. 17.

²⁴ Ibid., p. 22.

²⁵ For one of the earliest discussions of the role of will in nation formation, see E. Renan, 'What is a nation?' in A. Zimmern (ed.), *Modern Political Doctrines*, London: Oxford University Press, 1984.

²⁶ Benedict Anderson, op. cit., p. 6.

an other-defined grouping',²⁷ one must try to understand them from the *inside* and see whether members recognise each other as compatriots and believe that they share the relevant characteristics.

This is particularly the case with the Chinese conception of national identity, which appears to give precedence to subjectivity over objectivity. Objective markers such as common territory, language, economic life and customs are significant in this conception, but they are not as important as subjective criteria. A person who meets all the objective criteria, for example, might still not be regarded as really Chinese if he/she fails to meet the subjective criteria. In the past, as we shall discuss in Chapter 6, the ultimate test for a Chinese was *xin* (*hsin*), a combination of consciousness, a way of thinking, an attitude of mind, a sense of morality, an aesthetic sense and many other things. The objective differentiae are important in so far as they help foster the right *xin* and are outward manifestations of it. Even today, there is something approaching a consensus amongst Chinese scholars that what makes a nation a nation is first of all 'national spirit' or 'national character' - modern equivalents of *xin*.

The emphasis on the subjective in defining the nation can probably also be seen from the common criticism of Stalin's materialist definition of the nation, namely that it fails to take sufficient account of national consciousness. As early as 1980, renowned anthropologist Fei Xiaotong reinterpreted Stalin's fourth criterion of the nation - a common psychological make-up - as 'the sense of belonging together among the members of the nation'.²⁸ In his recent book, Li Zonggui, professor of philosophy at Zhongshan University, dismissed Stalin's definition even more sweepingly, arguing that only a sense of belonging together is absolutely necessary for a nation, whereas a common territory, a common language and a common economic life are not necessary.²⁹

A problem with objective definitions like Giddens' is that they bracket off 'nations before nation-states' and 'stateless nations'. Worse still, they seem to suggest that territorially bounded 'collectivities' magically become nations when a

²⁷ Walker Connor, 'A nation is a nation, is a state, is an ethnic group, is a...', in John Hutchinson and Anthony Smith (ed.), *Nationalism*, Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1994, p. 37.

²⁸ Cited by Li Zonggui, 'Preface' to *Confucianism and the Cohesion of the Chinese Nation* [*Rujia wenhua yu zhonghua minzhu ningjuli*], Guangzhou: Guangdong renmin chubanshe], 1998, p. 3.

²⁹ *Ibid.*

state asserts claims of unified sovereignty. That is an assumption shared by no small number of predominantly objective or materialist definitions of 'nation'. Not only do they underrate self-awareness, but in doing so, they tend to unduly privilege the state, or the dominant ethnic group, thus often lending themselves to statist manipulations.

A case in point is China. So far as the Party-state is concerned, 'the Chinese nation' is beyond question. 'Chinese' is ascribed to all Tibetans, Mongolians, Koreans, Uighurs, Kazhaks, Russians, and everybody else living within the boundaries of the PRC, as if their identification were to be accepted by them as a matter of fact, or as if it did not matter. If we apply Giddens' definition to the Tibetans, Mogolians, Uighurs etc., as the CCP does, they will appear perfectly 'Chinese'. Yet, it may very well be that many of them do not think of themselves as Chinese, as Dikotter has suggested.³⁰ From the point of view of those who attach great importance to popular will, shared beliefs and values, history, culture and descent, and refuse to identify themselves as Chinese, 'Chinese' is nothing but an other-defined category and an imposed ascription. In that case, is their ascription as 'Chinese' justified simply because they are territorially bounded within the PRC?

In the case of the Chinese cultural nationalists, what is at issue is not territory or even citizenship, but the meaning of Chineseness and the legitimacy of a Party-state that fails to express the will and identity of their imagined community. Thus their challenge to the Party-state's conception of the nation focuses more on the psychological than the physical definitions of the collective self. Given their refusal to identify themselves as Chinese as defined by the Party-state, they can hardly be said to belong to the Party-state's 'Chinese nation'. Likewise, the Party-state cannot be regarded as the sole representative of 'the Chinese nation' as imagined by the cultural nationalists, either.

Objective definitions like Giddens' appear to ignore such crosscutting cleavages or lack of positive identification. They fail to account for the crucial importance of a sense of belonging together among the population and a relationship of identification between the nation and the state. Perhaps it is

³⁰ Frank Dikotter, 'Culture, "race", and nation: the formation of national identity in twentieth century China', *Journal of International Affairs*, vol. 48, no. 2 (winter, 1996), note 4, p. 605.

assumed that national identification is structurally determined and that it will emerge under conditions of demarcated territories, unitary state administrations, universal citizenship and common laws. However, it is not always the case; there is sufficient evidence to prove that these conditions do not always transform a population into a nation. Ethnic conflicts within states all over the world amply testify to the importance of a sense of belonging together and the failure of states to foster identity and solidarity amongst their respective collectivities. Even if structural factors are helpful in generating a common bond among a demarcated population in the long run, this population cannot be considered a nation until shared memories, beliefs and values and a sense of belonging together have already emerged. To emphasise the objective aspects at the expense of the subjective is to underestimate the domestic politics of national identity.

3. Nation and State as Separate Concepts

Many things have muddled conceptions of the nation, national identity and nationalism, but much confusion also stems from the way in which 'nation' is understood in the first place. This confusion appears to result most commonly from the lack of a clear differentiation between 'nation' and 'state'. An elementary error is to take 'nation' as a synonym for 'state'. When some talk about the 'newly emerging nations of Eastern Europe', they are really referring to the newly created states there. Malapropisms such as 'transnational', 'multinational' and 'nationalisation', the League of Nations and the United Nations are obvious examples. So is 'international' relations, which should really be *interstate* relations. Even a sophisticated theorist like Michael Billig explains the 'nation' as the 'nation-as-people' and the 'nation-as-state'.³¹ A less common error is the confusion of 'nation' and 'nation-state'. One example is Giddens' definition of the nation, which Paul James uses as a definition of 'nation-state'.³²

The equation of nation and state or nation-state has clearly hampered some discussions of national identity. As an example, Whiting states that 'national identity emerges in how the policy-making elite perceives and articulates the

³¹ See Michael Billig, *Banal Nationalism*, London: Sage Publications, 1995, p. 24.

³² Paul James, *Nation Formation*, London: Sage Publications, 1996, p. 14.

image of China in its relationship to the world'.³³ Dittmer, as another example, defines national identity as 'the relationship between nation and state that obtains when the people of that nation identify with the state'.³⁴ Scalapino, Kim and others employ the same definition, or a slightly modified version of it, in the same book. In all these cases, what is regarded as national identity looks more like state identity - a state-defined identity or a state-manipulated image that serves its purpose in international politics. In Dittmer's case, this becomes all the more apparent when he further explains that the substantive content of national identity is the state, and that national identity is the record of the zig-zag course of the ship of the state through international waters. It is also obvious that Dittmer equates state and nation when he describes China's national identity as a socialist country and a Third-World country and that of the Soviet Union as a superpower donor in the past and a Third-World supplicant later.

All in all, the state predominates in what is presumably national identity, whereas the nation becomes something represented in mute acquiescence by the state as the nation is subsumed under the nation-state. One obvious question about this 'national identity' is whether or not the beliefs, memories, values, practices and characteristics shared by the members of the nation find expression in the state's articulation and whether the members of the nation actually identify with it or not. If so, state identity and national identity are more or less congruent; if not, it is all the more problematic to treat state identity as national identity. In either case, we need to look at state identity and national identity separately to see if a relationship of identification obtains or not. That relationship simply cannot be taken for granted.

Dittmer, however, refuses to take this approach. He insists that national identity is neither the identity of 'nation' nor of 'state'; if it is, it will 'force the differentiation between state identity and national identity'.³⁵ This is a highly problematic proposition for two reasons. First, if 'nation' and 'state' are separate concepts and entities, it is only logical to assume that each has a sameness within

³³ Allen Whiting, 'Chinese nationalism and foreign policy after Deng', *The China Quarterly* 142 (Jun. 1995), p. 297.

³⁴ Lowell Dittmer and Samuel Kim, 'In search of a theory of national identity', in Lowell Dittmer and Samuel Kim (eds.), *China's Quest for National Identity*, Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1993, p. 13.

³⁵ *Ibid.*

itself, or its own identity. Second, there is absolutely no reason why a differentiation between state identity and national identity should not be made if there is one.

To be sure, there is generally a relationship between 'nation' and 'state', but there have been 'nationless states' like China³⁶ and 'stateless nations' like the Palestinians. In addition, the relationship between nations and states is certainly not always one of identity either in an objective or subjective sense. Objectively, the nation does not always fall into the territorial boundaries or the decision-making scope of the state; subjectively, the members of a nation do not always identify with the state as their own. If national identity is indeed the relationship that obtains when the people of the nation identify with the state, are there national identities to talk about in the case of 'stateless nations' and nations with illegitimately imposed state formations with which those nations refuse to identify? In other words, does each of these nations have a national identity? Or, are they nations in the first place? Dittmer's definition does not seem to allow for affirmative answers to these questions. Yet in the real world we witness struggles waged on the grounds of, and in the name of, national identity, for example, by the Palestinians, East Timorese and Tibetans.

The reason for Dittmer's refusal to 'force the differentiation' can probably be found in his particular use of 'national identity'. Like Whiting, he defines national identity as a concept to be applied in the study of international relations, where, as we know, the primary actor is the state rather than the nation. Therefore, their definitions can be of little help to the inquiry into the domestic politics of national identity in China (or anywhere else for that matter), as what is in dispute there is precisely the state-defined identity or the official image of China and the Chinese.

4. Nationalism: Identification with the Nation or Loyalty to the State?

The tendency to equate the state or nation-state and nation and the failure to make a clear distinction have also got much discussion of nationalism off to a false start. A good (or bad) example is the definition of nationalism as a 'mass emotion'

³⁶ See John Fitzgerald, 'The nationless state: the search for a nation in modern Chinese nationalism', in Jonathan Unger (ed.), *Chinese Nationalism*, Armonk, New York: M.E. Sharpe, 1996, pp. 58-9.

which 'makes the state the ultimate focus of the individual's loyalty'.³⁷ 'With the concepts of the nation and state thus hopelessly confused', as Connor accurately pointed out, 'it is perhaps not too surprising that *nationalism* should come to mean identification with the state rather than loyalty to the nation.'³⁸

In much of the literature on 'Chinese nationalism', in particular, the critical distinction between nation and state is often not made. With some exceptions, 'Chinese nationalism' is treated as a generic concept and an undifferentiated whole, and regarded as an ideology of the state rather than of the nation. Yet, analysts usually focus on certain aspects of 'Chinese nationalism' or nationalism during certain periods of history. Confusion arises when 'Chinese nationalism' is not spelt out or specified. It is particularly the case with nationalism in post-Tiananamen China, which is very complex and multifaceted. As Jonathan Unger noted, 'Chinese nationalism today seems like Joseph's biblical coat of many colours. It does not consist of a single cloth, a single easily comprehended sentiment.'³⁹ Nor can it be taken for granted that all the different varieties of nationalism in China are unified by a single purpose.

What is called 'Chinese nationalism' in the literature mostly refers to one, or a mixture of two, overlapping types of nationalism: official or state nationalism and unofficial nationalism (including cultural and popular nationalisms). What Ying-shih Yu, Whiting and Oksenberg have respectively described as 'fascist', 'assertive' and 'confident' nationalism is clearly state-centred;⁴⁰ it can thus be more accurately termed official or state nationalism. What Wang Gungwu referred to as 'restoration nationalism' is much broader, including elements of state, cultural and popular nationalisms. Reports and commentaries on 'Chinese nationalism' in *The Asian Wall Street Journal* and *Far Eastern Economic Review*,

³⁷ Jack Plano and Roy Olton, *The International Relations Dictionary*, New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston Inc., 1996, pp. 119-20.

³⁸ Walker Connor, op. cit. p. 40.

³⁹ Jonathan Unger, 'Introduction' to *Chinese Nationalism*, p. xvii.

⁴⁰ For Ying-shih Yu's views on 'Chinese nationalism', see 'Democracy and nationalism', *Democratic China*, 33; also in *Feng Hua Yuan*, fhytk06 (17 May 1996, web site: <http://www.uwalpha.uwinnipeg.ca:8001/fhy/>). For Allen Whiting's analysis of 'assertive Chinese nationalism', see 'Chinese nationalism and foreign policy after Deng', *The China Quarterly* 142, and 'Assertive nationalism in Chinese foreign policy', *Asian Survey*, vol. xxiii, no. 8, 1983, pp. 913-33. For Michel Oksenberg's contrasting evaluation, see 'China's confident nationalism', *Foreign Affairs*, vol. 65, no. 3, 1987, pp. 501-23. For Wang Gungwu's analysis of Chinese restoration nationalism, see 'The revival of Chinese nationalism', IIAS Lecture Series, Leiden, 1996.

in contrast, concentrate mostly on popular nationalistic sentiments,⁴¹ as given expression in *China Can Say No*.

As is often the case with these reports and academic studies, official and unofficial nationalisms are lumped together as 'Chinese nationalism'. This practice almost certainly presupposes congruence between the two and obscures their differences and conflicts, thus leading many an analyst, almost automatically, to the conclusion that 'Chinese nationalism' necessarily serves the state.⁴² The point at issue is not whether or not congruence exists in this case, or whether or not nationalism can be manipulated to serve the state, but that whether it exists or not should be proved through empirical research rather than implied through the careless use of general terms. Even if congruence is established, we still need to ask whether 'Chinese nationalism' simply benefits the state without also causing it problems.

Theoretically, there is nothing inevitable about the association of nationalism with the state. As Smith put it well,

...nationalism is an ideology of the nation, not the state. It places the nation at the centre of its concerns, and its description of the world and its prescriptions for collective action are concerned only with the nation and its members. The idea that nations can be free only if they possess their own sovereign state is neither necessary nor universal.⁴³

Durkheim and Breuilly even suggest that nationalism is a product of the tension between the nation and the state. According to Durkheim, it is not the strength of the nation-state but usually the apparent *disjunction* of people and state that brings the category of nation and the phenomenon of nationalism into play.⁴⁴ Breuilly carries the point much further in defining nationalism as a movement in opposition to the state that seeks to gain or exercise state power and justifies this objective on nationalist grounds.⁴⁵

⁴¹ For samples of reports and commentary on 'Chinese nationalism', see, for example, Linda Jaivin, 'Life in a battlefield', *The Asian Wall Street Journal*, 24 Dec., 1993, p.7; Matt Forney, 'Patriotic games'; Bruce Gilley, 'Potboiler nationalism'; Yu Wong, 'Boy wonder', all in *Far Eastern Economic Review*, 3 Oct., 1996, pp. 22-5.

⁴² Chen Xi, 'Nationalism among Chinese intellectuals', *China Strategic Review*, vol. 1, no. 6 (5 Sept., 1996), pp. 9-14.

⁴³ Anthony Smith, *op. cit.*, p. 74 and pp. 14-5.

⁴⁴ Emile Durkheim, *Textes*, vol. 3, ed. by V. Karady, Paris: Editions de minuit, 1950, pp. 179-80.

⁴⁵ John Breuilly, *Nationalism and the State*, Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1993 (second edition), pp. 8-9.

Of more immediate relevance to China are Townsend's remarks that nationalism may serve either the state or the nation.⁴⁶ Furthermore, Townsend observes, albeit tentatively, that popular nationalism in China is probably less oriented towards state nationalism than the Party-state would have us believe. It is certainly less oriented towards state nationalism than much of the existing literature suggests. Similarly, Goldman, Link and Su Wei argue that intellectuals are 'changing their understandings of their identification with the Party-state and of their own proper relationship to it'.⁴⁷ In *Chinese Nationalism*, Townsend identifies four 'Chinese nations': the official one of state nationalism, composed of all the PRC citizens; a Han nation; one that comprises the PRC and the compatriots of Taiwan, Hong Kong, and Macau; and one that includes Chinese elsewhere around the world who retain some idea of dual nationality. He goes on to state that 'it is the Han Chinese nation, not the PRC state, that is the focus of national sentiment.'⁴⁸

Fitzgerald, in contrast, examines the relationship between nation and state in modern China. He concludes that the Chinese state is a 'nationless state', as it has no given nation; the Chinese nation, instead, 'has been created and recreated in the struggle for state power, and it has ultimately been defined by the state as a reward of victory.'⁴⁹ He notes, however, that the nation-state relationship is under negotiation today on an unprecedented scale. In what he describes as a 'revolutionary development', not only the official configurations of the nation but the state's monopolised right to name the nation have come under challenge.⁵⁰ While these scholars have made a welcome start, much remains to be done in the way of empirical work.

5. Nation, National Identity and Nationalism as Applied in This Study

⁴⁶ James Townsend, 'Chinese nationalism', in Jonathan Unger (ed.), *Chinese Nationalism*, p. 7 and p. 23.

⁴⁷ Merle Goldman, Perry Link and Su Wei, 'China's intellectuals in the Deng Era: loss of identity with the state', in Lowell Dittmer and Samuel Kim (eds.), *China's Quest for National Identity*, p.125.

⁴⁸ James Townsend, op. cit., pp. 28-9 and p. 23

⁴⁹ John Fitzgerald, op. cit., p. 57.

⁵⁰ Ibid., pp. 58-9.

Calhoun successfully brings together the subjective and objective by viewing the nation, as Smith has suggested, from the inside and identifies a pattern based on the images, ideas, beliefs and claims held by most or all nationalists.⁵¹ The pattern consists of ten essential features:

- 1 Boundaries of territory, population, or both.
- 2 Individuality - the notion that the nation is an integral unit.
- 3 Sovereignty, or at least the aspiration to sovereignty, and thus formal equality with other nations, usually as an autonomous and putative self-sufficient state.
- 4 An 'ascending' notion of legitimacy - i.e. the idea that government is just only when supported by popular will or at least when it serves the interests of 'the people' or 'the nation'.
- 5 Popular participation in collective affairs - a population mobilised on the basis of national membership (whether for war or civic activities).
- 6 Direct membership, in which each individual is understood to be immediately a part of the nation and in that respect categorically equivalent to other members.
- 7 Culture, including some combination of language, shared beliefs and values, habitual practices.
- 8 Temporal depth - a notion of the nation as such existing through time, including past and future generations, and having a history.
- 9 Common descent or racial characteristics.
- 10 Special historical or even sacred relations to a certain territory.

This list affords a useful aid to conceptualising an ideal type of 'nation'. To use Calhoun's own words, 'the word "nation" is used sensibly and commonly understood when it is applied to populations which have, or claim to have, most of the characteristics listed'.⁵² By 'most' Calhoun means at least six. Which six, or seven, or eight characteristics it has is less crucial than the preponderance of them. Although this is not a precise definition, as Calhoun readily acknowledges, it is nonetheless more useful than precise but misleading definitions, because recognition as a nation is not based on strict definitions, but on a preponderance of features from the above pattern. The nation as such is set apart from the state: the set of political institutions that such populations possess – 'that territorial juridical unit'.⁵³ It is also differentiated from the nation-state: a territorial-political unit (the

⁵¹ Craig Calhoun, *Nationalism*, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1997, pp. 4-5.

⁵² *Ibid.*, p. 6.

⁵³ Walker Connor, *op. cit.*, p. 38.

state) whose borders coincide or nearly coincide with the territorial distribution of a national group.⁵⁴

In order to have a clear idea about national identity, we can follow Erik Erikson⁵⁵ and understand identity as a combination of a persistent sameness within itself (or identity) and a relationship (identification). In conceiving national identity, however, we need to locate both identity and identification within the realm of the nation, and envisage national identity as the self-sameness of the nation and the identification of individual members with the national community itself. In other words, national identity can be understood as a persistent but constantly revised set of beliefs, values, practices, characteristics and symbolic representations shared by the members of a nation, and the collective expression of an individual sense of belonging to such a national community.

Based on the above conception of the nation, nationalism refers to a project, discourse or evaluation that aims to advance national autonomy, unity and identity. This combines Smith⁵⁶ and Calhoun's definitions of nationalism by retaining the three objectives of nationalism envisaged by Smith and broadening nationalism as Calhoun does. As conceived by Calhoun, nationalism has three dimensions:

First, there is nationalism as discourse: the production of a cultural understanding and rhetoric which leads people throughout the world to think and frame their aspirations in terms of the idea of nation and national identity, and the production of particular versions of nationalist thought and language in particular settings and traditions. Second, there is nationalism as project: social movements and state policies by which people attempt to advance the interests of collectivities they understand as nations, usually pursuing in some combination (or in a historical progression) increased participation in an existing state, national autonomy, independence and self-determination, or the amalgamation of territories. Third, there is nationalism as evaluation: political and cultural ideologies that claim

⁵⁴ Ibid., p.39.

⁵⁵ For Erikson's detailed discussions of identity, see Erik H. Erikson, 'The problem of ego identity', in Maurice Stein et al., *Identity and Anxiety*, Glencoe, Illinois: Free Press, 1960; Erik Erikson, *Young Man Luther: A Study in Psychoanalysis and History*, New York: Norton, 1958; 'The concept of identity in race relations', *Daedalus* 95 (winter 1966), pp. 145-71; *Dimensions of a New Identity*, New York: Norton, 1974; and *The Life Cycle Completed*, New York: Norton, 1982.

⁵⁶ Anthony Smith defines nationalism as 'an ideological movement for retaining and maintaining autonomy, unity and identity' on behalf of the nation. (See Smith, op. cit., p. 73.)

superiority for a particular nation; these are often associated with movements or state policies, but need not be.⁵⁷

Nationalism thus denotes a basic way of thinking, talking and/or acting; it is no longer simply a 'mass emotion' or 'national sentiment', as many understand it, a doctrine,⁵⁸ a 'political principle, which holds that political and national units should be congruent',⁵⁹ or 'an ideological movement'.⁶⁰ All these definitions are unduly restrictive and tend to narrow our understanding of nationalism too much to do justice to the extent to which nationalism shapes people's lives. Calhoun's conception, on the other hand, is broad enough to cover a multitude of manifestations of nationalism. At the same time, the specification of nationalism enables us to look at the different aspects or forms of nationalism separately. It is justifiable, for example, to focus on nationalism as discourse – as an ideology, mythology, symbolism, as a political principle or doctrine, or as what Shotter describes as 'a tradition of argumentation', a way of people continually arguing with each other over who or what they are.⁶¹ This allows for far greater flexibility than narrow definitions that treat nationalism as nothing but concrete action.

Two types of nationalism will be the focus of examination in this study: state nationalism and cultural nationalism. I mean by the former a political 'nationalism in which the state strives to become a unified nation (the idea of nation-building) or claims that its goals embody those of a nation and are essential to its nationhood'.⁶² The official version of patriotism in China corresponds to this definition in so far as it posits the CCP as the object of the nation's loyalty and seeks to focus national allegiances on the Party. In the eyes of state nationalists, the nation is first of all a political-territorial unit. They emphasise the necessity of a strong state and the role of citizenship in maintaining national autonomy, unity and identity. They also promote traditional culture in building a state-nation, but so far as state nationalists are concerned, culture is a means to a political end rather than an end in itself.

⁵⁷ Craig Calhoun, op. cit., p. 6.

⁵⁸ Elie Kedourie, op. cit., p. 1.

⁵⁹ Ernest Gellner, *Nations and Nationalism*, Oxford: Blackwell, 1983, p. 5.

⁶⁰ Anthony Smith, op. cit., p. 73; also *Theories of Nationalism*, London: Duckworth, 1971, p. 171.

⁶¹ John Shotter, 'The politics of identity and belonging', in John Shotter (ed.), *Cultural Politics of Everyday Life*, Buckingham: Open University Press, 1993, p. 201.

⁶² James Townsend, op. cit., p. 7.

Cultural nationalism, as Hutchinson has noted, is also a political movement.⁶³ While overlapping with state nationalism in some respects, it is in the main a counter-discourse and project that not only aims to restore national autonomy, identity and unity but also endeavours to bring about cultural revival and moral regeneration. To cultural nationalists, the essence of the nation is its distinctive civilisation, which is a product of its unique history, culture and geographical profile, whereas the state is perceived as an accidental. Moreover, cultural nationalists do not conceive nations as merely political-territorial units but as primordial expressions of a national spirit and natural solidarities like families, *organic* beings and living personalities. Cultural nationalists seek to identify the nation to itself 'by returning to the creative life-principle of the nation' or rediscovering the national spirit and essence.⁶⁴ Furthermore, cultural nationalists regard themselves as 'moral innovators' who establish 'ideological movements at times of social crisis in order to transform the belief-systems of communities and provide models for cultural development and political that guide their modernising strategies'.⁶⁵

As 'a response to the erosion of traditional identities and status orders by the modernisation process as mediated through a reforming state',⁶⁶ cultural nationalism is defensive; what is more, it can also be regressive in its emphasis on cultural traditions. Yet, cultural nationalists do not simply beat a retreat into the simplicity and comfort of the past. They are eager to see the nation as a high civilisation with a unique place in the world, and 'to recreate this nation which, integrating the traditional and the modern on a higher level, will again rise to the forefront of world progress'.⁶⁷ This sets cultural nationalists apart from traditionalists, for what they put forward is an evolutionary vision of the community instead of a primitive one.⁶⁸ By the same token, they differ from assimilationists (or Westernisers), who regard it as imperative to uproot a traditional socio-political and moral-cultural order for the sake of a largely legal-rational society. Unlike the assimilationists, they are generally suspicious of

⁶³ John Hutchinson, *The Dynamics of Cultural Nationalism*, London: Allen & Unwin, 1987, p. 36.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, pp 122-3.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 30.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 4.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 128.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 30.

foreign practices and universalist models of modernisation and deeply convinced that 'social progress comes not from the imposition of alien norms on the community but from the inner reformation of the traditional status order'.⁶⁹ While their insistence on 'national characteristics' (*minzuhua*) could help maintain or retain national identity, their suspicion of foreign practices and universal models of modernisation inclines them to favour cultural relativism rather than universal values.

So far, I have outlined the background of the politics of national identity between cultural nationalists and state nationalists in post-Tiananmen China. I have also reviewed the literature on 'Chinese nationalism', drawing particular attention to the gaps in it and the problems with some common approaches to the subject. I have tried further to clarify my theoretical position on nationalism and my approach to the subject through a discussion of a number of theoretical issues that have often hampered studies of the nation and nationalism. The discussion highlights the need to focus on nationalism as it exists in the real world, to pay due attention to the subjective or 'imagined' dimension of the nation, to treat nation and state as separated concepts, and to regard nationalism as identification with the nation rather than loyalty to the state. Furthermore, it justifies the attempt to relocate arguments about nationalism outside of the *statist* frameworks of analysis and examine cultural nationalism and state nationalism separately and in their relations with each other. This is what I will do in the rest of the thesis.

In the next chapter, I will start to investigate the politics of national identity between cultural and state nationalists by looking at the discourse and project of state nationalism first before turning to cultural nationalism as a counter-discourse.

⁶⁹ Ibid., p. 34.

3 Reconstructing Official Ideology: The Rise of State Nationalism

State nationalism is by no means a new phenomenon in China, but as a bulging body of literature demonstrates from different perspectives, it has evidently been given an unprecedented role since June Fourth. Why is this? What is the nature of this state nationalism? What is its objective? Is it achieving its objective? These are the questions to be explored in this chapter in order to make clear what elements of state nationalism are challenged by cultural nationalism before I start to examine the contest in the rest of the study.

Since the characteristics and objectives of state nationalism are shaped to a large extent by the circumstances under which it was set in action, it is necessary and advisable to take account of those circumstances. Of pivotal significance in the upsurge of state nationalism is June Fourth. The historic events of 1989, as Fewsmith has commented, 'marked an upheaval along three interrelated fault lines: between conservatives and reformers within the Party leadership, between the Party-state on the one hand and the emerging forces of society on the other, and between China and the outside world, particularly the United States.'¹ A correlation can be found not only between factional politics and the assertiveness of state nationalism as manifested in China's US policy, as Allen Whiting has demonstrated,² but also between state nationalism and state-society relations. While granting Whiting's argument to be true, it can also be argued that nationalism has been rekindled by the post-Tiananmen leadership primarily for the purpose of shoring up its position against intra-Party opposition and reining in an alienated society.

A definitive feature of Chinese State nationalism is that it is Party-centred; it regards the Party as an embodiment of the nation's will and the nation as a means rather than an end in itself. Accordingly, its primary objective is 'stability' for the

¹ Joseph Fewsmith, in Roderick MacFarquhar (ed.) *The Politics of China*, New York: Cambridge University Press, 1997, pp. 522-3.

² For a detailed discussion of the connection between assertive nationalism and factional politics, see Allen Whiting, 'Chinese nationalism and foreign policy after Deng', *The China Quarterly*, no. 142 (Jun. 1995), pp. 295-316. While agreeing with Whiting on the correlation, I see it in much broader terms and regard state nationalism itself, not simply its varying virulence, as a means to an end, employed first of all to serve the Party-state.

Party-state, even though it is keen to maintain national identity, national unity and national autonomy. Another predominant feature is that it presupposes a two-tiered nation, which consists of the 'people' on the one hand and the citizens of the PRC and the 'children and grandchildren of the Yellow Emperor' on the other. This characteristic gives state nationalism an irreplaceable role as a supplement to the CCP's official ideology.

While state nationalism is achieving some of its objectives, however, it also creates new problems for the Party-state. For one thing, the 'nation' presupposed by the CCP, which straddles class, race and citizenry, is growing increasingly problematic as the contradictions therein are now magnified by changed social realities. The CCP's 'state-nation' project, which attempts to blend a national identity, socialist identity and civic identity, is hampered by dilemmas for the very same reason. In addition, state nationalism encounters stiff challenges from many quarters, especially from intellectuals who are contesting both the CCP's definition of patriotism and its monopoly on the right to name the nation.

In what is to follow, I shall first of all look at the intensified patriotic indoctrination against the background of the June events in 1989 and the goals it set out to achieve. Sections 3 and 4 will analyse the Party-centred nature of state nationalism and the Party's discursive practice of meshing Party interests with national interests. In the following two sections, I shall discuss the CCP's problematic 'nation' as a two-tiered structure and its reliance on pan-Chinese nationalism as a supplementary ideology and as a basis for a new united front in post-Tiananmen China. The chapter will conclude with a discussion of the major theoretical challenges to state nationalism in order to cast some light on why it is not achieving all its desired objectives.

1. Patriotic Indoctrination in the Wake of the Tiananmen Events

Soon after the Tiananmen crackdown, Jiang Zemin launched the patriotic campaigns in a speech entitled 'Carry on and Develop the Tradition of Patriotism in New Historical Circumstances'. Li Ruihuan, head of the CCP's Ideological Leading Small Group, followed up with his article in *The People's Daily* on 10 January, 1990, 'Some Questions Relevant to Enhancing the Outstanding Elements of National Culture'. Deng Xiaoping joined in the campaigns with his speech

'Revive the Chinese Nation', which was published on 7 April, 1990. The campaign was boosted in 1994 by the publication of the CCP's 'Outline for the Implementation of Patriotic Education' and reached its peak in 1996-97 with the handover of Hong Kong and during China's missile tests in the Taiwan Strait.

In step with those directives from the top, a saturation bombardment of propaganda ensued to maximise exposure to the patriotic message. Or, as it is put in the *Beijing Review*, 'We will make a concerted effort in various quarters to create a strong atmosphere in which the entire Chinese people will be influenced by the patriotic ideas and spirit'.³ This is achieved by mobilising schools, families and society, and making use of all possible channels and occasions. The Party's Department of Propaganda, the state Education Committee, the Ministry of Broadcasting, TV and Films, and the Ministry of Culture jointly launched a 'hundred books program' and a 'hundred films program'. Another major state project is the construction and renovation of 'bases for patriotic education' in all Chinese cities, in the form of museums, memorial halls, or historical sites. Nanjing boasts the largest number of such bases, and since September 1996, every primary and secondary school student there has been required to visit 40 compulsory and optional bases before they can graduate. Other programs include the daily raising of the national flag at every school in the country and 'coming-of-age' ceremonies in front of the national flag for young people when they reach 18. At Tiananmen Square, the daily raising and lowering of the national flag is carried out with religious regularity and solemnity, and the timing is adjusted daily to synchronise this to the minute with the sunrise and sunset.⁴

A central aim of the concerted patriotic indoctrination is to produce 'a new socialist generation with high ideals and moral standards, educated and disciplined' who can restore to China its past glory.⁵ With regard to society in general, patriotic education is intended to cultivate 'patriotic sentiment', to 'enhance political consciousness, and to guide the Chinese people to establish

³ *Beijing Review*, 26 Sept.-2 Oct., 1994, p. 4.

⁴ Wang Zhankui (ed.), *The National Flag, the State Insignia, the National Anthem – Questions and Answers* [Guoqi, guohui, guoge zhishi wenda], Beijing: Guojia xingzheng xueyuan chubanshe, 1997, pp. 159-60.

⁵ Jiang Zemin, 'Speech at the 40th anniversary of the PRC', excerpted in Xiao Huaisu et al. (eds.), *A Work Manual for the Construction of Socialist Spiritual Civilisation* [Shehuizhuyi jingsheng wenming jianshe xuexi gongzuo shouce], Beijing: Zhonggong dangshi chubanshe, 1997, p. 35.

correct ideals, convictions, a proper perspective of life and values.’⁶ The national spirit is, so goes the argument, most significant in ‘concentrating the strength of the nation and uniting people of all Chinese nationalities to fight for the rejuvenation of China’.⁷

At the same time, while patriotic education got under way, the new leadership acted swiftly to tighten political control over college students through a code of conduct, which came into effect on 17 November 1989. The very first article of the code says that students must ‘safeguard the interests of the motherland’ and must not take part in ‘any activities that harm the dignity and honour of the motherland’.⁸ Tighter control was also extended to the media and society at large. The CCP, as one example, took over *Qiushi* from the Central Academy of the CCP in mid-August 1989;⁹ and even though the moderate Li Ruihuan was made the head of the Ideological Leading Small Group, conservatives Wang Renzhi, Song Ping and Gao Di dominated the CCP’s Propaganda and Organisation Departments, and *The People’s Daily* after June 4th.

In addition, new laws and regulations were promulgated to tighten control of publication, the media and the culture market. Anything that touches on ‘main Party and state leaders, major historical events, foreign policy, national security, and policies on ethnic and religious affairs’ must be approved by state departments, while any works that are suspected of ‘politically overstepping the Party line, leaking Party or state secrets, harming national unity, or hurting the feelings of religious groups’ are to be strictly banned.¹⁰ After the Tiananmen debacle, the CCP also resumed the enforcement of disciplinary requirements for all those who work in propaganda units or departments, demanding unconditional conformity to the Party line.¹¹

The coupling of patriotic indoctrination and the tightening of political control over the Party and society in the CCP’s reaction is based on the Party’s diagnosis of the Tiananmen debacle. Explaining the ‘inevitability’ of the events a few days

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ *The People’s Daily*, 23 Nov., 1989, p. 3.

⁹ Xinhua, 18 Aug., 1989.

¹⁰ Zhang Weiping (ed.), *A New Work Manual for Party Affairs* [*Dangwu gongzuo shouce*], Beijing: Zhongguo yanshi chubanshe, 1995, p. 949.

¹¹ Ibid., p. 969.

after the crackdown, Deng Xiaoping said that 'This storm was bound to come sooner or later. This was determined by the major international climate and China's own minor climate.'¹²

The international and domestic factors that Deng alluded to in this speech are elaborated in great detail by propagandists in the CCP's Department of Propaganda and elsewhere. In a series of articles on the nature of the Tiananmen events, their causes and the lessons to be learnt from the debacle, *Qiushi*, the mouthpiece of the CCP's Department of Propaganda, explains that the 'major international climate' is one in which 'Western countries headed by the US have always pursued a strategy of sabotage that aims to subvert communist governments throughout the world'.¹³ China has become the main target now that the Soviet Union and the Eastern bloc have collapsed. The 'minor climate', according to these articles, is the 'bourgeois liberalisation' within the Party under Hu Yaobang and Zhao Ziyang since the early 1980s.

Song Ping charged that bourgeois liberalisation went against the Marxist political line, and Tiananmen was the 'bitter fruit of violating this line'.¹⁴ Moreover, he added, the 'bourgeois liberalisation' encouraged a 'cultural nihilism' or 'national nihilism' that saw nothing of value and nothing worth loving in anything Chinese. The two 'climates', according to the Party's diagnosis, converged to reduce national confidence and patriotism to its lowest point since 1949 and created an unprecedented 'crisis of faith' and social discontent, thereby resulting in a weaker Party, weaker state and a demoralised nation.

There is no doubt at all, according to the Party's diagnosis, that the students' movement was 'unpatriotic' and it resulted from the lack of patriotism. It was 'unpatriotic' because the ideas that inspired the movement and the students' slogans were Western, and because the students demanded something that would throw the country into chaos, thus contributing, consciously or unconsciously, to the 'peaceful evolution' in China. The CCP seemed convinced, too, that the students' protests would not have taken place had it not been for waning

¹² *Jiefang ribao*, 28 Jun., 1989, p.1.

¹³ Editorial in *Qiushi* 12, 1989, pp.18-20.

¹⁴ Song Ping, 'Speech at the national meeting of organisation department heads' [*Zai quanguo zuzhi buzhang huiyi shang de jianghua*], in Zhonggong Zhongyang wenxian yanjiushi (ed.), *Important Documents Since the Thirteenth Party Congress of the Chinese Communist Part*, vol. 2 [*Shisanda yilai wenxian xuanbian, zhong*], Beijing Zhongyang wenxian chubanshe, 1991, pp. 566-77.

patriotism. This diagnosis, accidentally or incidentally, was supported by survey data. According to one survey of high school students' ambitions, for instance, those who wanted to 'make our motherland rich and powerful' dropped from 35.35% in 1981 to 20.8% in 1989, and those who wanted to 'serve the people' also registered a decrease from 15.6% to 0%. Another survey found that 40.1% of the respondents regarded 'patriotism' as an ideal in 1988 while 55% did so in 1987.

TABLE 1: Survey of Middle School Student Ambitions, 1981 and 1989

<i>Contention</i>	<i>(%)</i>	
	<i>1981</i> <i>(N: 769)</i>	<i>1989</i> <i>(N: 966)</i>
Make our motherland rich and powerful	35.35	20.8
Have a high salary and secure life	22.63	38.61
Serve the people	15.6	-
Be a well-educated person with a high social status	14.73	23.4
Realise the 'Four Modernisations'	6.24	-
Strive for communism	3.25	-
Eat well, dress well and have fun	1.43	1.35
Go abroad for further development	-	6.31
Make a fortune	-	2.8
No ambition	0.52	1.04
Others	0.78	5.69

SOURCE: G. Li and Z Li, 'An Investigation of junior middle school student culture in Guangzhou' [*Guangzhou chuzhongsheng wenhua diaocha*], *Social Sciences in China* 8, 1991, p. 170.

TABLE 2: What Ideals Do You Think University Students Should Have?

<i>Contention</i>	<i>1986</i>	<i>(%)</i>	
		<i>1987</i>	<i>1988</i>
Communism	38.1	7.2	6.1
Socialism	16.4	13.5	5.0
Only patriotism, social ideals are not necessary	28.1	55.0	40.1
Humanism	13.8	-	-
Anarchism	1.3	-	-
'Rely on one's skills to survive'	-	10.5	29.2
Others	-	8.9	16.4

SOURCE: 'Mistakes in the process of political socialisation' [Zhengzhi shehui guochengzhong de wuqu], *Qingnian yanjiu* 1, 1992, p. 37.

It is probably true that contemporary Chinese are more concerned about a secure life than in the 1950s and early 1960s and less keen to 'serve the people', but that does not prove clearly that they love their country less. Whether or not the Tiananmen generation of young Chinese was less 'patriotic' really depends on what one means by 'patriotism'. Words such as 'our motherland', 'the people', 'serve' and 'patriotism' are politically charged terms with distinctive socialist connotations. Is it the motherland or is it the 'socialist characteristics' that the students now love less? Is it possible to argue that it is not that the young love the country less but that they dislike communism and socialism more?

The survey data do not provide us with any answer to either question, but they certainly give us a clear indication that the students love communism and socialism less. In Table 1, for example, those who were ready to 'strive for communism' dropped from 3.25% in 1981 to 0% in 1989, and in Table 2, communism as an ideal went down from 28.1% in 1986 to 6.1% in 1988, and socialism from 16.4% to 5%. Yet, according to the Party's version of 'patriotism', which allows no opposition to socialism or to the Party, diminishing commitment to socialism is symptomatic of waning patriotism.

2. Party-Centred Nationalism: *Guo* as a Package

Serious as the CCP may be in its pursuit of national unity, national identity and national autonomy, its first and foremost consideration is its own position as the ruling party rather than the nation. To this extent, the CCP's version of patriotism could be more accurately described as 'state nationalism', as it 'portrays the state as the embodiment of the nation's will, seeking for its goals the kind of loyalty and support granted the nation itself and trying to create a sense of nationhood among all its citizens'.¹⁵ The Party-centredness of state nationalism becomes immediately obvious if we look at the Party's definitions of 'patriotism', which, in spite of numerous revisions as the Party's agenda and priorities have changed, invariably demand loyalty to the Party and conformity to the Party line. In 1951, for example, patriotism meant

¹⁵ James Townsend, in Jonathan Unger (ed.), *Chinese Nationalism*, Armonk, New York: M.E. Sharpe, 1996, p. 18.

...opposition to imperialist aggression and feudal oppression, it is upholding the fruits of the Chinese revolution, it is upholding the New Democracy, it is upholding progress and opposing backwardness; it is upholding the working people, it is upholding the international alliance of China and Russia, the people's democracies, and the working peoples of the entire world; it is struggling for the future of socialism.¹⁶

Conversely, it was considered unpatriotic to speak against the Sino-Russian alliance, for instance, or to refuse to struggle for the future of socialism, or fail to oppose backwardness in the form of, say, traditional culture. Today, patriotism means

...pride in the country's outstanding contributions to the civilisation of humanity, its broad and profound traditional culture, to acknowledge the basic national conditions, to follow the political line of the Communist Party of China, to recognise the Party's achievements, to uphold socialist democracy and abide by the law, not to harm national defence, national security or national unity, and accept the principles of peaceful reunification, and one country two systems.¹⁷

According to this definition, it would be unpatriotic not to follow the Party line, not to appreciate what the Party has done for the nation or to bring harm to the Party-state by demanding something that does not suit the 'national conditions', like human rights, liberty or democracy. Patriotism requires one to accept the Party's 'blueprint' for modernisation as the best and only alternative, and to work hard in order to achieve that goal instead of indulging in hedonism or idle talk about other alternatives. It would even be considered unpatriotic if one suggested that Taiwan should be taken by force or Hong Kong should have the same political system as the mainland.

In defining the content of 'patriotism', then, the Party not only posits itself as an embodiment of the nation's will and demands its loyalty but also monopolises the power to name the nation.¹⁸ The nation thus named, however, is a means rather than an end. The real end is, first of all, the security of the Party's rule, the achievement of the Party's goals and the mobilisation of the population for that

¹⁶ Li Weiham, 'The Chinese Communist Party and the People's Democratic United Front' [*Zhongguo gongchandang yu renmin minzhu tongyizhangxian*], *People's China*, IV: 1, 1 Jul., 1951, p. 38.

¹⁷ *Beijing Review*, 26 Sept.-2 Oct., 1994, p. 4.

¹⁸ John Fitzgerald, 'The nationless state: the search for a nation in modern Chinese nationalism', in Jonathan Unger (ed.), *Chinese Nationalism*, Armonk, New York: M.E. Sharpe, 1996, p. 80.

purpose. As John Fitzgerald has accurately pointed out, the Chinese nation 'has been created and recreated in the struggle for state power, and it has ultimately been defined by the state as a reward of victory'.¹⁹

By thus naming the nation, defining the content of 'patriotism' and determining the connection between act and patriotic behaviour, the Party-state seeks to create a collective identity which serves as the means by which individual members relate to each other in a way that suits the Party. Such a collective identity places the individual under the obligation of collective purpose as expressed by the Party. Furthermore, the Party-state claims the right to exact from the nation of patriots the obligations necessary to ensure success. In doing so, the Party-state also gives purpose to the individual, and the purpose is moralised much as in church religion. In fact, the Party-state encourages a political religion that expresses moral purpose through right conduct and worthy objectives - aims that cleanse, purify, and promote in the individual a sense of personal worth. The ultimate ends of the Party-state and the moral aims of individuals are thus bound together. Selflessness, diligence, and obedience to the Party-state then become moral imperatives to be translated into work, discipline and social conduct.

Of central importance to official patriotism, therefore, is the promotion of 'country' or *guo* as a package, which takes advantage of the ambiguity of the term, which can be translated into 'country', 'the land', 'nation', 'state' or 'nation-state'. When combined with *jia* (as in *guojia*), *guo* is usually taken in every day parlance as the equivalent of 'the government', which in turn means the CCP. Packed in *guo*, therefore, is not only the country, land, nation and state but also the government and the CCP. Patriotism, or love of country, thus becomes love for all these things.

As a matter of fact, Party propaganda spares no pains to justify why the government and the CCP are to be included in *guo*. As Deng Xiaoping once said, 'Some say that it doesn't mean one is not patriotic if one doesn't love socialism. Is the motherland an abstract notion? What is patriotism without love for the socialist new China led by the Party?'²⁰ Deng's argument is echoed in Jiang Zemin's speech 'Carry On and Develop the Tradition of Patriotism In New

¹⁹ Ibid., p. 57.

²⁰ Deng Xiaoping, cited in editorial, *Qiushi* 9, 1990, p. 9.

Historical Circumstances', which stresses that patriotism is consistent with socialism, as 'only socialism can save China' and socialism represents 'the fundamental interests of the state, the nation and the people'.²¹ The Party deserves love and loyalty because, to quote Jiang, 'our Party has carried on and developed the outstanding tradition of the Chinese nation, has sacrificed the most and made the most contribution in the struggle for national independence and in defence of national autonomy' and because 'the Chinese Communists are the most thorough patriots'.²²

These arguments are certainly not original; the CCP has been using the same line of argument ever since 1949. The only difference is that while socialism was very much promoted on its merits in the Mao era, it now feeds parasitically on patriotism as an unpalatable part of the patriotic package. Socialism, or rather love of socialism, as such, takes a back seat in the core virtues of Jiang's new version of 'spiritual civilisation': love of the motherland, love of the people, love of work, love of science and love of socialism. Accordingly, the patriotic education package not only includes history and traditional culture but also the Party line and state institutions, laws and other civic culture. Out of those elements, the CCP constructs an official 'grand narrative' or an 'official story' of Chinese history and destiny for the purpose of legitimating its rule and buttressing China's political identity.²³ More specifically, it covers

...the long history of China, the development course of the Chinese nation which has pursued greater strength and indominability, and the country's outstanding contributions to the civilisation of humanity; China's broad and profound traditional culture; basic national conditions; the political line of the Communist Party of China and construction achievements; democracy and legality; national defence and security; national unity; and the principles of peaceful reunification, and one country two systems.²⁴

²¹ Jiang Zemin, 'Carry on and develop the tradition of patriotism in new historical circumstances' [*Zai xinde lishi tiaojianxia jicheng he fayang aiguo zhuyi chuantong*], in Xiao Huaisu et al., op. cit., p. 37.

²² Jiang Zemin, 'Speech at the closing session of the sixth plenum of the 14th Congress of the Chinese Communist Party' [*Zai Zhongguo gongchandang shisi jie liuzhong qianhui shang de jianghua*], in Xiao Huaisu et al., op. cit., pp. 66-7.

²³ See Nei Renwick and Qing Cao, 'China's political discourse towards the 21st century: victimhood, identity, and political power', *East Asia: An International Quarterly*, vol. 12, winter 1999, p. 111.

²⁴ *Beijing Review*, 26 Sept.-2 Oct., 1994, p. 4.

Of those components, history and culture assume the most prominent role, to be followed by the 'people's democracy', political institutions and laws, but there is no doubt that it is the Party line that remains the overriding agenda. The prominence of traditional culture increased dramatically after Li Ruihuan's speech, 'Some Questions Relevant to Enhancing the Outstanding Elements of the National Culture'.²⁵ In all the major national newspapers, special columns and programs devoted to national culture were set up, and innumerable encyclopaedias of, and books on, traditional and folk culture were published. Folk art - regional operas, dance, acrobatics, painting, and calligraphy - was promoted by holding local and national competitions and art festivals. Li also instructed that cultural sites and relics, ancient texts and manuscripts were to be preserved, protected or restored, that new buildings, especially libraries, museums, theatres, schools, parks and bridges, should contribute to a physical environment that exhibits distinct national features.

Furthermore, Li wanted more books to be written for the younger generations about national heroes, historical figures, poets and writers. He also wanted to substantially increase the weight of traditional culture in the textbooks for primary and tertiary students alike, particularly in the four core subjects of Chinese, history, geography and politics. Since Jiang Zemin added cartoons to the ambit of his 'spiritual civilisation', the Department of Propaganda has instructed leading publishers of children's books to develop cartoons that 'express Chinese traditions and values', so that the likes of the Japanese *City Hunter* and Walt Disney's *The Lion King* could be kicked out of China.²⁶

This, of course, is not culture for culture's sake. What Li emphasised were two practical functions of the arts and culture: as a tool for stability and as an 'indicator of stability', or a showcase for it. He stressed that stability could not be achieved before stabilising the 'mood of the masses'. Political work could help greatly to stabilise public mood, said Li, and although people's difficulties needed to be dealt with, cultural activities and entertainment could help 'enliven the atmosphere, sort out contradictions and dissolve negative sentiments'.²⁷ This

²⁵ Li Ruihuan, 'Some questions relevant to enhancing the outstanding elements of the national culture' [*Guanyu hongyang minzu youxiu wenhua de ruogan wenti*], *The People's Daily*, 10 Jan., 1990, p. 1.

²⁶ Yu Wong, 'Boy wonder', *Far Eastern Economic Review*, 3 Oct., 1996, p. 25.

²⁷ Li Ruihuan, op. cit., p. 1.

instrumental view of culture would certainly be frowned upon by culturists and cultural nationalists, most of whom concur with Liang Shuming and Chen Yanque that culture is simply a nation's way of life. Nevertheless, the Party's reliance on traditional culture in the patriotic indoctrination has clearly created a favourable climate for cultural nationalism.

The use of history in the patriotic education, similarly, is characterised by a combination of past glory and humiliation, and a balance between the CCP's achievements and the country's historical constraints, or backward national conditions. To stress the Party's achievements alongside the 'national conditions', or vice versa, is to say in effect that the Party is the legitimate leader of the nation on account of those achievements, but historical conditions, not the Party, are to blame if it cannot achieve what is expected. People should therefore be more realistic in their expectations. The Party is hence positioned to win either way.

The promotion of the 'people's democracy', political institutions and laws, on the other hand, is apparently intended to encourage the growth of a civic culture which could help turn Chinese into law-abiding citizens. In practice, however, the advertising of the Party's achievements is often confronted with memories of all the disasters that the Party has created, and the socialist education is quickly becoming irrelevant now that 'socialism with Chinese characteristics' looks increasingly like capitalism. So too is the promotion of a civic culture, given the rampant official corruption and widespread cynicism about the Party-state's institutions and laws.

How effective, then, is the CCP's patriotic education? According to Stanley Rosen's survey data, it has not been effective.²⁸ It must be added, however, that it is least effective in generating love for the Party or socialism and that it is particularly ineffective where a distinction is maintained between love of country and love of the Party.²⁹ This is clearly the case with the type of nationalism which takes the Party-state to task over its decision to relinquish the right for reparations

²⁸ Stanley Rosen, 'The effect of post-4 June re-education campaigns on Chinese students', *The China Quarterly*, no. 132 (Jun. 1993), pp. 311-34. I would like to thank Jonathan Unger for calling my attention to Rosen's work.

²⁹ According to a series of recent surveys conducted on-line by *The Public Opinions Forum* [*Minyi pinglun*], 52.33% of the respondents said that the Communists had done more damage to China than the Japanese, 53.66% thought the Communist regime in China was illegitimate, 32.32% believed that communist parties were bad for any society, while only 2.84% agreed that the 'four cardinal principles' should be the cornerstone of the Chinese spirit. For the details of the surveys, visit <http://minyi.hypermart.net>.

without a national mandate to do so, its perceived compromises with Japan over the *Diaoyu* islands (Senkaku), its recognition of the Republic of Mongolia, and its alleged 'territorial concessions' to India, Vietnam, Burma, Nepal, North Korea and other countries. On the other hand, where such a distinction is blurred, the patriotic education has actually achieved some success.

The most obvious example is the turn of the tide in the debate on tradition and modernity and the current cultural assertion in contrast to the cultural iconoclasm of the 1980s. Another example is the upsurge of anti-US and anti-Japanese sentiments, the demand for Chinese sovereignty over the Spratly Islands, and the general support for unification with Taiwan.³⁰ One is not likely to find much difference therein from official patriotism, however one might want to describe these sentiments - as patriotism, popular nationalism, or anti-foreignism. Furthermore, the patriotic indoctrination seems particularly effective where it is able to project Party-state interest as national interest, establish supposed national 'truths', such as national stability and national unity, as seemingly self-evident, and turn these national 'truths' into rallying points for national solidarity around the Party.

3. Party Interest and National Interest

'Stability' took on such importance after the Tiananmen crackdown that it had come to 'represent the fundamental interest of the Party, the state and the nation'. For that reason, 'stability overrides all.' It was immediately added, of course, that stability can only be guaranteed if the authority of the Party is secured; therefore, to safeguard the authority of the Party also 'represents the fundamental interest of the whole nation'.³¹ The new catch phrase with regard to the CCP's indispensability to China in its propaganda is 'the annihilation of the Party (*wang*

³⁰ According to a large-scale survey sponsored and conducted in 1994 by the Chinese Youth Foundation, *China Youth* and other organisations, 87.1% of the respondents thought the US was the most unfriendly country, and 57.2% said they disliked the US the most; 96.8% said they felt angry about Japanese atrocities in China during World War II; and 93.7% said they supported whole-heartedly Chinese sovereignty over the Spratly Islands. See *The China Youth Daily*, 14 Jul., 1995, p. 2 and p. 8. A poll in *The Public Opinion Forum* found that 79.89% of the respondents were ready to support military attack on Taiwan by the Chinese government if Taiwan declared independence.

³¹ Wang Jianwei, 'To safeguard the authority of the Party is in the best interest of the whole Party and the whole nation' [*Weihu zhongyang quanwei shi quandang qaunguo renmin de zuogao liyi suozai*], *Qiushi* 8, 1995, p. 26.

dang)' means 'the annihilation of the nation (*wang guo*)'. For without the CCP, according to the propaganda, China would disintegrate. The message to be put across is quite simple, but it is embedded in the quite complex discourse of the 'official story' of Chinese history and destiny.

A major characteristic of the 'official story' is the portrayal of China as a victim and the association of internal enemies and external threat. The narrative of a century of victimisation - from the Opium Wars, the Japanese invasion, criticisms of China's human rights record and US policies on Tibet and Taiwan to the 'peaceful evolution' - forms a collective cultural memory that contributes directly to a contemporary sense of victimhood.

It may well be that what underlies the portrayal of China-as-victim, as Barmé noted, is the 'sentiment that the world (that is, the West) owes China something', and there is no denying that past humiliations are sometimes 'used as an excuse to demand better treatment from the West'.³² In addition, it must be stressed, the image of China-as-victim serves domestic political purposes as well. For one thing, it is against the historic experience of victimisation that the CCP claims legitimacy as the historic agency that ensured, in Mao's words, 'the Chinese people has stood up'. For another, the inculcation of a sense of victimhood is designed to enhance an awareness that past humiliations can be repeated if China remains technologically backward and becomes politically divided.

What is more, the inculcation of the sense of victimhood is coupled with efforts to create a sense of insecurity and danger. This is a long-running art of rule grounded in traditional Chinese wisdom; according the adage immortalised by Mencius, 'a sense of insecurity brings out the instinct to survive, and contentment and complacency lead to demise'. Even China's national anthem hinges on this idea.³³ A sense of insecurity and danger not only imposes duties and demands common effort but also enables the Party to set the national agenda in a way which suits itself. For, as Ying-shih Yu observed, 'in the face of a collective crisis,

³² Geremie Barmé, op. cit., p. 187.

³³ *Beijing Review*, Aug. 21-27, 1995, p. 4. The original words date back to World War II. They were questioned during the Cultural Revolution and dropped during Hua Guofeng's brief reign, but they were restored at the 5th Session of the 5th NPC on the grounds that 'the appropriateness of its call to patriotism was borne out in the people's persistent loyalty to them'. Although its words are not current, 'it enables the Chinese people to remain prepared for danger even in times of peace, ensure they will not forget the need to defend the nation's sovereignty, territorial integrity and national dignity.' See Zhi Ye, 'Exercising power on behalf of the people', *Beijing Review*, 52, Dec. 27, 1982, p. 31.

the main objective of our modernisation is invariably national prosperity and military strength (*fuguo qiangbin*),³⁴ but when the danger is removed, or perceived to be so, political reform, human rights and so forth start to force their way onto the national agenda.

The theme of victimhood and national crisis is exploited to the full in the theory of 'peaceful evolution', which was the centrepiece of the CCP's political discourse between late 1989 and 1994. In his 1989 National Day Address, Jiang Zemin thus warned the Party and nation:

It should be stressed here that the international reactionary forces have never abandoned their hostility toward the socialist system or their attempts to subvert it. Beginning in the late 1950s, after the failure of military intervention, they shifted the focus of their policy to 'peaceful evolution'...They support and buy over so-called dissidents through whom they foster blind worship of the Western world and propagate the political and economic patterns, sense of values, decadent ideas, and life-style of the Western capitalist world. When they feel there is an opportunity to be seized, they fabricate rumours, provoke incidents, plot turmoil, and engage in subversive activities against socialist countries....The struggle between infiltration and counter-infiltration, subversion and counter-subversion, 'peaceful evolution' and counter-'peaceful evolution' will last a long time. In this connection, people of all nationalities, and all party members, especially leaders, must maintain a high degree of vigilance.³⁵

The reiteration of China's victimhood in Jiang's address was apparently meant to stress once again the twin historical tasks of preventing China from being victimised by foreign powers and internal enemies and of building a strong and prosperous country. These objectives have inspired numerous reforms, revolutions and modernisation movements since the Opium Wars and continue to have a very strong national appeal. By promising to fulfil these national tasks, the CCP is able to mobilise some consensual legitimacy and, at the same time, gets into a good bargaining position for the nation's loyalty. Its rationale is that those historical national tasks cannot be accomplished without a strong state, and there cannot be a strong state without a strong CCP; if the Party is weakened or overthrown, China will plunge into chaos and fall prey again to foreign predators.

³⁴ Ying-shih Yu, *On Modern Confucianism* [*Xiandai ruxue lun*], Shanghai: Shanghai Renmin chubanshe, 1998, p. 240.

³⁵ Jiang Zemin, 'Speech at the 40th anniversary of the PRC', in Xiao Huaisu et al., op. cit., pp. 35-6.

This argument sounded far less convincing before the 'collapse' of the Soviet Union and the whole Eastern bloc. In the Chinese mass media, the developments in Eastern Europe are made out to have vindicated the 'peaceful evolution' theory. The Tianamen events in 1989 for the first time brought the CCP, as it were, face to face with such an 'evolution', and the danger of Chinese socialism collapsing looked more real than ever in the midst of the massive protests and demonstrations between April and June in 1989 and against the background of socialist systems collapsing like dominoes in Eastern Europe. Western support for the students in Beijing, moral and material, tied in convincingly with the myth of an international bourgeoisie collaborating to subvert socialism. Speeches and comments on socialism or new developments in Eastern Europe by American, EU and Japanese politicians and diplomats are cited as proof of a concerted and co-ordinated international offensive against socialist countries. The world-wide condemnation of the military crackdown on the students and the subsequent sanctions against China by the US, Britain, Japan, Denmark, Sweden, Germany, Belgium, and Canada were seen and projected as further evidence of a co-ordinated conspiracy.

Most China observers have dismissed 'peaceful evolution' as little more than a propaganda ploy; some, however, believe there is actually substance to it. David Shambaugh, for example, noted that 'the PRC government is...not incorrect to charge the United States with pursuing a policy of "peaceful evolution", as this has been the underlying premise - if not the active policy guide - for America's China policy since 1979.'³⁶ At any rate, the CCP certainly took 'peaceful evolution' as 'a matter of life and death for the CCP', and a siege mentality became apparent among Chinese leaders as a result of the concatenation of these events.

Soon after June 4th, Deng charged that 'The entire imperialist Western world plans to make all socialist countries discard the socialist road and then bring them under the control of international monopoly capital and onto the capitalist road.'³⁷ He further went on to say that the end of cold war between the US and the Soviet

³⁶ David Shambaugh, 'Peaceful coexistence vs. peaceful evolution', *Issues & Studies*, vol. 28, no. 11, Nov. 1992, p. 78.

³⁷ Deng Xiaoping, [*Disandai lingdao jiti de dangwu zhiji*], in *Selected Works of Deng Xiaoping* [*Deng Xiaoping wenxuan*], Beijing: Renmin chubanshe, vol. 3, 1993, p. 310.

Union 'may mean the end of one cold war, but it also marks the beginning of another two cold wars, one being directed at the entire South and the Third World countries, the other at socialism'. He was adamant that 'Western countries are now engaged in a Third World War which displays no smoke of gunpowder.'³⁸ The Propaganda Department took the Western threat so seriously that it issued a document to warn that after its success in bringing down communism in the Soviet Union, the US was now attempting to turn China into an eastern Russia in ten to fifteen years.³⁹ In this sense, the CCP's response to June 4th has to be interpreted, first of all, as an attempt to prevent the CCP from suffering the same fate as its counterparts in Eastern Europe and elsewhere.

The defeat of socialism by capitalism might not be a problem for many in China, but that of China by the West is a problem to some while the scenario of national disintegration is dreaded by most. What happened in the Soviet Union seemed to have convinced many in China that national disintegration was bound to take place if China embarked on radical political reforms like the USSR. Party propaganda skilfully capitalises on this sentiment and goes to great lengths to mesh Party interest with national interest. It is calculated to create the impression that the Party, regardless of its imperfections and historical mistakes, is indispensable if stability is to be maintained, and that the nation, whatever grudges it might have against the Party, has no choice but to stick with it if it wants to avoid internal chaos (*neiluan*) and foreign incursions (*waihuan*).

The idea of *luan* (chaos) evokes memories of the Opium Wars, the Japanese invasion and the pillage of the warlords. In the light of the Soviet experience as it is represented in the media, it is now harder not to pay heed to a possible Soviet scenario in China, even for those who are generally sceptical about Party propaganda. CCP propagandists also capitalise on increased anti-American sentiments and argue that the US constantly 'makes trouble' for China not really because of its socialist system but because it is in its national interest to impede China's rapid development. That argument tied in readily with the theories of 'the China threat', 'containing China' and 'the clash of civilisations'.

³⁸ Cited in Wang Zhengping, 'U.S. "human rights diplomacy" is doomed to fail', *The People's Daily*, 4 Mar., 1996, trans. in FBIS-CHI-96-054, 19 Mar., 1996, p. 10.

³⁹ *The Standard*, 4 Jun., 1993, in *China Facts & Figures Annual 1993*, p. 72.

Moreover, many in China, intellectuals in particular, are bitterly disillusioned with the 'Western myth' and the 'myth of democracy' in the wake of the Soviet disintegration.⁴⁰ 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. The West has won the Cold War, only to replace it with a Cold Peace. The West still does not regard a democratic Russia as a friend. Few are convinced that a democratic China would fare any better. These mixed feelings probably account for the generally negative perceptions in China about the Soviet experience.

As is clear in Table 3, only 12.5% of the respondents thought democratic reforms should have been undertaken in the USSR, and about the same number of people had negative views about communist parties. It is not evident from the data whether these respondents had definite positive perceptions about the Soviet experience, but supposing it is the case, we have a positive ratio of under 25%. It is not absolutely clear either if respondents who gave the third response thought the form of democracy that the Soviet Union eventually adopted was 'radical', but it is more likely to be the case than not. If so, we would have a negative ratio of over 70%.

TABLE 3: What Does the Soviet Experience Tell You?

<i>Responses</i>	<i>N: 263</i>	<i>%</i>
Democratic reforms should not have been undertaken.	4	1.5
Democratic reforms should have been undertaken.	33	12.5
It's bad to have no democracy and it's bad to have radical democracy.	99	37.6
The USSR should have followed China's example.	28	10.6
Communist parties are bad for any society.	32	12.2
Neither socialism nor capitalism is the best alternative for humanity.	16	6.1
Ism's are meaningless, the stomach is what matters.	33	12.5
The cunning Americans succeeded in subverting the USSR.	14	5.3
Others	4	1.5

SOURCE: *The Public Opinions Forum [Minyi pinglun]*, <http://minyi.hypermart.net>.

⁴⁰ Chen Xi, 'Nationalism among Chinese intellectuals', *China Strategy Review*, vol. 1, no. 6, 1996, p. 13.

While it is readily admitted that some of the responses here are too vague to allow us to draw clear-cut conclusions, it is hardly possible to draw a positive conclusion. It should also be admitted that the sample is too small to generate an overall picture; the survey can at best give us some idea of people's perceptions about what happened in the USSR. There is ample corroboration, however, in the remarkable consensus in the Chinese mass media that what has happened in the Soviet Union is nothing short of a disaster and that it serves as an example to China of how social transformation should not proceed. One quickly finds out, when talking to ordinary people, that this is not just propaganda but actually a widely accepted view.

That is hardly surprising for a nation that attaches great importance to unity and stability. Perhaps most prefer democracy to authoritarianism, but, if pressed to make a choice between democracy + chaos and authoritarianism + stability, most would probably go for the latter. If the perception is democracy = chaos = American victory over China, and authoritarianism = stability = national prosperity and national strength, then democracy would hold little attraction and authoritarianism would seem the lesser evil.

It is exactly this sort of perception that the Party propaganda aims to create. In doing so, it plays on the 'pathological fear of chaos', the desire for national unity and stability, and suspicions about American intentions to 'contain China'. There is reason to believe that this 'negative campaign' has succeeded to some extent. It has succeeded, for example, in drawing a concession from the nation that the interests of the Party and the nation are at least partially enmeshed and that the Party is indispensable in maintaining national unity, like it or not. This can at best be interpreted as reluctant acceptance of, rather than love of, the Party, but the Party-state is nonetheless able to derive from it some legitimacy that is potentially helpful in counteracting or reducing opposition.

The meshing of Party-state and national interests is manifest not only in the call for stability but also in the general consensus over territorial unity, over US 'human rights diplomacy', over Sino-American friction over trade and so on. That partially explains why the majority of people you talk to in China are more likely to agree with their government on such issues as Taiwan and Tibet. Even among political dissidents, few take exception to the CCP's uncompromising rhetoric on territorial disputes, even though they might condemn it for its human rights

abuses. The human rights issue, too, is turned into a national issue, for American and Western condemnation is interpreted as a pretext under which to 'contain' China. Chinese nationalists, and many people who do not consider themselves as nationalists, can criticise the government for its human rights abuses amongst themselves, but when criticism comes from the US or the West, more often than not they adopt the government's rhetoric or get seriously enraged about the 'foreign interference' and its 'evil intentions'. In this respect, state nationalism enjoys considerable popular support.

4. Who Are the Nation?

'National interest' clearly presupposes a 'nation'. But what is this nation? Is it the 'pan-Chinese nation' (*Zhonghua minzhu*), 'the Chinese people', the Chinese citizens (*guomin*), or 'the people' (*renmin*)? Although the four overlap to some extent, each has a recognisable boundary and they are not always compatible and can hardly be said to always share a common national interest. A cultural and genealogical pan-Chinese nation, as imagined by Liang Qichao, Sun Yat-sen, Chiang Kai-shek and Mao Zedong, includes the people of Hong Kong, Macau, Taiwan, and the overseas Chinese, as well as mainland Chinese. This pan-Chinese nation includes the 55 non-Han ethnies, although the pan-Chinese nation supposes a Han past and Han ancestors - the Yellow Emperor and the Dragon.

Eager as the CCP may be to command the loyalty of the pan-Chinese nation, its ideology determines that its 'nation' is basically the 'people', which, as the 1954 Constitution made clear, refers to the proletariat, the peasantry, the petty-bourgeoisie and the national bourgeoisie. These four classes that make up the 'people' are represented on the national flag in the form of the four small stars around the big star - the CCP. Excluded from representation on the national flag, however, are not only un-revolutionary or counter-revolutionary classes, but also individuals of skin colours other than yellow. For while red stands for revolution, yellow indicates the racial and genealogical dimension of the CCP and the revolutionary classes; it was taken for granted by the designer of the national flag that skin colour was the first criterion for defining the nation.⁴¹ Those who are not

⁴¹ Wang, Zhankui, op. cit. p. 9.

good enough to make it into the 'people' are relegated, ironically, to the all-inclusive category of 'Chinese citizens', including 'all persons holding the nationality of the People's Republic of China'.⁴²

This suggests that the CCP's nation is a two-tiered structure. The core nation consists of the 'people', which is, so to speak, the in-group, or the real 'us'. The expanded nation includes all the Chinese citizens, who only becomes 'us' vis-à-vis the Other - the West, for example - or when united by sympathy or a common goal. The same can be said about the pan-Chinese nation. As a distinction is still made between the 'people' on the one hand and 'citizens' on the other, power and rights are not to be equally distributed. The 'people' are the 'masters of the country', at least in theory, whereas some 'cannot enjoy the rights of the people', although 'they have to observe the obligations of citizens'.⁴³

As social transformation has rendered the political categories irrelevant, the national flag and state insignia are now truly out of date. Rather than serving as sacred symbols of nationhood, they are likely to alienate those who are aware of their symbolism and who are eager to erase bad memories of the decades-long class struggle. So far as national identity is concerned, the constitutional anachronism is a political reality. Little wonder, then, that the 1982 Constitution, all the subsequent amendments, as well the National Flag Act of 1990 and the State Insignia Act of 1991, are invariably evasive as to what the five stars stand for, vaguely referring to them as 'symbols of the People's Republic of China'. A recent official youth study guide interprets the five stars as the CCP and 'the people of all nationalities around the country'.⁴⁴ This shows clearly that the Party is trying to 'forget' their class and racial overtones and re-interpret them in national terms.

The class concept was virtually dead by 1989. In the Hu and Zhao era, there was, as Song Ping pointed out in his speech at the Defence Academy in 1990, a

⁴² See Article 33, the 1982 Constitution of the PRC.

⁴³ Zhou Enlai, 'Report to the CPPCC', *China Digest*, 5 Oct., 1949, p.11. The directive of the preparatory committee defining qualifications for representation in the CPPCC automatically excluded all those not in basic agreement with the CCP's 'minimum programme'. It specified that the CPPCC was to be limited to representatives of those parties and organisations throughout China 'who support the New Democracy, oppose imperialism, feudalism and bureaucratic capitalism and agree to mobilise the entire people's democratic forces to overthrow the KMT reactionary regime and establish the People's Republic of China.' *China Digest* 5, Oct., 1949, p. 11. See also articles 52-56 of the 1982 constitution.

⁴⁴ Wang, Zhankui, op. cit., p. 12.

trend of nationalising the CCP into a 'all-people party' (*quanmin dang*) or a 'national party' (*minzu dang*).⁴⁵ In the Jiang Zemin era, the concept of class struggle was first revived as a result of enhanced leftist influence between 1989 and 1994 and has since then gradually been played down again as Jiang's grip on power becomes firmer. In one of his most important speeches since 1989, Jiang affirmed the CCP traditional identity in terms of the Marxian class concept, as 'the class organisation of the Chinese working class' (*gongren jieji*) and 'the vanguard of the working class guided by Marxism, Leninism and Mao Zedong Thought'. He reiterated that 'the universal transformation of all class societies into classless ones can only be led by the industrial proletariat', and that 'the working class needs the Party and the Party cannot do without the working class'.⁴⁶

The post-Tiananmen leadership, paradoxically, did not admit to any advantage in broadening the CCP's constituency, but saw Hu and Zhao's nationalising strategy as a thinly veiled attempt to weaken the Party by removing it from its class base. On the other hand, however, the CCP has always portrayed itself or the Party-state as the embodiment of the nation's will, representing the best interests of the whole nation, except the 'remnant elements of the exploiting classes'. But it is much harder now than it was before 1978 to reconcile its identity as a party of and for the industrial proletariat with its self-portrayed image as the embodiment of national will.

Unlike in the Mao era, when it had some credibility on account of the congruence between the Party's theory and practice, it is now challenged by the divergence between that theoretical formation and the changed social realities in China. The polarisation of rich and poor, the stratification of society, uneven regional development and ethnic tensions are only some of the fissiparous tendencies at work today. At the same time, changes in property ownership and relations of production as a result of the economic reforms have resulted in a distinct class society. Interests, if anything, are becoming increasingly differentiated and irreconcilable. The size of both the exploiting and the exploited classes, defined by Marxian criteria, is increasing steadily as foreign companies, joint ventures and a private sector continue to flourish. The partial privatisation of

⁴⁵ See Song Ping's speech at the National Defence University in Oct. 1990, quoted in Zhang Weiping, op. cit., p. 1673.

⁴⁶ Jiang Zemin, quoted in Zhang Weiping, op. cit., p. 1673.

state enterprises, furthermore, has left millions of 'masters of the country' jobless thus far, and that number is bound to grow as more state enterprises go to the wall.

Thus, class struggle in Marxian terms looks like a solid reality instead of a theoretical construction. In a hard-hitting article in the People's Daily on 23 October, 1992, leftist ideologue Deng Liqun declared that class struggle was more acute than ever since 1949.⁴⁷ The irony is that by shifting towards a market economy, the CCP, in fact, not only created a fledgling domestic bourgeoisie and proletariat that well satisfy the Marxian definitions of these categories, but also brought the international capitalists into its own backyard. It has also endorsed a relationship of 'exploitation' - the extraction of surplus value. It is not easy for anybody to accept the image of the CCP as an organisation of and for the proletariat, given that it is the Party which has set in motion, and presided over, the process that is dismantling state ownership and creating exploitation, especially now that even the CCP itself is turning to some extent into a capitalist class, albeit 'red'. This glaring contradiction is poised to destroy the CCP's own *raison d'être* and alienates its own constituency, the industrial proletariat.

If state ownership and the planned economy levelled 'the people' in Maoist China, the market is doing the opposite, polarising, dividing and stratifying the society, thereby considerably reducing the membership of the 'people', or rather, the number of people who qualify for membership by Marxian standards. This is coupled with a general reluctance, as a result of the anti-revolution backlash in post-Mao China, to recognise the proletariat and peasants as the most progressive forces of history and to identify with them. The concept of a class-based 'people' is consequently of less credibility and relevance to anybody except Party traditionalists, who can make use of it in their attempt to frustrate or slow down the reforms, or to challenge the current leadership. What is more, the class concept is divisive and detrimental to the invention of a national identity or a civic identity, which is probably more likely to bring about social cohesion and national unity in China.

It is in this context that we witnessed Jiang Zemin's significant revision of the role and nature of the Party in April-May 2000 as the 'three representatives' (*sange daimiao*): namely, the CCP represents 'advanced productive forces, an

⁴⁷ *The People's Daily*, 23 Oct., 1991. *Jingbao* (Monthly) 178 (5 May 1992): pp. 46-7, trans. in FBIS Chi., 18 May, 1992, p. 22.

advanced culture and the fundamental interests of the Chinese people'.⁴⁸ What Jiang meant by 'advanced culture' is not clear, except that it is 'advanced', 'scientific', 'socialist', 'national', 'open', 'popular', and 'creative'. It is quite clear, however, that the other two 'representatives' are both related to class in varying degrees. If we compare these new roles for the CCP with Jiang's affirmation of the Party as 'the class organisation of the Chinese working class' (*gongren jieji*) and 'the vanguard of the working class', the contrast becomes so apparent it is easy to see how far Jiang has back-pedalled.

In Jiang's comments on the 'three representatives', what is not foregrounded is overshadowed by what is. In making the advancement of productivity an overriding objective for the Party, Jiang is merely repeating what Deng did before him, that is, freeing the Party from the shackles of socialist modes of production, particularly socialist relations of production. It is upon the basis of relations of production - as determined by relationships to the means to production - that individuals are divided into social classes, whereas productive forces, or the ability to use tools and act on nature according to individual needs, only define people's relationship with nature, not social relations. In this sense, the stress on productive forces at the expense of relations of production may well be understood as a move away from 'class'. This is also the case with the emphasis on the 'fundamental interests of the Chinese people', for, as we have discussed, 'the Chinese people' are certainly larger than the 'people' - principally the industrial proletariat and the peasantry.

Clearly, then, Jiang's new initiative really differs little from Hu Yaobang and Zhao Ziyang's attempt to broaden the constituency of the CCP and transform it into some sort of 'national party'. Like Hu and Zhao, the current leadership seems to have realised that sooner or later the Party will have to reposition itself in relation to the nation and relaunch itself as a representative of the whole nation. That is not to say, however, that the CCP will stop paying lip service to its own constituency in the near future; nor does it mean that it will erase 'class' from the PRC constitution, the Party's constitution, the national flag and national insignia. For that reason alone, it is too early to write off the class concept as yet. Since the

⁴⁸ For the details of Jiang Zemin's comments on the 'three representatives', see, for example, the report in *The People's Daily*, 16 May 2000, p. 1.

imagining of nations is very much about their symbolisation and institutionalisation, one errs by underrating these national symbols.

However, the point about the class concept should not be taken too far. For, after all, the CCP is pragmatic enough not to stick to it in practice at the expense of anything else from which it can benefit. In fact, it has often acted from expediency, diluting it, playing it down or even temporarily suspending it, in order to win as much support as possible and to achieve tactical as well as strategic, short-term as well as long-term, goals. The strategy it has perfected in its 80-year history is the united-front, and its basis in the post-Tiananmen era is nationalism.

5. Pan-Chinese Nationalism: A New Patriotic United-Front

Such is the value of the united-front strategy that it is enshrined in the current constitution as of central importance to the Party, and the operation of the CCP's Department of United-Front goes on unabated today. In the original words of the Constitution:

In building socialism it is imperative to rely on the workers, peasants and intellectuals and unite all the forces that can be united. In the long years of revolution and construction, there has been formed under the leadership of the Chinese Communist Party of China a broad patriotic united front that is composed of democratic parties and people's organisations and embraces all socialist working people, all patriots who support socialism and all patriots who stand for reunification of the motherland. This united front will continue to be consolidated and developed.⁴⁹

The 1954 Constitution was even more frank about the function of this united front. It is 'mobilising and rallying the whole people in the common struggle to fulfil the fundamental task of the State during the transition and to oppose the enemies within and without.'⁵⁰ This makes it fairly clear that two things determine the composition of a united front: the nature of the Party's enemy, and the Party's fundamental task at a certain time. It is argued on this basis that members of the

⁴⁹ See Preamble to the 1982 Constitution.

⁵⁰ See Preamble to the 1954 Constitution.

united front generally fall into the category of the 'Chinese people'.⁵¹ Another way of putting this is that the 'Chinese people' is actually defined with reference to the CCP's enemy and the CCP's fundamental task. Support for the Party is demanded from the members of this front, and they are put in a position where they can prove their love of country by their support for the CCP. On the other hand, however, the CCP has often been ready to compromise when its enemy is outside of the Party or when its fundamental task requires more support than it can muster from Party members and supporters: the more difficult and urgent the task, the lower the political requirement. To restate the point, the less adequate the Party's ideology is for the main task at hand, the less does the Party stick to it, and the more does it rely on supplementary ideologies like nationalism.

That tells us why the Party needs the united front, but 'the whole people' the CCP wants to mobilise might have little reason or incentive to concern themselves with the enemy and task of the Party-state. In order to entice or morally compel them to join in the front, what is of primary importance is an identification between the Party's enemy and task and those of the nation, or the projection of Party-state interests as national interest. Similarly, the Party-state encourages identification with itself by fostering a political subject - a 'we' - on the basis of kith and kin, as 'children and grandchildren of the Yellow Emperor' and 'descendants of the Dragon'. This is a subject that 'acts as a reservoir of political power' ready to be tapped over long periods of time in achieving a wide range of objectives.⁵² Since it is not an inexhaustible resource, it must be strengthened and rejuvenated. That can only be done by promoting what binds this identity - descent, shared memories, traditional culture, and homeland - not the ideology of the Party, which proves counter-productive more often than not. Hence the instrumental promotion of traditional culture to foster and bolster that identity.

The fundamental task of the Party-state since 1978 is not a class struggle that would lead the people into a communist utopia, but modernisation that primarily aims at national strength and national revival. An urgent task is to counter the 'decadent ideas' and influence of the West which are said to have resulted in

⁵¹ Lyman P. Van Slyke, *Enemies and Friends - The United Front in Chinese Communist History*, Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 1967, p. 209 and p. 251.

⁵² Margaret Canovan, *Nationhood and Political Theory*, Cheltenham, UK: Edward Elgar, 1996, p. 72.

cultural/national nihilism and to have generated a large amount of political dissent, which could threaten the Party's rule and cause political instability. A second pressing task is reunification with Hong Kong, Macau and Taiwan. A third task is to avoid national disintegration by quenching separatism in Tibet, Xinjiang, Inner Mongolia and elsewhere, and curbing centrifugal tendencies in the provinces. The current enemy without refers to 'hostile forces' that challenge China's sovereignty or intend to contain China politically or economically. To fulfil all those tasks and defeat this enemy certainly requires more than just the 'people', and nationalism is definitely more useful than a discredited Marxism.

A question that has been asked by many in recent years is whether nationalism can or will replace Marxism as the CCP's official ideology. The simple answer is that the CCP is not yet ready to give Marxism up. This is not only because nationalism is no rose without a thorn but because it also has an enemy within to deal with. This enemy, for the time being, refers to those in the Party who are actively involved in 'bourgeois liberalisation'. Nationalism might be able to aid certain factions on particular issues, like policies on Sino-US relations, Taiwan and Tibet, but it is hard to imagine how it alone can guide a party conceived and organised on Leninist principles and rally the Party around the central leadership. In a factional power struggle, all sides probably stand to gain from an image of genuine patriots. Just as conservatives can draw on nationalism in their attack on liberal reformers, so can dissidents within the Party mount challenges to Marxism and Party rule on nationalist grounds.

What seems to be happening is that the Party is adopting two-track ideologies: Marxism for the Party and state nationalism for the society. This is best exemplified by the CCP's graded approach in its political requirements within the united front. Party members are called upon to hold firmly to the Party's established ideals, moral values, and organisational discipline. This is the focus of 'emphasising politics' (*jiang zhengzhi*). It aims, in Jiang's own words, to ensure that 'Party and state leadership at all levels stays in the hands of people who are loyal to Marxism'.⁵³ It urges Party members and cadres to improve their understanding of Marxism and be aware of political developments instead of being engrossed in daily routines, so that they will follow the Party line more

⁵³ Jiang Zemin, quoted in Zhang Weiping, op. cit., p. 1679.

closely, rather than drifting away from it under the influence of marketisation and economic decentralisation.

Instead of attempting to indoctrinate the whole people in socialism and Marxism, however, the Party scales the requirements down for non-party members and overseas Chinese. As Jiang Zemin put it, 'We should persistently educate the whole people, especially the young, in patriotism, collectivism, socialism...and educate the members of the Party, Communist Youth League and advanced elements in communism'.⁵⁴ So far as citizens are concerned, unquestioned conformity is all the better, but what is emphasised is civic duties:

to abide by the Constitution and law, uphold discipline at work, keep public order and respect social ethics, to protect public property, to pay taxes, to defend the homeland and perform military service, to safeguard the unity of the country and the unity of all the nationalities, to keep state secrets, to safeguard the security, honour and interests of the motherland, and not to commit acts detrimental to the security, honour and interests of the motherland.⁵⁵

Even less is expected of overseas Chinese; they are not even expected to support socialism.⁵⁶ For them, patriotism is the essential requirement for membership in the CCP's Chinese nation, and love of the motherland means first of all support for national reunification. Support for the CCP is desirable but one can still be regarded as 'patriotic' so long as one is not fundamentally against the CCP. As Mu Fu-sheng put it, 'Chinese Communists seem to count a genuine patriot half a comrade.'⁵⁷

The graded approach suggests at least two things: either the CCP recognises the fact that Marxism is not totally sufficient for all purposes, or it is resigned to the fact that it is no longer feasible to reinforce it. At any rate, nationalism can provide the CCP with a far broader basis of national authority than Marxism under the changed circumstances in the post-Tiananmen era. As Geremie Barmé argued with much more certainty:

Just as commercialisation is creating a new avaricious social contract of all sorts, so nationalism is functioning as a form of consensus

⁵⁴ Jiang Zemin's speech on the 40th anniversary of the PRC', op. cit., p. 36.

⁵⁵ See Articles 52 - 6 of the 1982 Constitution.

⁵⁶ Quoted in editorial in *Qiushi* 9, 1990, p. 9.

⁵⁷ Mu Fu-sheng, *The Wilting of the Hundred Flowers: The Chinese Intelligentsia under Mao*, New York: Praeger, 1962, p. 234.

beyond the bounds of official culture. But it is a consensus that for the time being at least benefits the Party. Both economic realities and national priorities call for a strong central state and thus tend to give an ideologically weakened Communist Party a renewed role in the broader contest for the nation.⁵⁸

However, a caveat must be entered against Barmé's evaluation: nationalism does not just benefit the Party but it challenges it as well. The most vigorous challenge comes from the intelligentsia who refuse to let the CCP dictate the terms for patriotism, contesting the CCP's definition of patriotism by contending that love for the nation does not have to include love for the Party. Equally contested is the Party's monopoly on the right to name the nation and its self-portrayed image as the embodiment of the nation's will. To this extent, what Mu wrote decades ago about Chinese intellectuals' response to the Party's demand still rings quite true today:

In China today many intellectuals serve patriotism under a penalty. The Communists want patriots for the sake of Communism, but these are patriots in spite of Communism.

The only modification to be made is that the CCP wants patriots not so much for communism as for itself.

6. Concluding Discussion: the Plight of State Nationalism

It has been argued so far that state nationalism has been called into action in post-Tiananmen China to bolster the CCP's position as the ruling party and to foster social cohesion after its erosion in the 1980s. As we have discussed, while state nationalism has been not totally ineffective in meshing Party interests with national interests, it has not succeeded in generating love for the Party or its socialist ideology. It also remains to be seen to what extent state nationalism has strengthened nation-building. What is clear is that there are a number of theoretical and practical problems which are liable to hamper the CCP's national identity project.

The nation that the CCP is endeavouring to build appears to correspond to a 'state-nation', like the US or Switzerland, in so far as it is more or less

⁵⁸ Geremie Barmé, *op. cit.*, 1996, p. 185.

multicultural and multinational.⁵⁹ According to Linz and Stepan, a 'state-nation' is not only desirable but also achievable, contingent upon 'the human capacity for multiple and complementary identities' and 'a common "roof" of state-protected rights for inclusive and equal citizenship'.⁶⁰ Law-abiding citizens might be easier to govern than individuals with little idea of citizenship. It is also apparent that the CCP does not fail to see the advantage of the idea of citizenship in forging a bond between the 50 odd ethnic groups in China, when its territorial unity is threatened by separatist demands based on cultural and religious grounds. In addition, the socialist identity, having been deprived of much of its attraction and tenability with the decay of Marxism, largely alienates individuals and social groups and compels them to re-define themselves on their own terms. Given these difficulties, the loss of prominence for socialist consciousness and the significant role given to national culture and civic culture in the patriotic education is quite understandable.

The new emphasis on civic culture, however, certainly does not imply in any way that the CCP is ready to go so far as to embrace 'civic nationalism', which boils down to 'the view that states should be composed of equal citizens whose ties to one another are purely "civic" in the sense that each acknowledges the authority of a common set of laws and political institutions'.⁶¹ Law-abiding citizens who fulfil their duties are certainly desirable, but not if they demand citizens' rights. Furthermore, civic identity in China is generally believed to be weak, as the idea of citizenship has to break through culturalism and the rule by men (*renzhi*) which have dominated the greater part of Chinese history and linger on today. Despite its advocacy by liberal-minded intellectuals and politicians since Liang Qichao, it is yet to take root in the Chinese society. Besides, the political and legal institutions, owing to their lack of respectability and credibility, hold out little attraction as objects of identification and can hardly serve as cohesive agents.

⁵⁹ Juan J. Linz and Alfred Stepan, *Problems of Democratic Transition and Consolidation*, Baltimore: The John Hopkins University Press, 1996, p. 34. Unfortunately, Linz and Stepan do not elaborate on the 'state-nation' other than to say that it is a multicultural or even multinational one that nonetheless still manages to 'engender strong identification and loyalty from their citizens, an identification and loyalty that proponents of homogeneous nation-states perceive that only nation-states can engender'.

⁶⁰ Ibid.

⁶¹ David Miller, *On Nationality*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995, p. 139.

'Constitutional patriotism', if possible at all in China, is without doubt contingent upon the integrity and authority of its laws and political institutions.

Even if China's legal and political institutions were perfect and authoritarianism gave way to democracy, the question still remains whether 'constitutional patriotism' alone is thick enough to sustain a Chinese national identity. The same can be said about most other nations in the world. As Anthony Smith noted, nation-builders around the world invariably endeavour to forge out of available cultural components 'a coherent mythology and symbolism of a community of history and culture', as 'without some ethnic lineage the nation-to-be could fall apart'.⁶² The CCP clearly concurs with Anthony Smith on the role of culture and history in nation-building. It certainly does what Smith believes most nation-builders do - fosters a sense of belonging together by creating and drawing on the myth of a nation stretching back into the past as an organic body of polyethnic groups and multi-cultures (*yiti duoyuan*). What is more, the Party-state still holds dear what it sees as socialist consciousness or ethics, and is keen to salvage whatever might be useful in the new national project.

What the Party-state attempts to forge is a mixture of national consciousness, socialist consciousness and civic awareness. In other words, the CCP's version of Chinese identity combines a civic identity based on citizenship, a national identity based on common history and culture, and a socialist identity based on the class concept. The problem is that they simply cannot be combined into one, or even coexist peacefully, for the simple reason that they contradict each other in many ways, even though they do overlap here and there.

The class concept, for instance, allows for no civic nation; indeed, the nation has no place therein. The Leninist state is but a 'nationless state', an instrument of oppression of one class over another. It does not allow for a cultural nation, either, because much of traditional Chinese culture, including its backbone of Confucianism, is either feudalistic or backward or both and therefore not acceptable until it is revolutionalised or modernised, and Chinese history is interpreted as 'the people's' history rather than national history. To put it another way, revolutionary historiography is 'premised on a break between the present and

⁶² A. Smith, *National Identity*, op. cit., p. 42.

the past', and it focuses on social and economic relations, not culture, thereby invalidating cultural notions of the nation.⁶³

Neither can a civic identity and national identity accommodate the class concept. The successful construction of a civic identity almost certainly calls for a significant playing down of the Leninist state, if not its abandonment. That entails a re-writing of the constitution and a revamping of the national flag and state insignia. It also requires a fair amount of 'thinning' of national identity based upon common history and culture, for it is often conflated with cultural Chineseness, which is, in effect, more Han than Chinese, and overlooks the existence of the ethnic minorities, therefore giving ethnic and other cultural identities sufficient reason to compete with it.

The challenge for the Party-state is how to balance or reconcile citizenship, cultural Chineseness and socialist consciousness. Despite its theoretical posturing, the CCP does play down the socialist identity in its nation-building practice so as to reduce tension between the socialist identity on the one hand, and citizenship and cultural identities on the other. Thus, socialist consciousness does not pose a real obstacle to national identity so far as the Party-state is concerned, although it remains a central point of contestation for other identities, as we shall see in Chapters 3-6; compromise is achieved at the expense of the socialist identity. Cultural Chineseness and citizenship are harder to reconcile because the former, as has been mentioned, bears the hallmarks of the dominant ethnic group - the Han. The approach that the CCP is taking appears to be an adaptive one, much as David Miller has proposed in *On Nationality*. Reconciliation is to be achieved not by 'thinning national identities to the point where they cease to have any content that could compete with ethnic or other such cultural identities',⁶⁴ as radical multiculturalists propose, but 'by adapting inherited culture to make room for minority communities'.⁶⁵ What this approach entails is that

...existing national identities must be stripped of elements that are repugnant to the self-understanding of one or more component groups, while members of these groups must themselves be willing to embrace

⁶³ Arif Dirlik, 'Reversals, ironies, hegemonies - notes on the contemporary historiography of modern China', *Modern China*, vol. 22, no. 3 (Jul. 1996), p. 257.

⁶⁴ David Miller, op. cit., p. 141.

⁶⁵ Ibid., p. 189.

an inclusive nationality, and in the process to shed elements of *their* values which are at odds with its principles.⁶⁶

Moreover, to achieve the latter goal, states may legitimately take steps to ensure that the members of different ethnic groups are inducted into national traditions and ways of thinking. These arguments for a 'state-nation' type of identity are clearly more statist than nationalist. The Party-state's national project can be easily justified in this light. However, it is one thing to adapt inherited culture, in this case socialist Chinese culture, to make room for ethnic minorities and other cultural identities; it is quite another to see whether the latter are ready to take part in the game and take up that room. As it is, the Party-state faces challenges not only from ethnic minorities, as a large body of literature demonstrates, but also from cultural nationalists who are imagining their nation irrespective of the CCP's dictates.

⁶⁶ Ibid., p. 142.

4 Rediscovering the National Spirit: The Search for Roots and the Making of Heroes in Chinese Literature

The previous chapter has discussed the Party-state's intensified patriotic campaigns in post-Tiananmen China and the distinct characteristics of state nationalism. In the next four chapters, I will concentrate on the cultural nationalists' challenge to the Party-state's configurations of the nation and the discourse of cultural nationalism as a counter-discourse. Focusing on the literary writers, one of the most articulate and creative groups of Chinese cultural nationalists, this chapter examines their endeavour to rediscover the national spirit in the folk and in the past and by re-making national heroes. To that end, it will concentrate on two genres: 'nativist' or 'primitivist' literature (*xungen wenxue*) and novels with anti-American and anti-Japanese themes.

The search for roots and the re-making of national heroes are but two dimensions of the same cultural nationalist discourse and project. On the one hand, nationalist novelists, like most cultural nationalists elsewhere, call for a return to the roots of the nation, as they are convinced that the last repository of national traditions is in the unpolluted ethnic remains of the folk and in the traditional high culture. The 'enemies' that this discourse constructs are Westernisation and the communist revolution. At the same time, they name rituals, celebrate national uniqueness and reject foreign practices. It is their aim to rediscover the life-principle of the nation and project it to the members of the nation so as to identify the nation to itself.¹

The search for roots has been accompanied by the deconstruction of the 'revolutionary hero' and the making of a new species of patriotic heroes, who are first of all Chinese rather than communists or proletarians. In other words, class consciousness and devotion to the CCP have been largely supplanted by national consciousness and loyalty to the nation as essential criteria for heroism.

Underlying this paradigmatic shift in the making of national heroes is a clear political statement that subverts the CCP's 'revolutionary hero', contradicts its

¹ John Hutchinson, *The Dynamics of Cultural Nationalism*, London: Allen & Unwin, 1987, p. 14 and p. 34.

definition of China the nation and deflates the myth of the CCP as the paramount leader of the nation. Moreover, national heroes exemplify or personify the true essence or spirit of a nation and 'embody the nation's quest for meaning and integration in their martial vigour, seer-like wisdom...and its collective vitality down the ages'.² Thus, to re-make national heroes is to reconstruct national identity, and the new species of national heroes is born of the conception of an alternative national self.

One possible criticism of the examination of national identity as reconstructed in creative writings might be that they are too fictional for any concrete or definite conclusions to be drawn from them. There is some truth in this criticism, but then national identity is not something concrete or definite like a set of codified laws. In fact, an intrinsic characteristic of national identity is its mythical, fictional, or 'imagined' nature. Or, as Anderson put it best, nations are 'imagined communities' that depend for their existence on an apparatus of *cultural fictions*. It is thus imperative to look into the cultural fictions to be found in a range of cultural sources, including literature.

Chinese literature is particularly pertinent to the examination of national identity for several reasons. The first reason is the conventional interweaving of fact and fiction in Chinese literature and the intimate link between literature and society. In addition, the link between literature and society is constantly reinforced by the didactic tradition of Chinese literature. Its function and its *raison d'être* are primarily to teach truth and virtue: it is supposed to contribute to uplifting people by attracting them emotionally toward approved ideals.³ Another reason is that literature is one of the least controllable spaces where a counter-culture or alternative discourses to the official discourse can be fostered relatively freely under the protection of a 'fictional licence'. This is particularly the case with the production of national heroes in China. As it is impossible to create a national hero by means of the mass media without official endorsement, cultural nationalists can only create their national heroes in literature, in the theatre, on TV or in films.

² Ibid., pp. 13-4.

³ Robert Ruhlman, 'Traditional Heroes in Chinese popular fiction', in Arthur Wright (ed.), *The Confucian Persuasion*, Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1960, p. 144.

Because of these characteristics of the national identity and Chinese literature, an examination of the articulation of novelists in the cultural nationalist project can provide us with an insight into the true nature of the alternative 'Chinese nation' being imagined, which it might not be possible to obtain otherwise.

The chapter is made up of five sections. Section 1 outlines the background to the 'search for roots' in Chinese literature. The second section examines the 'search for roots' by nativist writers and their endeavour to rediscover 'Chinese essence' in the preliterate 'low' cultural substratum. Sections 3 and 4 focus on some influential literary works with anti-American and anti-Japanese themes. Finally, section 5 discusses the dual thrust of the imagining of the nation in Chinese literature in the last decade.

1. The Crisis of Faith and A Heroless China

The Rise and Fall of National Confidence

The crisis of faith in China became increasingly obvious as 'scar literature' (*shangheng wenxue*) came to predominate in the late 70s and early 80s and gave vent to the nation's grievances against the CCP. Having evolved into reflections on why such disasters as the Cultural Revolution happened, it soon led to a deeper cultural examination by an emerging Chinese *avant garde*, who were frustrated to see China's economic experiments running into all sorts of problems. Increased media coverage of the outside world and open debates about China's problems, which were made possible by the political relaxation under Hu Yaobang and Zhao Ziyang, effectively deflated the myth of national supremacy kept alive for many years through communist propaganda and official control of information. Moreover, the collapse of communism in Eastern Europe shattered any remaining national confidence based on the illusion of the superiority and invincibility of the socialist system. As Jonathan Unger commented in *Chinese Nationalism*:

With the demise of the Maoist ideology in the last two decades, a vacuum in commitment to public goals has become obvious among the people of China in what Chinese newspapers have called a 'crisis of faith'.⁴

⁴ Jonathan Unger (ed.), *Chinese Nationalism*, Armonk, New York: M.E. Sharpe, 1996, p. xi.

This 'crisis of faith' has apparently lasted to this day. However, it has been interpreted in very different terms in the 1980s and since 1989. In the 1980s, and since 1989, it was a loss of faith in communism, but it also became a crisis of faith in the Chinese cultural heritage. As a result, the century-old sense of national crisis, which was briefly resolved by the CCP between 1949 and 1978, pervaded the country; there emerged once again the perception that China was in deep trouble, economically, politically, socially and culturally. Hence, as at the end of the 19th century, China's intellectuals were grappling yet again with the issue of tradition versus modernity.

'Nativist literature' made its debut in the mid-80s, and its attempt to rejuvenate the nation and identify it to its own cultural traditions proved immensely popular, but radical advocates of Westernisation soon got the upper hand. For the greater part of the decade, criticisms of Chinese culture and the national character, a trend that has been described by the establishment and nationalists since 1989 as 'cultural nihilism' or 'national nihilism', predominated in political and cultural discourse. Such was the ethos of the 1980s that one of the best-sellers of that decade was *The Ugly Chinese* (*Choulou de Zhongguoren*), Bo Yang's scathing commentary on the national character.

The animated debate over tradition versus modernisation reached a flashpoint in 1988 following the screening on CCTV of the controversial series *River Elegy* (*Heshang*). The simple message of the series was that China's problems had deep roots in Chinese polity, society, and culture; for that reason, Chineseness must be transformed thoroughly as a precondition for China's modernisation. The dragon, the symbol of Chinese ancestry, is condemned as outmoded imperial authoritarianism. The Great Wall, the symbol of historical continuity, is depicted as a manifestation of a close-minded conservatism. The Yellow River, the cradle of Chinese civilisation, is said to symbolise unmitigated violence. Confucianism, the mainstay of the Chinese cultural tradition, is blamed for not giving China 'a national spirit of enterprise, a system of laws, or a mechanism of cultural renewal, but a fearsome self-killing machine that, as it degenerated, constantly devoured its best and its brightest, its own vital elements'.⁵

⁵ Quoted in Tu Wei-ming, 'Introduction' to *The Living Tree*, Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1994 (first printed in 1991), p. 31.

Many, including CCP General Secretary Zhao Ziyang, commended the series for its vision and the sense of crisis it created. Conservatives and cultural nationalists, on the other hand, were infuriated to see Chinese tradition excoriated in favour of Westernisation, but they were not in a position to effectively challenge the Westernisers until their champion, Zhao Ziyang, was ousted in June 1989. Henceforth, the tide has changed: pessimism has given way to optimism, and self-examination to assertiveness. National confidence is boosted to unprecedented heights not only by China's economic achievements, but also by speculations in Chinese and Western media that China will become a new superpower to be reckoned with in the next century. Furthermore, as has been pointed out in the last chapter, the CCP's intensified patriotic indoctrination since 1989 has done much to boost national confidence by condemning 'national nihilism' and promoting national culture.

It is now Westernisation and 'cultural nihilism', as well as communism, that are held responsible, especially by cultural nationalists, for the dissipation of the national spirit, and there is now a common conviction in China that the nation can best rejuvenate itself by returning to its own life-principle. Consequently, the subjugated cultural traditions have re-emerged with a vengeance, and China is witnessing a 'national essence fever' and renewed interest in *The Book of Changes* and other classics. It is generally believed that the number of classics reprinted in the last decade is unprecedented, and so is the number of historical novels and TV and cinematic productions of historical drama.

Ups and Downs of National Heroes

The crisis of faith in China can also be seen from the fact that it is left with few national heroes in the last two decades, in spite of the Party-state's sustained production and reproduction of national models. In the 1980s, both traditional national heroes (especially Lin Zexu and Wei Yuan) and revolutionary heroes came under attack, although the Westernisers' attempt to cut down revolutionary heroes proved far more successful than their tilt at traditional heroes. The obvious reason for this is that the popularity of revolutionary heroes had been dropping continuously, and there was a general consensus in society that these heroes were irrelevant now that revolution as a theory and practice was widely condemned and socialism was becoming irrelevant.

A good example is Lei Feng's loss of appeal. Elevated to the status of revolutionary hero in the early 1960s, Lei was recycled after the Tiananmen events of 1989 in another Lei Feng campaign. The campaign was designed to reverse the decline of 'patriotism' amongst the Chinese young, but it failed dismally to make Lei Feng more popular. According to a survey of 675 soldiers in the Shandong Military District, 92 per cent of the soldiers no longer venerated Lei.⁶ His 'spirit of the rust-free screw', as the surveyors put it, had become incompatible with current needs. Another study, of secondary high school students in Jiaocheng county, Shanxi Province, revealed that Lei Feng had become a hard-sell.⁷ One senior high school student was applauded by his fellow students when he contradicted the teacher by stating that what people needed was not the 'Lei Feng spirit' but money.

It is not just Lei Feng who has been rejected by the Chinese young, of course; most of the revolutionary heroes that the CCP has produced since 1949 have suffered a similar fate. According to a 1988 survey of 2,658 students from 29 universities, the most popular model was Wen Yuankai, a professor at the Chinese University of Science and Technology, best known for his bold arguments for reform. Revolutionary heroes Qu Xiao and Xu Liang, who received the second and third largest number of votes, were chosen primarily out of sympathy. Qu was branded a rightist and exiled in the desolate Qinghia Province for 20 years, while Xu had lost both his legs in the Sino-Vietnam war in 1979.

TABLE 4. Which of the Following People Would You Like to Emulate?

<i>n</i> = 2,658	
<i>Responses</i>	<i>%</i>
Wen Yuankai	24.8
Qu Xiao	18.5
Li Ruihuan	14.2
Jiang Zhuying	11.2
Chen Jingrun	6.9
Lei Feng	2.0

SOURCE: Wen Zhizhou, 'Summarising the feedback from an investigation of the psychology of students from 29 universities' [*Ershijiusuo gaoxiao xuesheng xinli diaocha fankui zongshu*], *Jiangxi gaojiao yanjiu* 1, 1988, p. 28.

⁶ Wang Guisheng, 'Thoughts on the problem of the declining effect of the Lei Feng model' [*Guanyu Lei Feng de dianxing ruohua wenti de sikao*], *Qingnian yanjiu* 3, 1990, pp. 42-5.

⁷ Zhang Biao and Zhang Jianming, 'Anxious thoughts on primary and middle school moral education' [*Dui zhongxiaoxue deyu de yousi*], *Qingnian yanjiu* 4, 1991, pp. 18-20.

Six other surveys conducted between 1982 and 1992 give us an overall picture of the changing popularity of national models during that decade.⁸ One trend that the surveyors noted was a gradual broadening of model choices and a shift away from revolutionary models. In the 1982 survey, for example, revolutionaries such as Marx, Mao Zedong and Zhou Enlai were the most respected and admired personages. In 1985, revolutionary models like Lei Feng and Zhang Haidi were still the most popular. By 1988, however, respondent preferences diversified to such an extent that not even one personage was chosen by the majority of respondents. What surprised the researchers even more was the choice of historical figures, fictional characters and 'anti-models'.

While the revolutionary models had lost much of their appeal, there were obviously no new models. When students were asked in one of the 1992 surveys which of the new models they preferred and what models they thought would be appropriate for the future, 6 percent did not answer, 10 per cent said 'none', 16 per cent wrote 'the same models we have always had', 8 put down their own names, and the remaining 60 per cent gave answers which were too vague to allow definite interpretations.

Attitudes towards revolutionary heroes today represent a continuation of these earlier trends. These heroes continue to slide into oblivion, even though the CCP has gone to great lengths to prop them up. None of the new models that the CCP has created since 1989 has proved attractive to Chinese youth, nor have they had a lasting influence, either. As is shown by a survey of 2,000 university students in Hubei Province, conducted in May last year, not a single officially-sanctioned revolutionary hero received more than 10 per cent of the votes.⁹ The only exception was Zhou Enlai, who was chosen by just over 20 per cent of the students as their model for emulation. It must be stressed, however, that Zhou was chosen not because he was a communist or revolutionary; when the students were

⁸ These surveys were conducted from under the auspices of Beijing Teachers' Training College. See Jin Zhongliang, 'Investigations on the question of "models" among secondary school students' [*Guanyu zhongxuesheng 'bangyang' wenti de diaocha*], *Beijing qingnian gongzuo* 5, 1992, p. 28.

⁹ Li Yongjian, Wang Yuhua and Yin Jiqun, 'University students care for their families, their country and the world' [*Dangdai daxuesheng guanxin jiashi, guoshi, tianxiashi*], *Hubei ribao*, 25 May, 2000, p. 1.

asked why they chose Zhou, 76 per cent answered that 'Premier Zhou had the traditional virtues' (*juyou chuantong meide*).

The lack of national models or heroes in China is evidently symptomatic of a crisis of faith. As in the 1980s, this crisis is, first of all, a loss of faith in communism. This, in turn, has resulted in a loss of faith in the CCP's revolutionary heroes, or rather, in the ideals and values that these heroes represent. As the Party-state belief system is eroded beyond repair and becomes increasingly irrelevant, its whole value system, or system of meaning, is collapsing. While this is happening, the revolutionary or socialist identity built upon that system of meaning also grows increasingly problematic. In this sense, what is generally described as a crisis of faith is rather a manifestation of a vacuum of beliefs and values and a national identity crisis. Thus, the nationalist novelists' search for the 'national spirit' and national heroes is part of a national endeavour to imagine a new collective identity.

2. The Search for Roots

The 'search for roots' (*xungen*) remains popular in literature today, although it has lost much of the prominence it had in the 1980s. It is paralleled in academic studies by the preoccupation with 'national learning' or 'national essence', especially Confucianism. The 'search for roots' in Chinese literature in many ways typifies the defence of cultural traditions by Chinese intellectuals as a whole. It is a new wave of cultural nationalism that seeks to rediscover the life-principle of the nation and to reconstruct national identity on the foundation of this principle. While the historical novel typically makes or re-makes national heroes out of historical figures, nativist writers turn to the folk. We will have occasion to discuss the cultural nationalist attempt to make the past serve the present in the following chapter; in this chapter I will focus on nativist writers.

So far as nationalist novelists are concerned, the nation will be invigorated if it recovers its vitality, and a remedy for China's present ills will be found if the Chinese search hard enough in their own cultural traditions. This project is motivated by the wide-spread perception amongst 'root-seeking' writers that there is a serious social decay and physical and spiritual dissipation in China. This perception is given most poignant expression by nativist writer Ah Cheng in a

short story entitled 'Unfilled Graves', a story about a village named Little Triple, where all the males, as well as the sun, have 'failed to achieve more than a symbolic existence'.¹⁰

For some mysterious reason, all the men in the village lack the capacity to generate heat, and they age so quickly that by the time they turn thirty, 'they look as if they had one foot in the grave'.¹¹ What is worse, all the men 'kiss their hard-ons goodbye' a few months after their weddings, and 'like fragile plants hit by frost, their masculinity wilts, triggering the inevitable decline into that all-too-familiar state of entropy'.¹² As this happens, even the feminine beauty and the 'feminine seductiveness' fail to arouse interest in the men. All the males 'from the outside world' who set foot in Little Triple are inveigled to stay and deposit some 'seed' before they are allowed to leave.

In this Daoist microcosm of Ah Cheng, quiescence and stasis prevail, whereas creativity has become scarcely possible with the decline of the life-giving force – the principle of *yang*, as symbolised by the sun and the men. What Ah Cheng presents in 'Unfilled Graves' is an epitome of a world wanting in creativity and vitality. This type of representation of contemporary life can be found in the works of most Chinese nativist writers, although, unlike Ah Cheng, many are concerned with the political and cultural causes of this state of affairs rather than with metaphysical reasoning.

In *Red Sorghum*, for example, Mo Yan depicts a distorted and lifeless contemporary existence, which is symbolised by the 'hybrid sorghum' and personified by the first-person narrator – an urbanised and revolutionised young man, who has lost touch with the spirit of his ancestors and his native place. Upon his return to Gaomi, ten years after he 'fled' from it, 'I' discovers that the lively, beautiful and nutritious red sorghum has disappeared, to be replaced by a hybrid species that the cadres have imported in a 'wave of revolution'. This hybrid is productive but looks ugly, tastes bitter, causes constipation and gives people a rust-like complexion. 'I' has returned apparently because he is quite disillusioned with the city. As a result of ten years of city life, he is contaminated to such an

¹⁰ Ah Cheng, 'Unfilled graves' [*Kongfen*], translated by Josephine A. Mathews, in *Unfilled Graves*, Beijing: Panda Books, 1995, p. 11.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 11-2.

¹² *Ibid.*, pp. 12-3.

extent that 'stench emanates from every single pore', and he is quickly turning into a copy of *The Readers' Digest*, which says nothing original but is filled with excerpts from all sorts of magazines.¹³

Mo Yan's symbolic return to Gaomi parallels Jia Pingwa's return to Shangzhou, Li Hangyu's return to the Gechuan River, Wang Anyi's return to Little Bao village, and Han Shaogong's return to a place that is at the same time familiar and strange to him. Underlying the motif of returning is the rejection of aspects of modernity as mediated through a reforming state or a symbolic flight from a modernist reality. Almost unanimously, nationalist writers hold revolution and Westernisation responsible for the dissipation of national spirit and China's identity crisis. They are fully convinced that both revolution and Westernisation have caused the ossification of national traditions, leading to social decay and external cultural dependence.

Ah Cheng, for instance, argues that the attempt at 'total Westernisation' during the May Fourth era has already caused a rupture in Chinese culture, and it is the writer's task today to close the gap rather than to enlarge it with more Western ideas.¹⁴ Han Shaogong's advice to his generation is to search for the native Chinese roots, literary and cultural, so that Chinese literature will not simply follow the latest trends in the West. He cites a number of well-known foreigners who showed some interest in Chinese culture as testimony to its superiority, his long list including Toynbee, Descartes, Einstein, Tolstoy, Sartre, Picasso, and so on. On the other hand, Han paints Western civilisation in rather gloomy colours:

If Jesus saw the religious trials of the Middle Ages, if Einstein saw the desolation of Hiroshima, if Freud saw the red-lantern districts and x-rated movies, if Owen and Marx saw the gulags in the Soviet Union and the Cultural Revolution in China, they would be speechless with embarrassment.¹⁵

¹³ Mo Yan, *Red Sorghum*, [*Hong gaoliang*], Haikou: Nanhai chubanshe, 1999, p. 371.

¹⁴ Ah Cheng, 'Mankind bound by culture' [*Wenhua zhiyue zhe renlei*], *Wenyi bao*, 6 July 1985, cited by Wang Lin in 'On the mythical quality of the search for roots in literature', *Shehui kexue yanjiu* 4, 1994, p. 108.

¹⁵ Han Shaogong, 'Dream talk of a night walker' [*Yexingzhe mengyu*], *A Perfect Hypothesis* [*Wanmei de jiading*], Beijing: Zuoja chubanshe, 1996, p. 99.

To nativist writers, the life-principle of the nation and the 'true self' of the nation exist in the uncontaminated folk and in the past. Hence, they would like to see China resume its history from the point where it was interrupted, not only by communism but also by the May Fourth Movement as well. Pitting themselves against Western influence and the socialist legacy, these writers set out to bring out 'the Chinese essence' from the ancient 'high culture' and from the preliterate 'low' cultural substratum of religion, mores, songs, historical legends and folklore. At the same time, by returning to the 'roots', albeit symbolically, they wish to rejoin their 'imagined community', so that the 'small I' becomes one with the 'big I', as Han Shaogong has put it.¹⁶

What these writers actually rediscover is quite mixed. If their writings have anything in common in this respect, it is the presentation of some form of pre-revolutionary, pre-modern, or pre-Confucian existence, while the rediscovered 'national essence' is generally referred to in vague and abstract terms as 'primitive vitality', 'energy', 'ethos', 'character', or 'spirit'. This is particularly the case with the writings of Han Shaogong. In *Return (Gui qi lai)*, for instance, we have a glimpse of life at its most primitive and natural:

Here people do not have clothing. As there are no strangers, there is no need for covering up or affectation, nor can people afford to do so. There are only naked selves; there is only genuineness. People have hands and feet, so they can do things; they have stomachs, so they can eat; and they have reproductive organs, so they can reproduce. The world is shut out for the time being.¹⁷

Jia Pingwa's Eden is Shangzhou, where a simple and harmonious life has been going on uninterrupted for centuries. Wang Anyi's ideal community is Little Bao Village, where the Confucian ideals of benevolence and righteousness have been translated into practice.¹⁸ For Zheng Wanglong, nothing is more full of life and vitality than the wilds of Heilongjiang, and what is most admirable for him is the masculinity of the frontiersmen. It is Mo Yan, however, who has captured the imagination of more readers and critics than any other seeking-root writer,

¹⁶ Han Shaogong, *Return*, [Gui qi lai], in *A Selection of Han Shaogong's Short Stories and Novellas* [Han Shaogong xiaoshu jingxue] Xi'an: Taibai wenyi chubanshe, 1996, p. 103.

¹⁷ Ibid., p. 97.

¹⁸ Wang Anyi, *The Little Bao Village* [Xiaobaozhuang], in Liu Xiqing (ed.), *That Pear, That Cherry – An Anthology of Seeking-Root Novellas*, Beijing: Beijing shifan daxue chubanshe, 1992.

especially since the film *Red Sorghum*, directed by the internationally renowned Zhang Yimou and co-starring Gong Li and Jiang Wen, made a sensation across China and overseas.

What Mo Yan rediscovers and projects to his readers is the 'spirit of the Red Sorghum Clan' and the 'spirit of the red sorghum', both of which are characterised by primitive vitality. The 'spirit of the Red Sorghum Clan' is one of passion, freedom, justice, bravery and comradeship. To Mo Yan, these are 'the greatest people in the whole wide world'. Unlike the typical revolutionary hero, however, they are definitely not perfect; in fact, they are 'the most bastardly in the world as well'.¹⁹ For Mo Yan, they are great because they dare to love and hate, and they are unrestrained in the way they carry on their daily life. Love is whole-hearted and passionate, and, in love, they are not restrained by moral prohibitions. When they are filled with hate, they are not even deterred by the law and do not hesitate to take things into their own hands, although revenge is always carried out with a sense of justice.

Comparing contemporary Chinese with the 'Red Sorghum Clan', Mo Yan comes to the conclusion that Chinese are suffering a racial degeneration. The only thing that can reverse this trend is the 'spirit of the Red Sorghum Clan' and the 'spirit of the Red Sorghum'. To drive this message home, Mo Yan evokes the spirit of Grandma No. 2. 'Come back, grandson!', she urges the confused first-person narrator, 'you will be wasted if you don't.'²⁰ She knows, of course, that he has to go back to the city. Hence, she tells him to go and soak himself in the Black Water River for three nights and three days in order to clean his body and soul. After that, he must find the last red sorghum and take it with him when he goes back to the city.

Descriptions of these types of uncontaminated, primitive forms of existence and the evocation of the 'national spirit' have evidently captured the imagination of readers and critics, which accounts for the enormous popularity of seeking-root literature. It is clear, however, that although nativist literature has been quite popular as literature, it has not constructed a workable nationalist project. One of its shortcomings is that what is rediscovered and upheld as outstanding Chinese

¹⁹ Mo Yan, op. cit., p. 2.

²⁰ Ibid., p. 372.

traditions does not always come out clearly. The rediscovered 'spirit', 'ethos', qualities and values are more presentable in the abstract than in the concrete, as manifested in action or a 'slice of life'. It is perhaps not accidental that some of the most enduring images in nativist literature are of bandits, bound feet, red lanterns, concubines, drinking sprees, adultery and incest.

Another problem with nativist literature is the conflict between a romantic vision or nostalgia and the modernist reality. The search for roots in the folk, or outside of the industrial cities, where the past is preserved in form of traditional ways of living, is apparently more symbolic than substantive. An insurmountable difficulty for the nativist writer/narrator is that his/her romantic vision cannot be sustained when reality intrudes. This is best illustrated in Jia Pingwa's *Shangzhou*, where 'the young man' embarks on his search for meaning in his native place in northern China during his holidays but feels compelled to return to the city at the end of his holidays.²¹ It is also illustrated by the first-person narrator's return to the city in Han Shaogong's *Return* and Mo Yan's *Red Sorghum*. In all these cases, there is a detectable ambivalence towards the modernist reality: resignation on the one hand, and resistance on the other. With few exceptions, seeking-root writers appear to be torn between tradition and modernity.

A related problem is that the native writer/narrator vacillates 'between all-embracing humanitarianism and self-indulgence, between altruist commitment and elite escapism, between earthy "soil" and imaginary utopia (or dystopia)'.²² As David Der-wei Wang commented succinctly:

(N)ative soil writings could not describe these themes without betraying certain of their limitations: To whom was native soil literature addressed (to the natives, who would not comprehend it or to the deracinated, whose belief might be imported and therefore unauthentic)? Where should the 'native' writer/narrator situate himself (or herself) in relation to all the 'insulted and injured' of history?²³

This raises questions about the credibility of the 'search for roots' as well as about its potential impact. What is more, despite the 'seeking-root' writers'

²¹ Jia Pingwa, *Shangzhou: Endless Tales*, Beijing: Huaxia chubanshe, vol. 3, 1995, p. 214.

²² Ibid.

²³ David Wang, 'Introduction' to *From May Fourth to June Fourth - Fiction and Film in Twentieth Century China*, Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1993, p. 3.

emphasis on nativity, the 'search for roots' was inspired by an imported American TV series, *Roots*, and most of them drew their inspiration from a foreigner, García Márquez, who won the Nobel Prize for literature in 1982. Very few foreign writers had attracted more attention and stimulated more discussion among Chinese writers than Márquez. In the words of critic Li Jiefei, 'There was hardly a literary conference or seminar where Márquez's name was not mentioned, and nearly every writer in China had a copy of *A Hundred Years of Solitude*.'²⁴

Chinese writers saw in Márquez an example of a Third World writer being recognised as a world-class writer. For many years now, they have harboured grievance over the fact that the Nobel Prize in literature has never been awarded to a Chinese writer. While many in China celebrated Gao Xingjian's recent success, some, including the government, took it as an insult partly because Gao is a French citizen. So far as China is concerned, it has not had a fair go, either because of ideological differences, unfamiliarity with Chinese works, or differences in taste. Márquez's example now encouraged some of them, e.g. Ba Jin, to make a bid for the prize, whereas it was the endeavour of the intellectuals as a whole to make it point of national honour to join the world as equal and dignified members through the creation of a national literature known to and accepted by the world.

Thus, Chinese native-soil writers seem to be at cross-purposes: both rediscovering the 'roots' and trying to win the Nobel Prize. It is often argued that local and national uniqueness is China's only ticket for entry into the global community, and Chinese writers cannot win the Nobel Prize unless they represent China's uniqueness. The argument is based on the logic that the more local, the more national, the more universal. This gives their critics good reason to believe that the native-soil writers seek roots for the purpose of winning the Nobel Prize. On the other hand, Cultural nationalists, particularly postcolonialists, find this type of exploitation of national uniqueness repulsive. For they believe that it plays squarely into the hands of Orientalism and, what is worse, it is Orientalism internalised, as it voluntarily endorses Orientalism at the expense of national dignity and national honour.

²⁴ Li Jiefei, 'The search for roots in literature: a new beginning' [*Xungen wenxue: gengxin de kaishi*], *Wenxue pinglun* 8, 1996, pp. 102-3.

Because of these problems, the upholding of a better alternative to Western culture by nativist writers amounts to little more than a weak ego-defensive response to the challenge posed by modernisation. Its nationalist appeal lies chiefly in its defensive rhetoric of traditional culture, its argument for a national literature and its insistence on the purity of the national language.

3. A New Species of Anti-American Heroes

On the anti-American front, the Korean War continues to be the main source of ammunition, but anti-American sentiment is nowhere more eloquently articulated than in *A Beijing Man in New York*, a TV series screened in 1993. In fact, the central theme of the show, according to well-known writer and critic Zha Xiduo, can be summed up in a single line: Screw you America.²⁵

Wang Qiming, a hooligan by Maoist standards, makes a fortune in the US against incredible odds. One day, he hires a white American prostitute. Before having his way with her, he scatters a bundle of greenbacks over her, and forces her to say repeatedly, 'I love you.' She does and he is satisfied. Another popular scene occurs when Ah Chun, Wang's lover, says, 'They (the Americans) can quite easily imagine a world without China, but could never conceive of a world without themselves.' Wang responds angrily, 'Fuck them! They were still monkeys up in the trees while we were already human beings. Look how hairy they are, they're not as evolved as us. Just 'cause they have a bit of money!' Reportedly, Chinese viewers, including bureaucrats and young intellectuals, have been full of praise for the series.²⁶

Surprisingly, even Sha Yexin, a renowned playwright and former director of the Shanghai People's Artistic Theatre, has joined in this nationalist enterprise. His recent reportage in *Four Corners (Dongxi nanbei)*, later adapted into a play, tells the story of a Chinese student, Qu Xiaoxue, studying in the US. While working as a part-time housekeeper for a rich American banker, Qu is subjected to

²⁵ Zha Jianying, *China Pop: How Soap Operas, Tabloids, and Bestsellers Are Transforming a Culture*, New York: The New Press, 1995, p.17.

²⁶ See Sang Ye, 'Are you ready?' [*Zhunbei hao le ma?*], translated by Barmé with Jaivin, in *The Year the Dragon Came*, Brisbane: Queensland University Press, 1996, cited by Barmé in 'To screw foreigners is patriotic: China's avant-garde nationalists', in Jonathan Unger, op. cit., p. 183.

all sorts of insults: the banker's mother summons her with a bell because she cannot remember Qu's name, and she is given leftover food. When she tells them she is quitting, the banker flows into a rage. 'I've despised Negroes all my life,' he shouts, 'but you Chinese are worse!'²⁷ Qu tries to explain and demands her pay. The banker insists that his mother has paid her, and when Qu points out that he is lying, he slaps her across the face, grabs her by the hair and pushes her head against the wall until she loses consciousness.

Qu takes on the American legal system and eventually wins. She has won single-handedly, through determination and cleverness. She makes the banker repeat his apology loudly three times in court, and tears into pieces the cheque she is given as compensation, shouting,

Go to hell, American dollars! What I want is dignity! Dignity! ...Some people think if they have money they can have everything; if they have money they can discriminate against other peoples; they can do anything they like; they can hurt the innocent; they can win court cases. But let me tell you, money can't buy the dignity of a Chinese girl. ...Let me also tell you, while going through this court case in the last four years, I've completed my Master's in sociology and PhD in information technology. I can proudly say: I haven't done badly at all! ²⁸

These stories confirm that the well-known Chinese inclination to distinguish sharply between foreigners and themselves is alive and well. They also reveal some typical responses to the disgrace that China has suffered since the Opium War. Commenting on *A Beijing Man in New York*, Barmé writes, 'It could be argued that by having his way with an American whore while buying her endearments with a shower of greenbacks, Wang Qiming's action is the most eloquent recent statement (in inversion) of the century-old Chinese-foreign dilemma.'²⁹ According to Linda Jaivin, 'the series represents the coming of age of Chinese narcissism, and it bespeaks a desire for revenge for all the real and

²⁷ Sha Yexin, 'Chinese dignity is not for sale' [*Zhongguore de zunyan buke ru*], in *Dongxi nanbei* 3, 1997, pp. 4-5.

²⁸ Ibid. p. 5.

²⁹ Geremie Barmé, op. cit., p. 210.

perceived slights of the past century.’³⁰ Both their comments can be applied to Qu Xiaoxue’s victory without much modification.

A point to be added here is that what Linda Jaivin calls ‘all the real and perceived slights’ have been made to look very real in Chinese literature and mass media. Given the large number of stories like these and reports about Sino-US friction, it becomes easier to comprehend the enmity towards America in China. Another point to be stressed is that in both stories money assumes great significance in generating pride and confidence, whereas ‘cultural capital’ holds the key to success. Qu’s academic success, amidst all the distractions of her court case, results from the fact that she is more intelligent, determined, persistent, hard-working, mentally tough and dedicated than her American counterparts. Wang demonstrates the same sort of ‘Chinese’ attributes, and it is these attributes that have led to his triumph over David, his American rival in love and in business, who is romantic but immature, frivolous, emotionally unstable and fragile, capricious and unscrupulous.

Wang’s conquest of an American prostitute (symbolising America?) is made possible by his possession of bundles of it, whereas Qu’s triumph is first of all a triumph over money, without which, according to Qu, discrimination, injustice, and hegemony would not be possible. This new emphasis on money contrasts sharply with culturalism’s emphasis on culture alone, let alone the socialist pride in the great motherland, although the acquisition of money is facilitated in the stories by unique ‘Chinese’ values. Undoubtedly, this reflects the importance attached to money as the Chinese society becomes commercialised. The unprecedented assertiveness of Chinese nationalists, like Song Qiang, Zhang Zangzang, Qiao Bian and others, could at least be partially attributed to China’s economic strength.

A still more significant point to be added to Jaivin’s comments on ‘Chinese narcissism’ is that its ‘coming of age’ is little more than a typical Ah-Q declaration of victory, and it boils down to a mere gesture - Wang Qiming showing a middle finger in defiance of America at the end of the series. Still, it is only one side of the story. The other side of it is that the nationalistic gestures of

³⁰ Linda Jaivin, ‘Television: life in a battlefield’, *The Asian Wall Street Journal*, 24 Dec., 1993, p. 7.

defiance and symbols of conquest are remarkably undercut by the beautified imagery of New York and thinly veiled attempts to flaunt to Chinese viewers a modern paradise, together with its luxurious houses, luxurious cars and high living standards.

It has been a major commercial consideration for publishers and TV and film makers in recent year to satisfy the general curiosity about foreign lands, particularly advanced Western countries. The paradise-like New York in *A Beijing Man in New York* might also be explained in commercial terms, but the demand for it by viewers and the recreation of it on TV bespeak something other than revenge. There is admiration, although it is not unqualified admiration, or unqualified admiration for all. The collective Chinese response to the US can even be said to admix admiration with resentment, and these sentiments jar with each other in *A Beijing Man in New York*. Thus the nationalistic assertiveness is accompanied by a sense of inferiority in the series, and that might be a more accurate picture of the 'coming of age of Chinese narcissism'.

4. Another Kind of Anti-Japanese Hero

The Anti-Japanese War has been the subject matter for hundreds and thousands of novels and poems since the 1930s. It has always been a powerful generator of nationalism. The number of works in this genre has increased since the late 80s. Their publication is usually accompanied by official fanfare, particularly during the celebrations of the 50th anniversary of the Chinese victory over Japan. It would be quite wrong, however, to suggest that official encouragement alone accounts for the increase of works in this genre and their new popularity. There is reason to believe that this reflects the anti-Japanese sentiment in China, which has been growing since the anti-Japanese demonstrations by Chinese students in 1984 and reached new heights during the *Diaoyu* islands (Senkaku) disputes in 1996.

Resentment against Japan stems from a perception shared by many that Japan is still unrepentant of its atrocities in China and in other countries during World War II; that militarism is deep-rooted in Japan; that Japan is not grateful to China for giving up its right to reparations; that Japan rips China off through 'cunning' trade practices and tries to slow down China's modernisation by blocking

technology transfer; and that Japan sees China as its chief enemy and is eager to collaborate with the Americans in containing China.³¹

It is worth pointing out that, unlike novels with an anti-American thrust, anti-Japanese works are invariably set in World War II, which betrays a dilemma that the Chinese government has to deal with. On the one hand, it has always used the war for the purpose of patriotic education, and at times used public resentment against Japan to pressure Japan into a compromise on bilateral relations. On the other hand, it is eager to build a friendly relationship with Japan, and for that reason, has usually discouraged or suppressed any formal expressions of anti-Japanese sentiment directed at the current Japanese government. In fact, anti-Japanese protests over the *Diaoyu* islands were discouraged; so were petitions for compensation from the Japanese by war victims in the late 1980s, and petitions in 1996 to have Japanese chemical weapons deactivated and disposed of in Japan rather than in China.

The Chinese government is under enormous pressure to act uncompromisingly on such issues as the *Diaoyu* dispute and the disposing of chemical weapons left in China by Japan, but the Chinese government cannot do so without damaging Sino-Japanese relations, which it is eager to improve. Compromises by the Chinese government have often caused resentment among nationalists, and even the general public. In all those cases, just as in giving up the right for reparation, the Chinese government has been widely seen to have sacrificed national interest for the sake of some Japanese good will that has never materialised. In that sense, the anti-Japanese sentiments can easily backfire on the government.

Among all the works about the Anti-Japanese War, the one that has won the hearts of prominent conservative leaders is the eight-volume *New War and Peace* (*Xin zhanzheng yu heping*), written by the 82-year-old veteran cadre-writer, Li Erzhong. Adhering to the class point of view, the novel emphasises the CCP's paramount leading role in the war. A seminar on Li's lengthy work was organised in Beijing even before it was completed. Li Ruihuan commented, 'I believe this novel will have a good impact in the patriotism and revolutionary tradition

³¹ These views are expressed by Song Qian, Zhang Zangzang, and Qiao Bian in *China Can Say No* [*Zhongguo keyi shuo bu*], Beijing: *Zhonghua gongshang lianhe chubanshe*, 1996.

education.’³² Sun Renqiong described *New War and Peace* as ‘a textbook for patriotism.’ Bo Yibo and Wang Renzhong also emphasised the novel’s patriotic theme.³³ A second seminar took place in 1994 and present were Sun Ping, Ma Wenrui, Deng Liquan, Lin Mohan and other Party veterans and cadre-writers. A ‘Special Committee for the Study of *New War and Peace*’ was set up to maximise the patriotic impact of the novel.

The special treatment of the novel must be attributed to the fact that it fits in well with the official brand of nationalism. Even a veteran cadre-writer like Li, however, has broken new ground by decorating his works with a few Nationalists, namely Feng Yuxiang, Zhang Xueliang, and Zhang Zizhong, who figure prominently because of their dedication to the national cause. In fact, in the first four volumes of the novel, the central hero is Zhang Xueliang. In this respect, this work differs from traditional anti-Japanese novels written before 1978. In comparison, war novels by Wang Huo, You Fengwei, Zhou Meiseng and Shang Kaiwen, diverge much further from the Maoist orthodoxy.

The contribution of the KMT to the Chinese victory over Japan was not even mentioned for a long time by mainland historians or writers. It was not mentioned in school textbooks, either. For decades, the official line was that the CCP alone led the nation in the war while the Nationalists were more eager to fight the Communists than the Japanese. It was probably not until the movie the *Bloody Battle of Taierzhuang* (*Xuezhān taierzhuang*) was released in 1988 that the general public became aware of the KMT’s participation in the resistance. Since then, a number of young writers, particularly Wang Huo, Zhou Meiseng, Zhang Tingzhu, and Jiang Jianwen, have produced some popular works about patriotic KMT soldiers and generals fighting the Japanese as members of the Chinese nation.

A good example is Wang Huo’s *War and Man* (*Zhānzhēng yu rén*). Wang’s hero, Tong Shuangwei, is a high-ranking KMT official and legal expert. In spite of his political convictions and affiliations, however, he sees himself first of all as a Chinese and responds to the CCP’s call for national resistance: his partisan loyalty is overridden by the sense of duty to the nation. He also puts the nation before his

³² Quoted by Wen Liping in a report on the seminar, *Wenyi lilun yu pinglun* 3, 1993, p. 132.

³³ Ibid.

own interests by refusing to be part of the Wang Jingwei puppet regime propped up by the Japanese, even though he is offered a coveted position.

Ye Zhaoyan and Shang Kaiwen detach themselves from the Communist-Nationalist politics to the extent that political beliefs are irrelevant in their novels, as is social background. The single most potent driving force behind their heroes is a nationalistic sentiment. Mr Ding in Ye Zhaoyan's *The Moon Tower* (*Zhuiyue lou*), was a member of the Qing Imperial Academy, but then leads a life of fortune in Nanjing. After the city falls to the Japanese, he puts up a personal fight by refusing to leave his Moon Tower and he instructs his family to bury him in the tower when he dies, so that he will not be subjected to the indignity of seeing or being seen by the Japanese in life or in death. So far as Ye is concerned, Mr Ding is no less heroic than soldiers fighting at the front, and, by virtue of his unyielding integrity, he becomes another one in a long line of Confucian scholars in history and literature who would rather die than live under the same sky with invaders.

Unlike Mr Ding, Shang Kaiwen's hero in *A Legend in the Grandpa Mountains* (*Laoyeling chuanqi*), Guan Pengfei, is an untouchable - a fierce-looking bandit who used to make a living by stealing horses. After the Japanese invasion of Heilongjian, he forms a small army and deals the Japanese army one blow after another by dint of courage and clever tactics until he lays down his life in action. Regardless of his background, he is remembered by the local people as a 'Chinese hero'.

This trend of depoliticising the Chinese resistance was probably started by Mo Yan in *Red Sorghum*. Mo Yan's hero, Yu Zhanao, has no affiliations to the CCP, nor to the KMT. A bunch of poorly armed and poorly organised bandits, Yu Zhanao and his men do not seem to have anything to do with any isms except a rough and ready nationalism: China is invaded by the Japanese, and as Chinese, it is their duty to fight the invaders. 'They murdered and robbed; they served the nation loyally,' declares the narrator matter-of-factly at the very beginning of the novel.³⁴ This seemingly illogical statement seems to be intended to defy logic, especially the logic that Chinese readers are accustomed to.

The point that Mo Yan is apparently making is that being murderers and robbers does not prevent them from serving the country loyally. Another way of

³⁴ Mo Yan, op. cit., p. 2.

putting this is that murderers and robbers can be patriotic heroes at the same time. Little attempt is made to explain their motives in the novel, still less in the film version. One is left with the impression that it is the most natural thing for them to do. In other words, the patriotic national heroes in both Mo Yan's novel and Zhang Yimou's film contrast sharply with the revolutionary heroes in Maoist literature and the revolutionary models that the CCP has created in the mass media. By Maoist standards, these heroes are nothing but villains, yet for Mo Yan and Zhang Yimou, they are patriotic national heroes because of their primordial sense of loyalty to the nation.

This primordial sentiment has nothing to do with class or communist consciousness, nor does it have anything to do with loyalty to the CCP. Thus, for Mo Yan and Zhang Yimou, class consciousness and loyalty to the CCP are not prerequisites for patriotism. What is more, they certainly do not portray the CCP as the object of national loyalty or the leader of the Chinese people in the resistance against Japan, as official propaganda has been trying to make believe for decades. On the contrary, the villains in Mo Yan's novel are not only Japanese soldiers but also the Communists and Nationalists. Yu and his army fight the Japanese while the Communists and Nationalists fight each other. Every time Yu Zhanao and his army defeat the Japanese, the Communists and the Nationalists come out of hiding and snatch the abandoned Japanese weapons. So, Yu has to fight the Communists and the Nationalists when he is not fighting the Japanese.

There is hardly any doubt that the creation of heroes like Yu Zhanao, Guan Pengfei, Mr Ding and Tong Shuangwei is an attempt to subvert the perfect revolutionary hero in Maoist literature and to challenge the official story of legitimisation, which projects the CCP as the 'leading core' of the Chinese nation in the war against Japan. Collectively, the creators of the above heroes have contradicted the myth created by the CCP, perpetuated by Chinese literature from the 50s to the 70s, and subscribed to by many well into the 80s.

The message that comes through clearly is that patriotism is no longer the sole province of the CCP, nor is class a valid criterion of patriotism; the Anti-Japanese War was a spontaneous act of the Chinese nation rather than one motivated by political beliefs; and patriotism is primordial rather than instilled through socialist education. In other words, these works do not simply recreate the heroic resistance of the nation, they deal a blow to the CCP by deflating the myth that the CCP is

the sole representative of the nation and by bringing into the limelight enemies of the CCP or elements that it considers not worthy to be members of the Chinese nation.

5. Conclusion: the Politics of Recreating National Spirit and National Heroes

Official endorsement of *New War and Peace* and other patriotic works is understandable, but the silence about the other works discussed above is quite extraordinary, although it is no longer surprising. The relaxation of political control is well documented, and it is also a well-known fact that local authorities and publishers now enjoy more autonomy as a result of limited decentralisation and marketisation. In the last few years, in particular, the CCP and the central government have been following the strategy of concentrating on macro control and refraining from micro control (*zhuada fangxiao*), thus retreating from some areas where it used to maintain tight control.

Meanwhile, the Maoist ideology has decayed to such an extent that it has no more than nominal significance. The CCP does not appear to have the strength, or even the intention, to defend it so long as it is not openly attacked. Besides, local CCP organisations and local governments are more interested in economics than politics in spite of Jiang Zemin's call to emphasise politics. Consequently, the book market is now flooded with everything, ranging from political dissent to pornography, even though a number of books have been banned.

Increased freedom as a result of these factors has enabled Chinese writers to venture further into forbidden territory. At the same time, the patriotic campaigns and the surge of state nationalism have made it much easier for Chinese writers to carry out a hidden agenda under the guise of patriotic rhetoric than was the case in the Maoist era. Unlike in the past, Chinese writers are no longer enclosed in clearly marked boundaries, as there are few ground rules to follow in the new game of nationalism. As Jonathan Unger has aptly put it, 'The content of Chinese nationalism has been up for grabs.'³⁵ This has opened up the 'nation' as a site of contestation and enabled the writers to articulate their conception of the nation more boldly than ever since 1949.

³⁵ Jonathan Unger, op. cit., p. xvi.

The CCP's reliance on nationalism is clearly an attempt to reconstruct a broader basis of national authority as rapid social changes render the Maoist ideology irrelevant day by day. It is particularly the case where the official ideology is counter-productive, as in the integration of Hong Kong and Macau and in the unification with Taiwan. For lack of a better alternative, the CCP will continue to rely on patriotism as a unifying ideology. The type of patriotism that nationalist writers promote, however, is of little help to the Party-state. For, as has been discussed, it by no means complies with the CCP's terms and dictates. On the contrary, the nationalist rhetoric turns out to be a double-edged sword: it wounds the US and Japan on the one hand by arousing anti-American and anti-Japanese sentiments while it stabs the CCP. Although it has an enormous patriotic impact, it is often accompanied by a hidden agenda that targets the Maoist ideology and the Party-state.

As I have argued, the central objective of the nationalist writers is to present an alternative national self and to make 'our nation', instead of the Party-state, the focus of national loyalty. To Ah Cheng and Han Shaogong, for example, the communist movement in China is a foreign intrusion and historical detour. Their call to the nation to return to the 'roots' represents a rejection of both the socialist heritage and the Western influence, and identification with the tradition and culture stigmatised by the CCP. The novels set in the anti-Japanese war set out to deflate the myth that the CCP led the nation to victory and that socialist consciousness and Marxism are prerequisites for heroism. The anti-American stories take place outside the CCP's sphere of influence altogether. The heroes' success results from their Chineseness rather than from a socialist consciousness or pride in the socialist motherland, as was invariably the case in literature before 1978 and quite often in the 80s and 90s.

In short, the nation imagined by the nationalist writers is defined by 'national essence' and national cultural traditions rather than by the class concept or socialist consciousness. According to this cultural nationalist conception, the essence of the nation is its distinctive civilisation, which is 'the product of its unique history, culture and geographical profile'. In addition, this conception affirms 'a cosmology according to which humanity, like nature, is infused with a

creative force which endows all things with an individuality'.³⁶ The nation, accordingly, is perceived as a primordial expression of this spirit, and cultural nationalists are convinced that this spirit must be cherished and respected by the members of the nation in order to maintain its self-identity and its creativity.

The cultural nationalists' imagined nation is also embodied by the new species of national hero that they have created or recreated. Heroes in literature and art are able to play this role because they do not simply express the personal opinions and dreams of particular authors but also embody current values and ideals and convey a powerful image of conflicting forces at work in society. Thus they can inspire imitation and initiate or revive patterns of behaviour, thereby playing a critical role in shaping national identity. For these reasons, national heroes are clear indicators of a nation's conception of itself: 'Tell me who your hero is, and I'll know who you are.'³⁷

By creating a new species of national heroes out of bandits, hooligans, landlords, KMT officers and officials, or even traitors, the nationalist writers are including in the new nation that is being imagined those who have been excluded by the CCP. In doing so they give one a fairly good idea as to who and what is included in 'their' nation. In addition, by recasting the new national heroes in the 'Chinese' mould rather than the Marxist or revolutionary ones, highlighting their 'Chineseness' and firmly planting them in the Chinese tradition and culture rather than class consciousness or partisan loyalty, they make it quite clear about the nature of 'their' nation.

It is probably not too far-fetched to see this as a struggle to break free from the shackles of communism. This struggle is motivated by the deep conviction that China has been led astray by the CCP, that China is better off returning to its own roots, and that 'their' new Chinese nation will not be able to emerge without ridding itself of the un-Chinese influence of the CCP. Neither is it too far-fetched to see it as an endeavour by the intellectual elite to assume a leading role in the invention of a new nation. The CCP's traditional role as guardian of patriotism is bound to diminish as patriotism ceases to be its sole province, as the ambit of what is seen to be patriotic becomes expanded to include what is unacceptable or

³⁶ John Hutchinson, *op. cit.*, p. 13.

³⁷ See Robert Ruhlman, *op. cit.*, p. 150.

even abominable to its fundamental ideology, and as the content of patriotism is no longer dictated by the Party but modified and redefined by nationalist writers and intellectuals.

This casts some light on who is imagining the nation, who are included or excluded, and how it is defined. Many signs point to a diminished role for the CCP and an expanded one for the intellectual elites in this national project. As it is, the CCP has already lost effective control over significant intellectual debates on cultural and national issues, whereas the intellectuals are now exerting increasingly greater influence on the society than they did before 1978. Furthermore, cultural nationalists and conservative intellectuals in general have the added advantage over their radical colleagues in the late 80s that, unlike the latter, they are embracing the Chinese tradition rather than condemning it, therefore facing far less resistance from the conservatives within the CCP and large proportions of the population. They are connived at or tolerated by the new, more conservative leadership because their return to the Chinese roots cannot be said to be unpatriotic notwithstanding its adverse impact on the CCP.

Before other social groups develop in strength and influence, the intelligentsia will continue to lead in intellectual, cultural or social debates. It will be surprising if that position is not translated into the power to generate and shape public opinion. It would be satisfying to be able to pin-point what sort of impact these works have on different types of readers or viewers. Unfortunately, such information is not available and extremely difficult to obtain. In the absence of more accurate information about reader/viewer response, it is reasonable to assume that these are the voices of a group of the most influential people that can be heard in the public realm, and their impact must be in proportion to their profile.

If the CCP is no longer able to dictate public opinion, it will be forced to respond to it with still greater flexibility than it has already demonstrated. There is even the likelihood that a highly autonomous civil society will fill in the gap that results from the receding presence of the CCP in the public arena as it further withdraws from micro control and is forced out of other areas. Moreover, the notion of a cultural nation calls in question the Party-state's legitimacy, which primarily rests on a constitutionally-sanctioned class-nation. If the concept of the class-nation cannot compete with the cultural nation, the CCP will have to

reposition itself in relation to the 'nation' in order to legitimise itself. There is no denying that this process is already well under way, even though the changes might not be obvious at a glance.

These implications, however, do not seem to matter to the CCP yet, either because they have not dawned on its leadership, or because there is little it can do to contain the intellectuals. So, for the time being, the hundred flowers of nationalism are encouraged to blossom, and for the first time in the literary history of the PRC, 'dregs' and 'essence' flourish at the same time, while villains and heroes march together under the same banner, the banner of patriotism.

5 Rewriting History for the Nation: The 'Zeng Guofan Phenomenon'

Zeng Guofan (1811-1872) has been one of the most controversial figures in modern Chinese history. He has been variously judged a 'saint' as well as a 'lackey of the Manchus', a 'cold-blooded killer', and a 'traitor' to his country. Since the mid-1980s, interest in Zeng in China has escalated into a virtual frenzy. Between January 1981 and March 1997, publications on Zeng have included *The Complete Writings of Zeng Guofan*, *The Letters of Zeng Guofan*, two biographies, a script for a 50-episode television series entitled *Zeng Guofan*, a play with the same title, 433 articles, and half a dozen book-length studies.¹ The debate broke out of the ivory tower of academia with the publication in 1993 of Tang Haoming's popular three-volume historical novel *Zeng Guofan*, which caused a sensation throughout the country as well as in the Chinese diaspora in Asia. It was printed 19 times between October 1993 and May 1996, and over a million copies were sold in the first two years alone. And there is still no sign of a slackening of interest. Such is the obsession with Zeng in China that it warrants the label 'the Zeng Guofan phenomenon'.

What is the fuss over Zeng Guofan all about? One explanation is that it has to do with the renaissance of Hunan regional culture that took place in 1993-94. Another view emphasises that readers today can find in Zeng's career a 'textbook' of classic Chinese power politics. Still another explanation holds that it is a reflection of the popular yearning in the 1990s for national heroes.² Zeng's newly-found popularity can also be attributed in part to the fact that he was taboo between 1949 and 1978; this has made it all the more tempting for scholars to set the record straight, although it has to be admitted that not all Chinese historians

¹ These statistics, for the period between Jan. 1981 and 15 June 1997, were obtained through the China Social Sciences Data Base at the Shanghai Library.

² Yang Nianqun, 'My views on the "Zeng Guofan phenomenon"' [*Wo kan 'Zeng Guofan xianxiang'*], *Ershiji Shiji* 25, Oct., 1994, p. 135.

and scholars are in this debate for the same reason. Contributors to the 'phenomenon' include aspiring young historians and undergraduate students who are eager to make a name for themselves, and even business people who are keen to capitalise on the Zeng frenzy. What is most striking is that Zeng appears to provide writers and readers with all sorts of opportunities and possibilities, and such seems his significance that the answers to questions about him can appear to be the key to many problems that confront Chinese society.

What is most important to me is the ideological and political dimension of the phenomenon, something that has scarcely been touched upon so far. Regardless of their seeming preoccupation with historicity, the arguments and counter-arguments are evidently not just about the past. Neither are they simply about Zeng Guofan. Rather, they reach far beyond Zeng to traverse at least three overlapping areas, academic, political, and cultural. The most fundamental questions raised in the debate are not only about historical studies but also about class analysis and historical materialism, revolution versus evolution, and tradition and culture. Above all, the debate raises a fundamental issue that underlies all the questions, that is, the issue of national identity, or the reimagination of a Chinese nation through the rewriting of 'Chinese' history. The real site of contestation in this debate is the nation and the central theme is 'Chineseness'.

This chapter focuses on the politics of national identity as it is played out in the debate. It begins with a brief discussion of the historical evaluation of Zeng as a contextual basis for later discussion. This is followed by a summary and analysis of the debate which underlines the centrality of national identity. The concluding discussion explores the implications of the revaluation of Zeng and the rewriting of history from two perspectives: the politics of history and the socialist, ethnic and cultural conceptions of the Chinese nation-state.

1. The Ups and Downs of Zeng Guofan since the Late Qing

The current 'Zeng Guofan phenomenon' may be a product of the last decade, but it is certainly not the first revival of Zeng since the late Qing. Zeng has been 'rediscovered' at major critical junctures when competing ideologies or value systems clashed and Chinese sought a new historical consciousness or wished to enlist new energies for a difficult task on a national scale.

From the Late Qing to the 1980s

Zeng Guofan's place in history was secured when Xue Fucheng, at the request of Li Hongzhang, wrote a report to the emperor to commend Zeng's virtues and achievements. In his report, Xue compared Zeng to China's outstanding ministers of all time, Zhu Geliang, Lu Zhi, and Si Maguang. Leading Qing reformer Liang Qichao believed that Zeng would have been the salvation of China at the end of the nineteenth century had he been alive and well. Liang argued that the *Collected Essays of Zeng Guofan* (*Zeng Wenzheng gong quanji*) provided valuable answers to restoring order to China. The nationalist project of Confucian moderniser Zhang Zhidong – 'preserving our race, our religion, and our state' – arguably owed more to Zeng's influence than anything else in placing 'our religion', Confucianism, squarely in the centre of the triad, to be preserved above all else and used to guide the preservation of 'our race' and 'our state'.

Sun Yat-sen's republicans attacked Zeng because of his identification with the Manchus, although on this point they were quite moderate compared with the Marxists, and even more so after their anti-Manchu revolution succeeded. Zeng was back in favour during the brief restoration of Yuan Shikai, who backed his cause against the republican revolutionaries with Confucianism and claims to religious and cultural orthodoxy. Chiang Kai-shek's promotion of Confucianism and Zeng as 'a model for national salvation and nation-building' might have been part of a scheme to secure some certainty during the first tumultuous decades of the century, but it was first and foremost aimed at the Communists. Chiang even commissioned a booklet, *Zeng Guofan and Hu Linyi on Military Affairs*, for which he personally wrote a preface, so that his generals, with this manual in hand, could defeat the Communists just as Zeng's army had routed the Taipings.

Under Chiang's sponsorship, the study of Zeng reached its first climax in the 1930s and 1940s. Half a dozen book-length studies on Zeng were published, all of which portrayed him as the first man in the last five hundred years to have put his learning to good practical use in his political and military career, as one of the 'perfect' men (*wanren*) of the past and present, as a brilliant example to be emulated by China's youth for self-education and self-perfection, and as a statesman who made an enormous contribution to the nation and state. That image, like his image today, is quintessentially 'Chinese'.

The young Mao Zedong, before he realised that the statement could not bear up under the scrutiny of Marxian historiography, professed that the only man in modern China whom he admired was Zeng Guofan.³ But such sentiments were not repeated by anyone until the 1980s. There was considerable interest in Zeng before 1957 and even then some historians raised objections to branding Zeng a traitor on the grounds that he remained loyal to the Qing. In the 1970s, Zeng was mentioned more frequently but only as a target of criticism, and the attack on him intensified during the Criticising Lin Biao and Criticising Confucius Campaign because of his Confucian credentials.

Zeng Guofan since 4 June

Interest in Zeng remerged gradually between 1979 and 1988 - only 65 out of the 433 articles were published during those ten years - but started to soar after 1989. The skyrocketing attention paid to Zeng apparently parallels the spread of the 'national essence fever' that started to emerge in 1989, and in terms of content, the 'Zeng Guofan phenomenon' is really part and parcel of the latter.

These trends have taken place against the background of a 'crisis of faith', which has emerged in the wake of accelerated modernisation and the debunking of socialism, as we have discussed in previous chapters. Meanwhile, reacting against the Westernisation discourse of the 1980s, intellectual elites began to reevaluate and rediscover tradition. It is not easy to find satisfactory answers to the causes of these complex social trends, but it can be generally argued, perhaps, that the renewed interest in Zeng and cultural traditions in general reflects the need of a new historical consciousness or a feeling of continuity to be projected backward as well as forward amidst the massive uncertainties of the time.⁴

The Pros and Cons in the Current Debate

³ Li Rui, 'Why did Mao admire Zeng Guofan?' [*Wei shenme 'dufu' Zeng Wenzheng*], *Dushu* 2, 1992, p. 8.

⁴ According to Rustow, late modernising societies generally share an ambivalence towards modernity and their own traditions. As massive uncertainties arise under the impact of modernisation, 'a feeling of continuity must be projected backward as well as forward'. See Dankwart A. Rustow, *A World of Nations: Problems of Political Modernisation*, Washington, D.C.: the Brookings Institute, 1967, p. 42.

In the official CCP historiography, Zeng stands condemned as a 'traitor to the Han' (*hanjian*), a 'traitor to his country' (*maiguozei*), and a 'cold-blooded killer' (*kuaizishou*). This verdict was sanctified by authoritative philosopher Feng Youlan. For over three decades, Feng's judgements were accepted as the CCP's official position and were not openly challenged until the beginning of the 1980s. Although Chinese historians are still not unanimous about Zeng, his rehabilitation is now becoming a solid reality regardless of the opposition from Marxist historians, who are certainly not dead and buried even though they are steadily losing ground. There is now something approaching a consensus that Zeng was an exemplary Confucian man of literary and professional achievements and moral excellence, and that the prominence of his role in modern Chinese history has been surpassed by few. The main battle, of course, is fought over his characterisation as a 'traitor to the Han', a 'traitor to his country', and a 'cold-blooded killer'. Table 5 summarises the major points of contention based on the 43 articles found in *Fuyin baokan ziliao* and quantitatively compares the arguments and counter-arguments.

TABLE 5. Major points of contention in the debate on Zeng Guofan

Contention	Yes n (%)	No n (%)	Mainly Affirmative n (%)	Mainly Negative n (%)	NA n (%)
Was Zeng a traitor to the Han?	2 (4.7)	26 (60)	0	0	15 (35)
Was he a traitor to his country?	4 (9.3)	21 (49)	0	4 (9.3)	14 (33)
Was his suppression of the rebels justified?	4 (9.3)	5 (12)	10 (23)	3 (7)	21 (49)
Was his handling of the riots justified?	1 (2.3)	3 (7)	9 (21)	8 (19)	22 (51)
Did he play a positive role in yangwu?	23 (53)	1 (2)	8 (19)	2 (4.7)	9 (21)
Was yangwu positive?	28 (65)	8 (19)	2 (5)	1 (2.3)	4 (9.3)
Should Zeng, the Confucian man, be denounced?	1 (2.3)	6 (14)	5 (12)	21 (49)	10 (23)
Was he an exemplary man of virtue?	25 (58)	1 (2)	7 (16)	4 (9.3)	6 (14)

SOURCE: Based on 43 articles published between Jan. 1981 and June 1997 and extracted in *Fuyin baokan ziliao*, *Zhongguo jindai shi*. NOTE: NA = not applicable.

The first four points of contention in Table 5 revolve around the question of whether Zeng was a 'traitor to the Han', a 'traitor to his country', and a 'cold-blooded killer'. The last four go well beyond Zeng's historical role and his

character and bring into focus such issues as China's modernisation and Confucianism. In the answers to these questions lies a large range of important issues in China's intellectual and political life. For the sake of clarity, let us now look at the first three questions one by one before discussing the political implications of the debate.

2. Han-Centric Conceptions of the Nation under Challenge

The labels 'traitor to his country' and 'cold-blooded killer' are primarily based on Zeng's suppression of anti-French riots in Tianjin in 1870 and his crushing of the Taiping rebellion. But the official historiography is deliberately vague about the epithet 'traitor to the Han' because of the CCP's declared opposition to Han chauvinism and its fear of inciting ethnic division. It is nonetheless fairly clear that the only reason for labelling Zeng a 'traitor to the Han' was his loyalty to the Manchu Qing dynasty despite the fact that he was of the Han nationality. Some historians, who apparently do not distinguish between the 'Han' and the 'Chinese' but take it for granted that the former equals the latter, even go so far as to condemn him as a 'traitor to his country' for the very same reason. Many others insist that an evaluation of Zeng from Han and Marxist perspectives falls short of being 'objective', and is unacceptable to many Chinese people, including those Han who regard the Qing dynasty as a national Chinese state.

Was Zeng Guofan a 'traitor to the Han'? Feng Youlan's answer was definitely affirmative, the reason being that 'Zeng Guofan and a bunch of followers had no national loyalty but willingly turned themselves into obedient slaves of the Manchus and slaughtered Han people'.⁵ Of course, the Han people that they 'slaughtered' included Taipings, and thus a question about ethnic loyalty becomes intertwined with ideology. From a Marxist point of view, the rebels were on the right side of history whereas Zeng was not. But to condemn Zeng as a 'traitor to the Han' on that score is hardly tenable. The accusation is not much more tenable

⁵ Cited by Ma Yongshan, 'Questioning Zeng Guofan's label of "a traitor to the Han"' [Zeng Guofan 'Hanjian' shuo zhiyi], *Nei Menggu minzu shiyuan xuebao* 1, 1987, p. 82.

if it is based upon his loyalty to the Manchu dynasty. For those reasons, the first label is not seriously defended today by anyone.

A few historians have vaguely referred to Zeng as a 'traitor to the Han' in their discussions of his ruthless campaigns against the rebels and his identification with the Manchus. However, not a single article that I have read makes any attempt to justify the label. A common argument is that it is not fair to accuse Zeng of betraying the Han people because, first, 'both the Han and the Manchus belonged to the same Chinese nation, which had been fostered for over two centuries when Zeng came onto the scene', and second, 'the Manchu dynasty was a legitimate Chinese state' and loyalty to the state, which encompassed the Han, was not a betrayal of the Han.⁶ If Zeng was a traitor to the Han, they argue, then Lin Zexu, Wei Yuan, Zuo Zongtang and many others who served the Qing dynasty cannot possibly be patriotic national heroes. To perpetuate the label, they further argue, runs counter to the interests of the whole nation by dividing the Han and the Manchu peoples.⁷

Was Zeng a 'traitor to his country'? Here the debate centres on Zeng's dealings with Westerners, particularly his handling of the Tianjin riots. His critics believe he sacrificed national dignity and the interests of the people.⁸ His defenders, on the other hand, contend that in compromising with the French Zeng was simply implementing a decision that was made by the Qing court.⁹ Besides, since China was in the grip of the Western powers and French gunboats were

⁶ Xu Shanhe, 'Zeng Guofan was a patriot' [*Zeng Guofan shi aiguo zhe*], *Xiangtan daxue xuebao* (sheke ban) 1, 1989, p. 86.

⁷ See, e.g., Peng Qian, 'On the study of Zeng Guofan' [*Tantan Zeng Guofan yanjiu wenti*], *Qunyan* 1, 1986, pp. 34-5; Ma Yongshan, op. cit., p. 83; Deng Yunsheng, 'A challenge to labeling Zeng Guofan a "traitor to the Han" and "a traitor to his country"' [*Zeng Guofan Hanjian maiguozei bian*], *Qiusuo* 1, 1988, p. 123; Shen Jiarong, 'A revaluation of the Zeng Guofan "case of treason"' [*Zeng Guofan 'maiguozei an' xintan*], *Shixue yuekan* 1, 1990, p. 45; Xu Shanhe, op. cit., p. 86.

⁸ See, Jiang Duo, 'A brief evaluation of Zeng Guofan' [*Luelun Zeng Guofan qi ren*], *Shehui kexue* 2, 1989, p. 76; Yi Mengchun, 'Zeng Guofan's psychological conflicts in handling the Tianjin riots' [*Zeng Guofan zai banli Tianjin jiaolan zhong de xinli maodun*], *Jindaishi yanjiu* 1, 1990, p. 91; Wang Linmao, 'Zeng Guofan's thought on Sino-foreign negotiations guided by Confucian ethics' [*Rujia lunli guannian zhidao xia de Zeng Guofan Hua yang jiaoshe sixiang*], *Jindaishi yanjiu* 3, 1996, p. 185; Dai Xueji and Xu Ru, 'Zeng Guofan's strategies to defend China against invasion' [*Zeng Guofan de 'yuyi' sixiang lunlue*], *Fujian luntan* 2, 1984, p. 40.

⁹ Xu Shanhe, op. cit., p. 83; Deng Yunsheng, op. cit., pp. 124-7; Shen Jiarong, op. cit., p. 90; Ma Yongshan, 'Zeng Guofan and traditional culture' [*Zeng Guofan yu chuantong wenhua*], *Nei Menggu minzhu shiyuan xuebao* 1, 1987, p. 87.

moving into the Tianjin harbour in response to the riots, Zeng had no choice but to meet French demands. Nevertheless, he did the best he could under the circumstances, and he did not give in wherever he could stand firm in order to minimise damage to the Chinese government and to the local community in Tianjin. In any case, even though it is not easy to justify his harsh action against his compatriots, he was by no means a 'traitor to his country'.¹⁰

Much of the argument over labelling Zeng a 'traitor to his country' revolves around his role in the modernisation movement (*yangwu yundong*). Critics of Zeng Guofan in this regard - and they are not many - fall into two main categories: those who are sceptical of his role rather than of the movement itself, and those who are critical of both. The former take exception to his moderate foreign policy, which was built on, in Zeng's words, 'sincerity, credibility, honesty, and respect'. To his sharpest critics, these Confucian principles meant nothing, under the treaty system, but appeasement of the invaders at the cost of state sovereignty and national dignity. These critics charge that Zeng's policies of 'appeasement' are responsible for China's humiliations from the late Qing to 1949.¹¹ The historian Zhu Andong, for example, suggests that the modernisation program was futile because of Zeng's appeasement policies, as the more China gave in to the West, the weaker it became, thus launching China into a vicious circle that rendered any advance in technology insignificant. In this regard, some historians have contrasted Zeng's moderate, pragmatic foreign policies with the belligerent stance of Lin Zexu and Zuo Zongtang; these critics conclude that there is no comparison between 'Zeng's cowardice' and the 'patriotic heroism of Lin and Zuo'.¹²

Those who find nothing positive either in Zeng's modernisation program or in the modernisation movement itself consciously or unconsciously start from a Marxist point of view. Their conclusion is that Zeng had gunboats built for no

¹⁰ See, e.g., Xu Shanhe, *op. cit.*, p. 86; Deng Yunsheng, *op. cit.*, p. 124; Ma Yongshan, *ibid.*, pp. 82-4; Shen Jiarong, *op. cit.*, pp. 49-50.

¹¹ Liu Leyang, 'A brief evaluation of Zeng Guofan's merits and demerits and his intellectual influence' [*Lüetan Zeng Guofan de lishi gongzui yu xueshu diwei*], *Jianghai xuekan* 4, 1987, p. 84.

¹² See, e.g., Zhu Andong, 'Zeng Guofan's role and influence in modern Chinese history' [*Ping Zeng Guofan zai jindaishi shang de zuoyong he yingxiang*], *Qiusuo* 1, 1988, p. 115.

other reason than to protect Western interests and facilitate foreign invasion,¹³ that the whole program was an effort on the part of the ruling landed class, of which Zeng was a representative, to wipe out the Taipings and salvage the crumbling reactionary Manchu Qing dynasty, and that in order to achieve that objective, Zeng and his associates had to collaborate with the imperialists.¹⁴

Most historians, however, recognise Zeng's contribution to China's first steps toward modernisation and the positive historical impact of the movement. It is frequently pointed out that it was under his aegis that China's first steamship, first arsenal, and first machine-tool manufacturer were born. It was also with his support that education developed quickly in China, the first Chinese students were sent to the West to study modern science and technology, and the first translation service was set up to take control of the flow of information from the West, which had up till then been monopolised by foreign missionaries. In short, thanks to Zeng, China began to open its doors to the outside world.

Many authors also agree that while Zeng's foreign policy may have been imperfect, its moderation, realism, and rationality ensured peace and facilitated national self-strengthening.¹⁵ To some, Zeng's major contribution was that he translated the idea of *shi yizhi* (acquiring the wisdom of the foreigners) into a social reality, and started a process of industrialisation that has had a most profoundly positive impact on modern China.¹⁶ On that basis, some even claim that Zeng was not a traitor to the Han or his country but a national hero.¹⁷ At any rate, Zeng's belief that China could improve its lot through systematic application of science, technology and social organisation appears to fit better with the

¹³ Zhu Zhenhua, 'Zeng Guofan and modern science and technology' [*Zeng Guofan he jindai keji*], *Jianghuai luntan* 1, 1984, p. 117.

¹⁴ Dong Qing, 'A sketch of the life of Zeng Guofan' [*Zeng Guofan de yisheng*], *Shandong daxue xuebao* 1, 1983, p. 35; Wang Shaopu, 'The formation, nature, and role of Zeng Guofan's ideas on modernization' [*Zeng Guofan yangwu sixiang de xingcheng, xingzhi he zuoyong*], *Lishi yanjiu* 2, 1983, p. 176; Dai Xueji and Xu Ru, op. cit., p. 40.

¹⁵ Deng Yibing, Wang Jiping and Cheng Xiaojun, cited by Rao Huaimin and Wang Xiaotian, 'An overview of Zeng Guofan studies' [*Zeng Guofan yanjiu shuping*], *Hunan shifan daxue shehui kexue xuebao* 5, 1986, p. 8.

¹⁶ Yang Guoqiang, 'A brief evaluation of Zeng Guofan' [*Zeng Guofan jianlun*], *Lishi yanjiu* 6, 1987, pp. 97-100.

¹⁷ Xu Shanhe, op. cit., pp. 86-90.

Chinese idea of modernisation today than Sun Yat-sen's ethnocentric nationalism and Mao's Marxist alternative.

Zeng is certainly not the only influential historical figure to have been reevaluated recently. Also under review have been Guo Songtao, Li Hongzhang, and Lin Zexu, and even Wen Tianxiang and Yue Fei, archetypal Chinese national heroes, and Qin Hui, the archetypal traitor. Guo Songtao and Li Hongzhang, in particular, were both closely associated with Zeng. Guo, China's first ambassador to Britain, was a towering figure in Zeng's think-tank, which consisted of a large group of intellectuals who operated outside the establishment but nevertheless were committed to safeguarding a centuries-old tradition of orthodoxy. It was Guo who overcame Zeng's reluctance and talked him into leading the anti-Taiping campaign. It was also Guo, as is often pointed out, who was responsible for Zeng's moderate foreign policies. If Zeng is a traitor, Guo cannot possibly be a patriot, as he is portrayed; while if Zeng is to be condemned for his role in the defeat of the Taipings, then Guo is certainly not blameless.

In recent years, historians have questioned the juxtaposition of Yue Fei as national hero and Qin Hui as traitor, because, for one thing, Yue's enemies and Qin's allies were the Mongols, many of whose descendants are today citizens of China. Since Yue Fei was fighting for the Han, and since the Chinese nation now includes Mongols, it then becomes problematic to continue to promote him as a patriotic Chinese national hero, just as it is questionable to label Zeng a traitor to his country because of his loyalty to the Chinese state created by the Manchus. The use of history to promote nationalism in a polyethnic nation like China has caused no small amount of confusion and resentment among ethnic minorities. Underlying Yue's glorification and Zeng's condemnation is a tacit assumption that 'Han' equals 'China'. That assumption has now been brought into question in the debate on Zeng Guofan, Guo Songtao, Yue Fei, Wen Tianxiang, and Qin Hui.

There is insufficient evidence to enable us to say with any certainty that Lin Zexu is being replaced by Zeng Guofan, Guo Songtao, and Li Hongzhang in the 'hit parade' among Chinese historians - indeed, Lin is, and will continue to be, regarded as a hero by Chinese nationalists due to his integrity, his well-established image, and his popular appeal. But growing scepticism about Lin Zexu, coupled with a trend toward positive evaluations of Zeng, Guo, and Li, reflects shifting attitudes with respect to the Other. Patriotic national hero though Lin may be in

the eyes of nationalists today, the distinction between belligerence and rational diplomacy is no longer one of patriotism versus treason. To speak for the rational/moderate model of Zeng, Guo, and Li calls for a vision of the world as consisting of nations that are more or less equal rather than as one consisting of a civilised 'us' and a barbaric 'them'. It is a vision that recognises that conflicts are best resolved through negotiations and compromise.

3. The Revolutionary Identity Deconstructed

A Cold-Blooded Killer?

The epithet of 'cold-blooded killer' is the thorniest question in the entire debate because of its political entanglements. Some historians - Jiang Duo, Liu Leyang, Dong Caishi, and Dong Qing, among others - condemn Zeng for crushing the Taiping rebellion; they start from the premise that the Taipings were a progressive historical force whereas Zeng represented the reactionary feudal landed class. Jiang Duo's argument is in many ways representative of the interpretations - as well as the political inclinations, methodology, and emotivity - of these historians. He is therefore worth quoting at some length:

It seems impossible to justify Zeng Guofan's crime of suppressing the Taiping Heavenly Kingdom. Reversal of the verdict will not be easy. In any case, the fervent Taiping movement was the first national democratic movement in the nature of a bourgeois revolution led by peasants. It was mainly a progressive and just movement. The Qing dynasty supported by Zeng Guofan, on the other hand, represented the decadent forces of the feudal aristocratic and landed classes. As the last feudal regime, it was an embodiment of corruption and violence at their worst. It also surrendered national dignity in exchange for peace with foreign invaders. It was a reactionary and unjust regime on the whole....I do not think any more needs to be said as to where a progressive Marxist historian should stand.¹⁸

But Marxist historians are few in this debate. Some defend Zeng within the framework of class analysis and conclude that it was only natural for Zeng, a representative of the landed class, to oppose a peasant rebellion that threatened its

¹⁸ Jiang Duo, op. cit., p. 75.

rule.¹⁹ Some defend Zeng on the grounds that the rebels, who became corrupt and went astray at the later stages, ceased to be a progressive force, and therefore their eradication was justified.²⁰ One author cleverly attacks the rebels by quoting the negative comments on the rebels by Karl Marx, which have been conveniently forgotten by Marxist historians.²¹ Others simply ignore class distinctions and represent the conflict as one between state and rebels, or as one over tradition and culture. The Taipings, they argue, were not only out to destroy the legitimate state but Chinese culture and tradition as well. Peng Qian, for instance, argues that Hong Xiuquan posed a greater threat than any other rebel in history because he declared war on both the state and Chinese culture. In the eyes of Zeng Guofan, Peng suggests, at stake were 'the mores, morality, literary classics, and laws of several thousand years'.²² What motivated Zeng in his ruthless campaign against the rebels was a determination to safeguard Chinese tradition; Zeng was thus an embodiment of the Chinese state (*wangchao*), the Chinese Way (*shengdao*), and the sacred religion (*shendao*).²³

Some historians directly question the assumption that held sway for decades that peasant rebels are necessarily a progressive force. They even liken the "cultural genocide" committed by the rebels to the leftist excesses of the Gang of Four during the Cultural Revolution. Peng Qian, for instance, writes:

A comprehensive study of the documents will enable us to see that the former [Zeng's suppression the Taiping rebels] has to do with their erroneous policy of liquidating or even randomly destroying the national culture. Imagine this: If ... the works of Confucius, Mencius, and other Chinese philosophers are all banned and no one is allowed to read *Shijing* without the approval of Hong Xiuquan, would it be possible for our traditional national culture to survive? Is that not the same as what the Gang of Four did during the Cultural Revolution? For this reason, some scholars say that Zeng Guofan's Hunan Army

¹⁹ Ma Yongshan, op. cit., p. 83.

²⁰ Shi Xingzhou, 'Contending evaluations of Zeng Guofan' [*Dui Zeng Guofan pingjia de zhenglun*] *Jiefang ribao*, 25 Jan., 1987, p. 4.

²¹ Zi Zhongjun, 'The criteria for patriotism' [*Aiguo de zuobiao*], *Dushu* 6, 1996, p. 62.

²² Peng Qian, op. cit., p. 35.

²³ Ibid., p. 35; Ma Yongshan, op. cit., p. 83; also see Shen Jiazhuang, 'A comparison of Zeng Guofan and Hong Xiuquan' [*Zeng Guofan yu Hong Xiuquan bijiao*], *Guangming ribao*, 5 Aug., 1987, p. 3; and Yang Guoqiang, op. cit., pp. 58-83.

was not really about defending the emperor but about accepting responsibility to safeguard the national culture.²⁴

Peng thus goes on to question the progressiveness of peasant rebels:

Did peasant movements throughout history play a positive role in the process of historical development? Did they have a negative impact while making some positive contribution? These questions are worth studying scientifically. The Taiping movement is no exception.... Historical evaluation should be able to stand the rigorous test of time.²⁵

Revolution versus Evolution

The debate on Zeng Guofan versus Hong Xiuquan involves a clash of two remarkably different paradigms, namely evolution versus revolution. The revolutionary paradigm held sway over the writing of Chinese history for more than three decades. It guided the construction of a revolutionary identity on the foundation of a worker-peasant alliance; in the process, much of the past that did not accord with this revolutionary vision was erased. Modern Chinese history, under this paradigm, became a narrative of 'two processes' and 'three climaxes'. One of the processes was 'the colonisation and semi-colonisation of China by imperialists and Chinese feudalists'; the other was 'the struggle against imperialists and their running dogs by the Chinese people'. The three climaxes refer to 'the Taiping Revolution', the *Yihetuan* (Boxer) movement and the Revolution of 1911.

The challenge to this narrative has been surprisingly bold in recent years. Hu Bing, for instance, commented in a speech published in the prominent journal *Wenshizhe* (*Literature, History and Philosophy*) that 'ultra-leftism in historiography is manifested in the belief that only revolutionary violence is just and in the failure to see the progressiveness of innovation and reform'.²⁶ Kong Linren's opinion was that both the peasants and the bourgeoisie fall within the

²⁴ Peng Qian, op. cit., p. 35.

²⁵ Ibid., p. 36.

²⁶ Hu Ping, Kong Linren, Qi Qizhang, and Chen Yueqing, 'A few questions about the basic framework of modern Chinese history' [*Guanyu Zhongguo jindaishi jiben xiansuo wenti*], *Wenshizhe* 3, 1983, p. 50.

category of 'the people'.²⁷ Renowned scholar Li Zehou wrote an article in 1994 entitled, without beating about the bush, 'Revolution Is Not Necessarily a Good Thing in China'. His target was not merely all the revolutions from 1911 to 1978, but also what he identified as the source of these revolutions, namely, intellectual and political radicalism, pioneered by Tan Sitong. After pointing out that Chinese Marxist historians have habitually taken a negative view of reform, he declared it was now time to abandon that type of revolutionary language and mentality.²⁸ Some Chinese scholars in exile in Hong Kong, enjoying the luxury of freedom of speech, excoriated revolution in a book entitled *Farewell to Revolution*.²⁹ Their definition of revolution is so comprehensive as to cover the French Revolution. In the same vein, they go far beyond the Qing reforms led by Kang Youwei and Liang Qichao to applaud the English Reformation. Their message is simple: turn away from the radical revolutionary social/political discourse and toward cultural conservatism.

Such a stance not only rejects revolution as a concept and a practice, but denies the Chinese revolution its historicity by describing it as a historical aberration. The case against revolution is that the revolutionary paradigm is premised on a break with, or negation of, the past, and in its inclination to view cultural tradition as an obstacle to revolution, it also dislodges culture to the point of irrelevance in the writing of history. In other words, as well as being an undesirable alternative, it is an un-Chinese concept that has led China astray from its natural path. As China was led astray, it lost touch with its own tradition and cultural roots in Confucianism, the foundation of the Chinese nation, or the Way, as Confucians would put it. Now it is revolution, as a concept and movement, which is widely regarded as an obstacle to China's modernisation and held responsible for China's deviation from its natural path.

²⁷ Ibid., p. 51.

²⁸ Li Zehou, 'A dialogue about moral reconstruction in contemporary culture' [*Guanyu wenhua xianzhuang daode congjian de duihua*], *Dongfang* 5, 1994, extracted in *Zhongliu* 10, 1994, p. 29.

²⁹ Li Zehou and Liu Zaifu (eds.), *Farewell to revolution: Looking Back on Twentieth-Century China* [*Gaobie geming: huiwang ershi shiji Zhongguo*], Hong Kong: Tiandi tushu youxian gongsi, 1995.

The paradigmatic shift from revolution to evolution renders problematic a number of conceptions of historical materialism, most principally, 'the people' that make up the political community, the prime mover of history, the pattern of historical development, and historical destiny. It is thus no accident that the Taiping and Boxer movements are almost 'forgotten', and the peasants and proletariat, cornerstones of a progressive revolutionary identity, are sidelined. Modern Chinese history is thus being rewritten as a natural, continuous process of evolution, led by the bourgeoisie instead of the peasants, wherein the progressive force is Confucianism. The focus has shifted back from certain economic aspects - the relations of production - to the realm of culture.³⁰ What is now highlighted is, as in the 'new history' (*xin shixue*), the continuity of history, and it focuses on the evolution of China as a nation, the communal identity shared by the Chinese people, and the unique characteristics of the Chinese nation.

This anti-revolutionary trend developed steadily through the 1980s and 1990s. An excellent summary of the trend can be found in eminent Marxist historian Gong Shuduo's criticism of 'reversing the verdict' on Yuan Shikai:

Reversals of judgements on historical figures and events are not unheard of in history, but they have become a fashion today. Speeches and writings intended to reverse judgements on people and events in modern Chinese history are very common, and reversals take place as easily as pancakes are turned over in the pan.... The Taiping peasant rebellion led by Hong Xiuquan is now described as a 'historical regression' whereas Zeng Guofan's suppression of the rebellion is said to have made 'an enormous contribution to the prevention of regression'. The Revolution of 1911 and the May 4th Movement are viewed as 'radical' [movements which]... not only disrupted the natural development of modern Chinese history, but had an adverse impact on the natural development of Chinese history today. The list of reversals goes on.³¹

It is worth emphasising that this trend has developed regardless of counterattacks from CCP propagandists in *Seeking Truth (Qiushi)*, the mouthpiece of the CCP's Ministry of Propaganda, and the left-wing *Popular Forum (Qunyan)*,

³⁰ Arif Dirlik, 'Reversals, ironies, hegemonies: notes on the contemporary historiography of modern China', *Modern China* 22 (3 Jul., 1996), pp. 256-7.

³¹ Gong Shuduo, 'The verdict on Yuan Shikai must not be reversed' [*Yuan Shikai zhi an fan bu de*], *Zhongliu* 11, 1995, p. 36.

and *Midstream (Zhongliu)*, most of which are directed at what is described as the 'ideological thrust' of the trend. An article in *Zhongliu*, for example, put it simply, and correctly: 'farewell to revolution means farewell to Marxism, to socialism, and to the whole revolutionary tradition of the Chinese people'.³² But its argument against the anti-revolutionary discourse is less than convincing, as it calls for the defence of all things under attack, a daunting task in the current political and intellectual climate in China.

4. Reconstructing the Nation on Cultural Traditions

At the cultural level, the debate on Zeng Guofan is primarily about Confucianism - the culture of the intellectual elite and of the general populace - and traditional Chinese values, or Chineseness in short. As a descendent of Zeng Zi, one of the main disciples of Confucius, and as an erudite Confucian (*tongru*), Zeng Guofan has impeccable Confucian credentials. Most critics attack Zeng from a class standpoint, clearly distinguishing between the progressive culture and values of the revolutionary classes and the reactionary values of the landed class. Zeng's defenders apparently refuse to engage in a debate on values in terms of class analysis and simply get on with the business of 'rediscovering' the values of Chinese nationalism, as if they were axiomatic.

In this, as in many other things, Zeng is the antithesis of the Taipings, who adopted Christianity and attacked Confucianism. Therefore, some historians portray the Taipings not only as rebels against the Chinese state but as rebels against Chineseness itself. Here, the anti-revolution thesis parallels the argument against Westernisation: both revolution and Westernisation are historical aberrations. In fact, the call to 'return to the roots' results from a popular perception of national degeneration. In this common view, Chinese history deviated from its own natural path during decades of revolution between 1911 and 1978 and it is now time that China returned to its 'true self'. A similar suggestion is that the remedy for the ills of a revolutionary China and a Westernising China

³² Zhang Haipeng, 'Refuting the absurd slogan of "farewell to revolution"' [*Bochi 'gaobie geming' de miushuo*], *Zhongliu* 2, 1997, pp. 29-31.

lies in the past, in the whole of China's cultural heritage and in Confucianism in particular. Clearly, then, the argument about Zeng and Hong goes well beyond these two individuals. In the nationalist historians' representation of Zeng Guofan as an embodiment of tradition and Hong Xiuquan as a destroyer of tradition, we can perhaps learn more about the historians' own identification and the shape of the new identity than about Zeng and Hong.

The rediscovered Zeng was an outstanding statesman who saved China from chaos, an accomplished man of letters, an influential educator, a trustworthy friend, and an exemplary man who led a simple life, attached great importance to learning, and upheld the four principal ideals of the Confucian man (achieving self-perfection, managing the family, governing the empire, and bringing order to all under heaven). Praise of Zeng as a statesman highlights his loyalty to the state and dedication to the nation. It is these commitments, among other things, that compelled him to take on a job against his own judgement that there was little he could do to avert the crisis at hand. It was also those commitments that prevented him from contemplating a coup urged by Zuo Zongtang and his own brother, Zeng Guoquan and motivated his passion for modernisation.

But nowhere is Zeng the Confucian better portrayed than in the setting of the family, valorised in Chinese culture as the embodiment of the nation's morality and the nurturer of the young. Zeng's image as a 'perfect' family man puts him well ahead of Mao Zedong, who is generally believed to have failed in that role. In fact, Zeng as a strict but loving father is often said to find no parallel in modern China. Evidence of Zeng's success as a father is contained in reports on the achievements of his descendants, among whom are some of China's most eminent diplomats, poets, scientists, educators, and scholars.³³

Zeng's new image is, in short, one of the *junzi*, or gentleman. Yet, in spite of his association with the establishment, he was a commoner of humble origins, not a member of the aristocracy. He nevertheless qualifies as a member of the Confucian moral elite because of an ethical quality that comes not with birth, but is achieved through education and the practice of virtue. Therein lies part of his

³³ Cheng Xiaojun, *Zeng Guofan and Modern Chinese Culture* [*Zeng Guofan yu xiandai Zhongguo wenhua*], Changsha: Hunan renmin chubanshe, 1991, pp. 9-10.

appeal. Predicated on this presumed universal Chinese ethical quality, Zeng's image as a quintessential 'Chinese man' transcends ethnicity and class to offer a Pan-Chinese national consensus.

The rediscovery of Zeng is obviously linked with the revival of Confucianism in the past decade; it can be seen at the same time as a result of and contributor to its revival. It was perhaps not accidental that the subject of the first international cultural conference to take place in China after the 1989 Tiananmen events was Confucian thought.³⁴ We shall return to the renaissance of Confucianism later in Chapter 6; for the time being, it suffices to note that Confucianism, widely regarded as the heart and soul of Chinese culture, is now at the core of the 'national essence' that is being rediscovered, reinvented, and re-embraced today as an essential criterion for defining the community. The rehabilitation of Zeng Guofan and the revival of Confucianism, together with the rediscovery of such eminent Confucians as Liang Shuming, Xiong Shili, He Lin, Zhang Junmai, Ma Yifu, and so on, is complemented by the renewed interest in the myth of the Yellow Emperor, the supposed ancestor of the Chinese people.

Confucius and the Yellow Emperor even enjoy a large measure of official recognition and support from the CCP: the Confucius Association of China and the Yellow Emperor Association of China are headed by former vice-premier Gu Mu and retired general Xiao Ke respectively. At the same time, the last decade has also witnessed an outburst of interest in a group of accomplished intellectuals often known as 'the masters of national learning', particularly the historian Chen Yinke and his friend and colleague, Wang Guowei. Official support has also been extended to 'the masters of national learning'; the recently published *Masters of National Learning Series*, for example, was funded as a major project in the government's Eighth Five-Year Plan.

If Zeng Guofan is rediscovered because of his reputation as 'the last Confucian' and as one of the towering scholar-officials of the late Qing, Chen and Wang have enjoyed a come-back mainly on the strength of their personal integrity, their erudition, their insistence on academic autonomy and their whole-hearted culturalism. On account of these qualities, they are believed to best embody the

³⁴ Chen Xi, op. cit., p. 10.

Chinese academic tradition (*xuetong*). Of particular appeal to contemporary Chinese scholars seems to be their culturalism. Indeed, many appear to find a sublime Chineseness in Wang Guowei's suicide, which has been attributed to his sadness and despair over the decline of Chinese culture, and in Chen Yinque's view of Chinese culture as embodying the 'Chinese idea'.

It is not hard to see that Chen and Wang, together with the other new heroes of the evolutionary modern Chinese history - Zeng Guofan, Guo Songtao, and the aforesaid Confucians - represent a whole conservative cultural tradition in modern China that competed with, but were eventually overwhelmed by, the political radicals, including the republicans and the Communists. Their rise speaks volumes about the nationalist historians' conception of the nation, and their consolidation in the new historical narratives would significantly change the public embodiment of the nation's conception of itself.

There is remarkable continuity, in both form and content, between this trend and 'the search for roots' in Chinese literature, which has turned to the folk and the past in response to Russification and Westernisation (or modernisation). Underlying the Zeng Guofan phenomenon, the revival of Confucianism, the 'national essence fever' and the 'search for roots' is an endeavour by Chinese intellectual elites to rediscover 'our' authentic cultural tradition, free from Marxist or Western pollutants, and redefine who 'we' are on that basis in a new era of modernisation and ideological transformation. It is possible to argue that the search for roots in cultural traditions is driven by the conviction that the nation opens itself to evil and decay as a result of inner degeneration resulting from Russification and Westernisation, both of which have induced an ossification of tradition. It is also premised on the conviction that in cultural traditions lies 'the creative life-principle of the nation', and that to go back to these roots is to identify the nation to itself and re-unite the nation.³⁵

Returning to the spirit of the past means a historic perspective that reads the appropriate trends into events, accompanied by a revaluation of historical figures

³⁵ John Hutchinson, *The Dynamics of Cultural Nationalism*, London: Allen & Unwin, 1987, pp. 122-3.

to identify instruments of national destiny or obstacles to it.³⁶ If history is indeed the historian's experience and if the only way to make history is to write it,³⁷ Chinese nationalist historians are then remaking Chinese history. In doing so, they need not only to rediscover cultural authenticity in the past but, in order to rally the community behind them, to create new heroes to personify the cultural tradition of China to be emulated. In addition, as the selection of the significant and relevant in the new interpretations of cultural tradition and historical figures has evolved with the gradual emergence of new goals in the present, the 'search for roots' is not just retrospective but future-oriented: it appears to be a dialogue between the past and future goals. Zeng has been rediscovered precisely because he is now widely seen as a national hero who saved China from chaos and who, as reputedly 'the last Confucian', best represents the Confucian tradition in modern China and holds answers to China's future.

5. The Politics of History and National Identity

The politics of history and national identity centred on Zeng Guofan has been played out at several levels. At the academic level, it seems a matter of primary concern for most historians to set Chinese history right, and that is inseparably entwined with the desire to establish the truth about the nation's past. This felt need arises from the fact that, for most of the past half-century, narratives of Chinese history have been shaped by the class viewpoint and historical materialism, or the revolutionary paradigm. The rewriting of history requires a new paradigm to replace the old; in the debate on Zeng it is an evolutionary or counter-revolutionary paradigm that is displacing the revolutionary paradigm. The systematic rewriting of history is part of the attempt by Chinese intellectual elites to re-create 'our' authentic past and redefine who 'we' are as Chinese. Thus, in the ideological transformation and shifting perceptions of Chineseness and of the

³⁶ John Breuilly, 'The sources of nationalist ideology', in John Hutchinson and Anthony Smith (eds.), *Nationalism*, Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1994, p. 109.

³⁷ Michael Oakeshott, *Experience and Its Modes*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1933, p. 99.

Chinese nation, history has become a branch of ideology, a site of contestation and a component of the new Chinese national identity.

The common representation of the debate as merely a historiographical logomachy obscures significant implications of the Zeng phenomenon. Particularly questionable is the professed motive of many of those involved in the debate. As in academic and intellectual discourse in China in general, partisans in this case claim no other goal than 'to be objective and faithful to history' - a quasi-religious catchphrase that is accepted virtually without question. The question of objectivity is far too complicated to be dealt with here; suffice it to say that what constitutes a 'fact' in history is highly problematic. For one thing, Chinese historians are rewriting the past, and in doing so they have adopted a point of view about the Chinese nation that contrasts sharply with Marxist and traditional Han notions. For another, the rewriting of history has been based, not so much on new facts that have come to light, as on new value judgements that have ensued from the ideological transformation and the reimagination of the Chinese nation. For these reasons, the subjective and ideological nature of the debate on Zeng Guofan cannot be concealed by claims of objectivity or autonomy.

Furthermore, Chinese history, like much of nationalist historiography elsewhere, can be said to belong to a type of history that Croce called 'rhetorical' or 'practicistical' history. Rhetorical history becomes a question of politics, religion, or morality as it is closely linked with them.³⁸ It is well known that nationalist historians, as well as 'creators' of history, are myth-makers who combine a romantic search for meaning with a scientific zeal to establish mythic and authentic purpose on authoritative foundations.³⁹ Their history can be easily dismissed as pseudo-history, but it is surely harder to disentangle it from 'true history'.

In any case, the distinction between the two varieties is irrelevant to us here for the simple reason that what we are interested in is not historicity but the politics of the writing and rewriting of Chinese history and how national identity is reconstructed in that process. So far as national identity is concerned, what is

³⁸ Benedetto Croce, *History: Its Theory and Practice*. New York: Russell & Russell, 1960, p. 42.

³⁹ Hutchinson, *op. cit.*, p. 123.

essential is a sense of common history, no matter whether that history is rediscovered or invented and no matter how garbled and mythical it may be. Sometimes, selective forgetting or deliberately 'getting the history wrong' is essential in nation-making.⁴⁰ In a word, there is no denying that national histories are often constructed narratives that serve clear ideological, political and other purposes.

A question that recommends itself here is why the construction and reconstruction of national identity almost always involves the past. Part of the answer lies in the fact that all history is contemporary history and that a 'past fact does not answer to a past interest, but to a present interest'.⁴¹ Specifically, history is indispensable to national identity for a number of reasons. First of all, one of the most essential elements that make up the 'soul and spiritual principle' of a nation is 'the possession in common of a rich heritage of memories'.⁴² As John Stuart Mill noted, 'The strongest cause for the feeling of nationality...is identity of political antecedents; the possession of a national history, and the subsequent community of recollections; collective pride and humiliation, pleasure and regret, connected with the same incidents in the past.'⁴³ For those reasons, even such cultural components as language, religion, customs and institutions remain secondary to the sense of common origins and history.⁴⁴

In addition, as Collingwood tells us, history is a source of reference and self-knowledge: it teaches a nation what it has done and thus what it is. Or, from a more postmodern point of view, national histories are most probably constructed narratives in which societies validate and mythologise what they consider to be their essential characteristics. In either case, one may well be justified in agreeing with Edward Carr that 'there is no more significant pointer to the character of any society than the kind of history it writes or fails to write'.⁴⁵ Moreover, the re-narration of history is in itself an act of political empowerment: it is a demand for

⁴⁰ Smith, op. cit., pp. 132-3.

⁴¹ Croce, op. cit., p.12.

⁴² Ernest Renan, 'What is a nation?', in Alfred Zimmern, *Modern Political Doctrines*, London: Oxford University Press, 1939, p. 203.

⁴³ John Stuart Mill, *Representative Government*, 1861, reprinted in part in Alfred Zimmern, *Modern Political Doctrines*, London: Oxford University Press, 1939, p. 206.

⁴⁴ Anthony Smith, *The Ethnic Revival*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981, p. 67.

⁴⁵ Edward Carr, *What Is History?*, London: Macmillan & Co Ltd, 1962, p. 37.

the right and freedom to say who 'we' are and who 'we' have been as well as the exercising of that right and freedom. This right and freedom is important not simply because who 'we' think 'we' are is in itself important, but also because national identity gives people a moral perspective on the world that provides interpretations of the world and of themselves and because national identity serves as a basis upon which a nation decides how or how not to conduct its collective life. Furthermore, as there is a unity between who 'we' have been, who 'we' are and who 'we' ought to be and can be in the future, to reinterpret past events in the light of present goals, or vice versa, is also to shape the nation's mission or destiny.

Because of all these essential functions of history to national identity, the writing and rewriting of history in any society is a matter of great significance, and history is naturally a site of fierce contestation. The politics of national identity takes place as past events and historical figures are reinterpreted and revaluated in accordance with competing identities; it also takes place as historical narratives are revised, reaffirmed, remade, blocked or created to validate or institutionalise certain identities at the expense of others. The nation is thus produced and reproduced in such a process of transformation and contestation.

In the debate over Zeng Guofan, the politics of history and national identity concentrates on the choice of paradigms. One reason for this is that paradigms, while providing a framework through which historical facts can be interpreted, express clear power relations. This is a point made very clearly by Arif Dirlik through a synthesis of Thomas Kuhn's conception of paradigms and Foucault's notion of knowledge and power. As he put it,

Paradigms are not just innocuous models of explanation that guide intellectual work. Paradigms are also expressions of social ideologies, narrowly within professions but also, because professions may hardly be isolated from their broader social contexts, within the broader context of social relations. The supremacy of one paradigm over others does not rest merely on a superior ability to explain available 'facts'; it is also an ideological supremacy that expresses power relations within a context of social relations and ideologies. Paradigms do not just guide inquiry; they control it, excluding alternative

explanations and, therefore, those who favour or promote alternative explanations.⁴⁶

Here we can see three types of power relations in the choice of paradigms. Broadly speaking, a power relationship exists between society at large and the community of historians, and it is manifested in the extent to which society shapes or influences the work of historians and the idea of history itself. What this means is that history writing does not take place in a vacuum, and that the historian's paradigms can hardly be independent of ideology and politics or general social perceptions.⁴⁷ This gives us still more reason to be sceptical about claims to autonomy and objectivity on the one hand and to be cautious not to neglect or discount the link between the narration of history and social perceptions on the other. It is perhaps because of that link and the contemporaneity of history that history can be seen as the most significant pointer to the character of a society.

Still more relevant to the politics of identity are the power relations between ideologies as expressed by different paradigms and between groups that favour and promote different paradigms. A prominent feature of the evolution paradigm is its expanded conception of the Chinese nation. Mongols, Manchus, and other ethnic groups are now thought to have made great contributions to the Chinese nation, and are no longer treated simply as foreign invaders. Chinese civilisation and Chineseness is thus depicted as a melting-pot containing a rich ethnic soup. To identify oneself as Chinese, therefore, is not necessarily to identify with the Han or to renounce one's ethnicity.

A second feature of the evolution paradigm is its challenge to revolution and to Marxist historians as well as Marxist historiography. To rewrite Chinese history as a process of natural cultural continuation rather than a series of revolutionary 'negations' necessarily entails a rejection of the class-based people and historical materialism. It is therefore clear that the Party-state has much to lose from the revaluation of Zeng Guofan and the rewriting of history even though it has much

⁴⁶ Arif Dirlik, *op. cit.*, p. 244.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 245. Dirlik's observations resonate with Edward Carr's comments on the historical conditions of history writing. See, Carr, Edward Carr, *What Is History?*, London: Macmillan & Co Ltd, 1962, p. 34.

to gain from a pan-Chinese identity based on the primordial attachment to Chinese history and culture. Not only does the nationalist historiography contradict the class concept and historical materialism, but in so far as the relationship between paradigms is one of power, it also dislodges historical materialism and Marxist historians from supremacy and deprives them of intellectual and political legitimacy.⁴⁸ As it subverts the revolutionary narrative of a revolutionary past, so too does it pose a challenge to the polity upon which that narrative bestows legitimacy. In short, nationalist scholars inevitably find themselves on a collision course with Marxist historiography in rewriting history in a nationalist mode. As open and explicit challenges to Marxism and the CCP are not allowed, what is done, as in the debate on Zeng Guofan, is to challenge the content of Marxism and the authority of the CCP without naming what is being challenged.

Those who have declared the death of Marxism in China might not see much significance in this challenge. It is worthwhile to remind ourselves that Marxism remains one of the CCP's four cardinal principles, and that although it has lost much of its credibility as an ideology, it dominates pre-1978 Chinese literature on history, politics and economics, and influences no small proportion of what is written today. In addition, the attitudes and habits that developed in the Mao era linger on. What this means to many nationalist historians is that the existing 'Chinese' history, or the national biography, is still very much Marxist and therefore not 'ours'. As 'our' history shows who 'we' are, it has to be set right in the light of 'our' new vision of ourselves and our identity, but that cannot be done unless we break out of the Marxist framework, for it is the Marxist framework that has produced inauthentic narratives. Of course, the reverse is also true: as 'our' view of ourselves today has changed, the new identity has to be projected back into 'our' past, and history must be rewritten to validate and institutionalise the new identity. The past is of such paramount importance to national identity that to rewrite the nation's history is to redefine the nation.

Of particular political significance to the Party-state in China is the definition of the political subject. Given John Stuart Mill's ideal of nationality (nation) as that government 'should be government by themselves [i.e., a nationality] or a

⁴⁸ Ibid., p. 244.

portion of themselves, exclusively',⁴⁹ the inclusion in and exclusion from 'we' has particularly clear implications with regard to legitimacy, even for an authoritarian regime like China's. Contrary to the views of many theorists of nationalism, neither the identity of the political subject 'we' nor the identification with it has to depend exclusively on ethnic attachments or allegiances; in fact it can be, and often is, defined along ideological, religious, cultural and other lines. While identities thus defined do not always constitute nations to begin with, they certainly can, as often happens, justify their claims and objectives on nationalist grounds or challenge the existing state in the name of the nation. Indeed, if John Breuilly is right, nationalism may well be considered, first and foremost, as a form of politics, which arises in opposition to the state and which seeks to gain or exercise state power.⁵⁰

To be sure, Chinese nationalist historians cannot be said to be after state power when they challenge the Party-state's Marxist historiography; they are more accurately thought of as 'nationalist pressure groups'⁵¹ which seek to influence the state's policies in accordance with their constructed cultural identity. In this regard, what is at stake is the regime's legitimacy in the eyes of the nationalist historians, and they regard the regime as illegitimate because its nature and its policies offend against national identity.

6. Concluding Discussion: The Construct of Pan-Chinese Identity

Underlying the debate on Zeng Guofan are three vastly different notions of the nation: an ethnic nation that refuses to accept anyone not born into the community, a 'people' defined by class criteria and a Pan-Chinese nation that extends membership in the community to all ethnic groups. The conviction that Zeng Guofan was neither a 'traitor to the Han' nor a 'traitor to his country'

⁴⁹ John Stuart Mill, *op. cit.*, p. 20.

⁵⁰ John Breuilly, *op. cit.*, p. 2, pp. 8-9 and pp. 405-6.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, p. 9.

reflects a significant conceptual transformation. It departs from the traditional ethnocentric notion of China as a Han nation where 'faithfulness and righteousness are ways of human discourse and are not to be extended to alien kinds'.⁵² It also departs from the republican revolutionary version, reformulated by Zhang Taiyan by combining Wang Fuzhi's notions of evolutionism and elements of Social Darwinism.⁵³ It also departs from the Marxist notion of the nation-state as a territorial-political unit with a class-based 'people', from which individuals and groups could be excluded as class enemies by application of arbitrary and constantly shifting political criteria. It is perhaps not coincidental that Zeng's sharpest critics are either Marxists or Han-centric historians - or both - who are still influenced by the ethnic ethos of Chineseness. Such individuals seem more or less committed to the status quo. By contrast, those who have recast Zeng in the role of national hero are constructing a new national identity.

Behind the view that Zeng Guofan was a traitor to the Han and his country is clearly the old Chinese-barbarian or Han-barbarian mentality - with the 'barbarians' including ethnic minorities and foreigners. The vision of the world as one of parallel nations, each with its own characteristics and destiny, has been slow to take root in China owing to deeply held ways of thought. The vision of China as the centre of the world persisted even after China's defeat in the Opium Wars. Eventual recognition of the economic and military superiority of the Western Other was all the more traumatic because of that defeat and accompanied by fear, resentment, and hatred. To this day, having to borrow from a superior antagonist has remained a constant source of bitterness for radical Chinese nationalists. Thus, the rejection of Zeng Guofan's label of 'traitor to his country' testifies to a new vision of the 'Chinese nation' and a new outlook on Han-ethnic and Chinese-foreign relations.

This new conception of the nation, at least in theory, includes all citizens of the PRC irrespective of racial, religious, or cultural backgrounds. To the extent that this notion includes all ethnic groups in the PRC, it is Pan-Chinese. It must be pointed out, however, that the pan-Chinese notion of the nation is still very much

⁵² Prasenjit Duara, 'De-constructing the Chinese nation', in Unger (ed.), *Chinese Nationalism*, 1996, p. 35.

⁵³ Ibid., p. 42.

Han-centric, as the criterion by which the community is defined is Han culture, and the past that this nation supposes is the Han past. Furthermore, even the rewriting of history today is still a Han affair, because it is a Han history by Han historians. Membership in this nation is open as it is not determined by racial or ethnic criteria but by knowledge and practice of 'Chinese' principles and it can thus be taken up if these principles are learned, or given up if they are renounced. Whether it is totally free, however, is doubtful, because it might incur the obligation to conform to some extent to what is regarded as 'Chineseness', which is in reality largely monolithic and certainly more Han than, say, Tibetan, Mongolian, or Uighur. That gives us reason to believe that the cultural conception of the nation has not gone far beyond the vision of such Confucian modernisers as Kang Youwei and Zhang Zhidong, who imagined a Chinese nation based on Confucian principles and only including ethnic minorities if they accepted those principles.

The transformation of a Han-centric China into a pan-Chinese nation and the casting off of a revolutionary identity in favour of a national identity accords with international trends in constructing national identities, and encourages cohesion among ethnic groups by playing down ethnicity. There is a clear awareness in China that the reconstruction of the Chinese national identity is vital to the survival and well-being of the nation-state in the face of all sorts of centrifugal and fragmenting tendencies. It is also obvious that underlying the Pan-Chinese project is the assumption that a national identity is compatible with all ethnic identities, not only Han but non-Han as well. The idea of multiple and compatible identities is perhaps more useful than assimilation in encouraging national identification among ethnic groups; it is a step forward from both ethnocentric and Marxian notions of the nation in that it no longer hinges on biological descent or class. Moreover, the pan-Chinese nationalism has grouped people in a large scale; it is most probably preparing for a way towards regionalism and globalism.

However, whether or not a Pan-Chinese national identity can be achieved ultimately depends on whether there is a sense that the 'Pan-Chinese' belong together on the basis of a set of characteristics that was often referred to in the past

as 'national character'.⁵⁴ It is also a question whether or not Marxism can be erased from the Chinese consciousness to restore Chinese culture to its pre-revolutionary purity. Having been translated into specific ways of doing things and ways of thinking, it has thus become part of Chinese identity just as Buddhism did long ago. To reject Marxism as alien heterodoxy is to reject a component of contemporary Chinese national identity. At any rate, it is easier to challenge or renounce Marxism than to exclude and eradicate it from Chinese culture.

It is reasonable to think of the cultural conception of a Chinese nation as a double-edged sword. On the one hand, it lends some legitimacy, for example, to Beijing's claim of sovereignty over Taiwan, as the idea of 'Cultural China' emphasises the common cultural heritage shared by the mainland China and Taiwan and underlines the cultural bond between them. On the other hand, 'Cultural China' - as the name implies - is predominantly premised on cultural rather than political bonds and interactions. The basic assumption at its heart is that the nation is a cultural community, or a tangible spiritual domain; that it is a cultural entity embracing all in a common framework that can be founded on a living language and culture; and that Chinese culture is above political and social divisions, whereas the state is but an instrument to secure peace, justice, material existence, and cultural survival and revival.

The emphasis on culture, to the extent that it is above politics or the state, is perhaps not so helpful to the CCP's national project as it is often made out to be. For one thing, it implies a neutrality about the political bickering across the Taiwan Strait. This rejection of partisanship in turn implies that whoever protects and promotes Chinese culture and tradition will enjoy moral support. Conversely, a government or state that fails in its duty to Chinese culture can lose support and legitimacy; sentiments of attachment would shift according to whichever government or state is perceived to be the guardian of Chinese culture and tradition. What is more, it might even be argued that there are advantages in having a multitude of political states striving for excellence in the wider cultural

⁵⁴ David Miller points out that a 'national identity requires that people who share it should have something in common,' that there 'must be a sense that the people belong together by virtue of the characteristics that they share' (See Miller, *op. cit.*, p. 25).

nation, although some people decry as artificial the political divisions among the Chinese. In any case, there seems to be space within the framework of a 'Cultural China' for competing political entities.

Moreover, the conceptualisation of Pan-Chineseness will throw into question a large range of issues, from the writing of history to affirmative action policy.⁵⁵ That, of course, is well beyond the scope of this chapter and remains the subject of future research. In addition, it is conceivable that the Pan-Chinese national identity will be confronted with two major challenges: the first, from postmodernism, which plays down the importance of national identities, and the second, from ethnic minorities within China and independence activists in Taiwan who do not share the Pan-Chinese identity. The first challenge may not manifest itself in China in the near future, but the second is close at hand. It is evident that ethnic nationalism and Taiwanese nationalism have been on the rise in the last decade and pose a serious threat to the project of Pan-Chinese nationalism.

⁵⁵ Baogang He, 'Can W. Kymlicka's liberal theory of minority rights be applied in East Asia?', in Paul van der Velde and Alex McKay (eds.), *New Developments in Asian Studies*, London: Kegan Paul, 1998, pp. 20-44.

6 Reidentifying the Nation to Its Confucian Tradition: *Xutong*

Both followers and critics of Confucianism generally describe it as the 'mainstream', the 'backbone', the 'central pillar' or the 'mainstay' of Chinese culture, differing mainly in their judgements as to whether it has played a positive or negative role in shaping China and its national character. Written off by Westernisers and Marxists as a 'sterile orthodoxy', a 'dead weight from the past', and an 'obsolete but immovable fixture of the old order' as early as May Fourth, Confucianism appeared destined for the museum, as Joseph Levenson predicted. On the other hand, it has always remained a question as to how far assaults on Confucianism, including the devastating Cultural Revolution and the Criticising Lin Biao and Criticising Confucius Campaign, succeeded in eradicating the Confucian legacy from the hearts and minds of the Chinese. It is a Chinese irony that Confucianism should have remerged in the last two decades to 'advance toward the twenty-first century with a smile on its lips'.¹ It is equally ironic that this news should have come through *The People's Daily*, the Party's mouthpiece.

What is driving the Confucian 'renaissance' on the mainland is evidently a strong current of cultural nationalism. Like cultural nationalists in general, Confucians believe that they are 'moral innovators' who establish 'ideological movements at times of social crisis in order to transform the belief-systems of communities and provide models for political and cultural development that guide their modernising strategies'.² It is, at the same time, an attempt to see the nation as a high civilisation with a unique place in the world, and 'to recreate this nation which, integrating the traditional and the modern on a higher level, will again rise to the forefront of world progress'.³

Inseparable from either objective - moral regeneration or cultural revival - is the Confucian search for authentic community and national unity. So far as Neo-Confucians are concerned, neither of these objectives is independent of some idea of Confucian Orthodoxy; in fact, they are quite convinced that these objectives are best achieved by reconnecting with the Confucian Orthodoxy (*xutong*). The

¹ *The People's Daily* (overseas edition), 8 Sept., 1994, p. 1.

² John Hutchinson, *The Dynamics of Cultural Nationalism*, London: Allen & Unwin, 1987, p. 30.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 128.

purpose of *xutong* is to reform society and set it back on track, and in so doing, identify the nation to itself and restore its self-respect and confidence. To strengthen national unity, the nation must rediscover the Confucian notions of Great Unity and Great Harmony, while the best remedy for the moral degeneration that is pervading a commercialising China is Confucian values. Both Westernisers and Marxists, of course, dismiss this as reactionary, although neither of them is as vitriolic as they used to be during the May Fourth era or the 1980s. Thus the on-going debate on tradition and identity in China today has once again unfolded between Neo-Confucianism, Marxism and Chinese liberalism - the three ideologies that have predominated in China since the beginning of the twentieth-century.

In this chapter, I propose to examine the Confucians' nationalist evaluation, discourse and project in their contest with Marxists over the nation. Before I start, however, I must stress that although I wish to concentrate on Neo-Confucians in the PRC and the post-Tiananmen era, it is not advisable to ignore the overseas Confucians, or Confucians of the past. This is because they have entered into the discourse directly or indirectly, as their works are easily available and are often quoted as authorities by the fledgling mainland Neo-Confucians. In addition, as the latter often use Confucian adages and mottoes as slogans in their writings, it is all the more necessary to unfold these slogans in order to make sense of them. Another point that needs to be clarified is the use of 'Neo-Confucians', 'Confucians' and 'Confucianists'. By 'Neo-Confucians' I mean contemporary Confucians. I also make a general distinction between Confucians, who believe in Confucianism, and Confucianists, who specialise in Confucianism but are not necessarily true believers.

The chapter consists of five sections. The first focuses on the contest for Confucianism. In the second and third sections, I shall analyse the substance of the contest between Confucians and Marxists over national unity and identity and look at the Confucian idea of 'Chineseness'. This will be followed by a discussion of the Confucian attempt at moral regeneration. Finally, I shall conclude with some general observations about how the Confucians might eventually influence China's future directions.

1. Confucians vs. Marxists: Their Contest over Confucianism

What seems most striking about the quarrel between Marxists and Confucians is the former's extraordinary readiness to compromise with the latter and their eagerness to draw some strength from Confucianism, while Neo-Confucians are most determined to deny Marxists a role in the imagining of a Confucian nation and to eradicate the 'contamination' of Marxism from the Chinese psyche. Some of the most authoritative Marxist Confucianists, such as Fang Keli, Li Jinquan, Ren Jiyu, Zhang Dainian, Pang Pu and Kuang Yaming, have gone so far as to propose that Marxism should be further Sinicized by incorporating elements of Confucianism.⁴ Some even suggest that a new brand of socialism – 'Confucian socialism' - could replace its current version.⁵

There are signs to suggest that Party leaders have decided to allow Confucius to reappear, like Hitchcock's Harry, as if he had never been buried.⁶ This can best be seen from the officially sponsored celebration of the 2545th anniversary of Confucius' birth in October 1994. The celebration was made all the more significant politically not just because former vice-premier Gu Mu chaired the conference as Chairman of the China Confucius Foundation, but also because Jiang Zemin himself made an unprecedented appearance and spent two hours recollecting fondly his own Confucian upbringing. Gu Mu's keynote speech, endorsed by Jiang Zemin,⁷ further dispelled doubts about the change of heart towards Confucius by the CCP leadership. Instead of condemning Confucianism as 'feudalistic' and 'reactionary', as the Communists had done previously, he claimed Chinese culture as quintessentially Confucian and presented Confucianism as enlightened and progressive.

The Marxists' conciliatory approach to Confucianism clearly has much to do with the erosion of Marxism. At the same time, the relaxation of political

⁴ Fang Keli, 'A review of *Rationality and Life*' [*Ping Lixing yu Shengming*], in *Neo-Confucianism and China's Modernisation* [*Xiandai xinruxue yu Zhongguo xiandai hua*], Tianjin: Tianjin renmin chubanshe, 1997, p. 419. See also Wang Yongxiang and Pan Zhifeng, 'Confucianism and China's modernisation' [*Ruxue yu Zhongguo xiandaihua*], in China Confucius Foundation (ed.), *Confucianism and the Twenty-First Century* [*Ruxue yu ershiyi shiji*], vol. I, Beijing: Huaxia chubanshe, 1996, p. 258.

⁵ Wang Yongxiang and Pan Zhifeng, *ibid.*

⁶ See Wm. Theodore de Bary, *The Trouble with Confucianism*, Cambridge, Mass. & London, England: Harvard University Press, 1991, p. 107.

⁷ *Ibid.*

restrictions has enabled Neo-Confucians to give voice to their concerns about China's moral order, its identity and its future. That probably helps explain why the waxing of Confucianism and the waning of Marxism have taken place almost simultaneously. Marxists who tout a 'dialogue' between the two ideologies are probably aware that there is not much that Confucianism has to offer to Marxism, but there are elements of Confucianism which are of particular benefit to the Party-state. These elements include, for example, the Confucian concern for the affairs of the state and the well-being of the people (*youhuan yishi*), the notion of Great Unity, loyalty to the ruler (*zhongjun*) and love of country (*aiguo*), and filial piety. Those elements were reason enough for the intimate alliance between Confucianism and political power in traditional China, warranting the description of Confucianism as the 'philosophy *par excellence*' for the imperial system.⁸ Whether Confucians like it or not, the CCP will continue to turn some of these to advantage, especially at a time when its ideology is suffering irretrievable decay and as the Party itself is moderating its antitraditionalism.

This does not mean that Marxists are blind to the ideological thrust of the Neo-Confucians' agenda, despite the latter's repeated declarations that they separate cultural commitment from politics. Nor are they unaware that the Neo-Confucian discourse and project are illegal according to China's constitution. This is well demonstrated by the comments of Fang Keli, a leading Marxist Confucianist and co-ordinator of the state-sponsored Neo-Confucian Project, which has produced in the last decade hundreds of articles as well as over 20 monographs and newly edited works of Neo-Confucians from Hong Kong, Taiwan, North America as well the PRC, including the works of the most staunch anti-Marxist, Mou Zongsan. As Fang put it,

Theoretically speaking, 'mainland Neo-Confucians' are still outlawed, as the four cardinal principles are written into the constitution, and it is a basic political requirement for every Chinese citizen to uphold these principles. To take a Neo-Confucian stand conscientiously is to adhere to idealism (cultural determinism, moralism, abstract humanism, etc.), to oppose historical materialism and dialectical materialism, and to negate Marxism. Hong Kong and Taiwan Neo-Confucians are resolutely against the Chinese Communist Party, socialism and the

⁸ Joseph Levenson, 'The suggestiveness of vestiges: Confucianism and monarchy at the last', in David Navison and Arthur Wright (eds.), *Confucianism in Action*, Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 1977, p. 252.

proletarian dictatorship. ... 'Mainland Neo-Confucians' are no different...⁹

Radical Marxists, in particular, warn against the 'dialogue' between Marxism and Confucianism – 'a remnant of feudalism', forcefully reminding their moderate colleagues of the irreconcilable conflict between the two ideologies and emphasising the risk of its further erosion to Marxism. What is most dangerous about Neo-Confucianism, they argue, is 'its negation of Marxism and its attempt to revive capitalism'.¹⁰

Moderate Marxists, however, persist in promoting the 'dialogue' regardless of the opposition from Confucians and radical Marxists. Their contention against the former is that 'Confucian humanism is not the property of Neo-Confucians, but belongs to the whole Chinese nation.'¹¹ Therefore, they, too, demand a piece of the action. Their defence of the 'dialogue', in reply to radical Marxists, is that it will strengthen Marxism and the CCP. This they wish to achieve by enticing or cajoling Confucians into forming a united front with them, and by 'developing and enriching Marxism by drawing on the essence of traditional culture, including Confucianism'.¹²

Confucians, on the other hand, have shown no interest whatsoever in a united front. Luo Yijun, a leading mainland Neo-Confucian, for example, insists that Marxists are simply too biased to see Confucianism as it is; moreover, as they treat it as a mere object of analysis rather than with religious reverence, they can by no means appreciate its essence and spirit. So far as Marxists are concerned, he adds,

⁹ Fang Keli, *Neo-Confucianism and China's Modernisation*, pp. 214 - 6. Li Yi, another member of Fang's research team, pointed out that 'Neo-Confucians are unified in their common opposition to socialist modernisation led by the CCP, and they are all representatives of the modern Chinese bourgeoisie.' See Li Yi, *Chinese Marxism and Neo-Confucianism* [*Zhongguo Makesi zhuyi yu xiandai xinruxue*], Shenyang: Liaoning University Press, 1994, pp. 6-7.

¹⁰ Cited by Fang Keli in *Neo-Confucianism and China's Modernisation*, p. 198 and pp. 203-4.

¹¹ Li Yi, op. cit., p. 338; Fang Keli, *Neo-Confucianism and China's Modernisation*, p. 404, p. 408 and pp. 418-9.

¹² Ren Jiyu, *Between Heaven and Man* [*Tian ren zhi ji*], Shanghai: Shanghai wenyi chubanshe, 1998, p. 63; Miao Runtian, 'Confucianism and the transition to modernity' [*Ruxue yu xiandai hua de zhongjie*], *Dongyue luncong* 2, 1990, p. 78; Chen Hanming, 'Confucianism and modern democracy' [*Ruxue yu xiandai minzhu*], *Tianjin shehui kexue* 1, 1998, pp. 100-1; Chen Qing, 'Overseas Neo-Confucianism and its value to China's modernisation' [*Lun haiwai dangdai xinruxue xiandaihua de jiazhi*], *Shanghai wenhua* 5, 1995, pp. 4-8; Fang Keli, *Neo-Confucianism and China's Modernisation*, pp. 418-9; Li Yi, *Chinese Marxism and Neo-Confucianism*, pp. 304-5; Jiang Linxiang, 'Confucianism in China marching towards a new century' [*Zou xiang xin shiji de Zhongguo ruxue*], in *Confucianism and the Twenty-First Century*, pp. 154-6.

Marxism is the principle while Confucianism is only utility.¹³ Hong Kong and Taiwan Neo-Confucians are still more forthright in their dismissal of the Marxists' interest in Confucianism. An article in the Hong-Kong-based *Fayan*, for instance, claims that the hype about Confucianism on the mainland is merely a united front gimmick, and it is anti-Confucian under the banner of Confucianism.¹⁴ Taiwan Neo-Confucian Li Minghui suggests that the biggest obstacle to Confucian studies on the mainland is ideological constraints, and that unless mainland scholars free themselves from Marxist dogmas, they are not likely to make any breakthrough. Confucian studies on the mainland, he concludes, are mostly politically motivated.¹⁵

In sharp contrast to the Marxists, the Neo-Confucians are more interested in *xutong*, or reconnecting with the Confucian orthodoxy and thereby identifying the nation to 'itself'. There are others, of course, who do not share that religious fervour about the Confucian orthodoxy but merely have an eye to the restoration of some Confucian values in China's present and future cultural-moral order. Nevertheless, it is quite common for this group of intellectuals not simply to justify the values in question on the grounds of merit but also in terms of national traditions and historical continuity. Their call to inherit the national essence and carry on the national traditions has helped reinforce the Neo-Confucian discourse of reconnecting with the Confucian tradition.

The Confucian project and discourse are spearheaded by three radical Neo-Confucians, Jiang Qing, Luo Yijun and Chen Kejian. They are supported to varying degrees by many others, including some of the country's most eminent philosophers and historians, such as Chen Lai, Kong Xianglin, Li Zonggui, Lin Zhichun, Ma Zhenduo, Tang Yijie, Yang Xiangkui, Zhao Jihui and Zhou Guidian. In *Rationality and Life*,¹⁶ which is clearly more activist than academic, Luo and Chen evoke the 1958 Neo-Confucian Manifesto, revealing beyond doubt their identification with Hong Kong and Taiwan Neo-Confucians. In fact, they make no

¹³ Luo Yijun, 'Studies on Neo-Confucianism in the last decade and the quarrel among different schools' [*Jin shi yu nian dangdai xinruxue de yanjiu yu suowei menhu wenti*], *Confucianism and the World Today* [*Ruxue yu dangjin shijie*], Taipei: Wenchin ch'upanshe, 1994, p. 130.

¹⁴ Cited by Fang Keli in *Neo-Confucianism and China's Modernisation*, pp. 196-7.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 197-8 and p. 221.

¹⁶ Luo Yijun, Chen Kejian, et al. (ed.), *Rationality and Life* [*Lixing yu Shengming*], vols. I & II, Shanghai: Shanghai shudian chubanshe, 1994.

secret of their intention to bring this more authentic brand of Confucianism back to the mainland so that it will nurture the mainlanders (*'fanbu dalu'*).

In what has been described as 'the mainland Neo-Confucian Manifesto', it is argued that China's most serious problem today is not economic backwardness or political authoritarianism, but the total dissipation of the national spirit and the lack of spiritual anchorage for the whole Chinese nation. In the original words, '[o]ver a billion Chinese are deprived of spiritual guidance, and over a billion souls wander aimlessly on the mainland.'¹⁷ The cause of this, according to the Manifesto, is the destruction of Confucianism while an imported alien ideology - Marxism - has taken over as the 'national religion' (*guojiao*) under the tutelage of the state. This alien ideology, it charges, can neither benefit the nation nor represent the national spirit of the Chinese. As a consequence, the Chinese have been without a spiritual anchor for nearly a century, and spiritual desolation has plumbed the depths today.

The Manifesto insists that the lack of spiritual guidance poses the biggest obstacle to China's modernisation and is responsible for the general social chaos and disorder of the last century. The most important task for the mainland, therefore, is to revive Confucianism, so that it will replace Marxism and become the orthodox ideology to nourish its national spirit and guide the nation in the 21st-century. For that purpose, it goes on to say, Confucianism must also take over again as the guide in moral education and replace the still influential Mao Zedong Thought, which has underpinned an education system that has done little more than train political rebels or slaves since 1949.

It is Marxism, more than anything else, that Confucians hold responsible for China's lack of spiritual guidance. As Li Yi, a Marxist Confucianist, has quite rightly pointed out, 'Neo-Confucians see the spread of Marxism in China as an invasion of exogenous heterodoxy, and believe that like Westernism, it has done much to destroy the and spiritual and symbolic resources of China.'¹⁸ According to Li Xianghai, similarly, Neo-Confucians distinguish sharply between the Chinese (Confucian) and the foreign (Marxist or Western, which are often lumped

¹⁷ Jiang Qing, 'The significance of and obstacles to the revival of Confucianism in mainland China' [*Zhongguo dalu fuxing ruxue de xianshi yiyi ji qi mianlin de wenti*], *Ehu* 170 (Aug. 1989), p. 64.

¹⁸ Li Yi, op. cit., p. 7.

together as 'Western').¹⁹ It is only pointing out the obvious to say that Neo-Confucians know all too well that a revival of Confucianism cannot take place without a head-on collision with Marxism and without subverting it effectively.

2. Class Struggle, Social Development, National Unity and Identity

The Neo-Confucians' theoretical challenge to Marxism is very broad. What is most pertinent to our examination of their nationalist discourse and project is their scathing attack on historical materialism. It is the theory of class struggle and historical development that they blame for fatally undermining China's national unity and identity, and consequently its cultural-moral order as well. Jiang Qing, Chen Kejian and Luo Yijun's comments on Marxism, as we have seen, well illustrate this belief. Mou Zongsan, for his part, has dismissed historical materialism as a theory that incites political revolutions to overthrow the status quo. This is echoed by Tang Changli, who has argued that 'Class struggle might be an effective theory for wars and revolutions but has little value in peaceful development; on the contrary, it destroys national unity and hinders modernisation.'²⁰

It requires no stretch of the imagination to appreciate the Neo-Confucians' abhorrence of the Marxian theory of class struggle and social development. After all, what can possibly be more irrelevant than relations of production in the Confucian scheme of moral relations? Besides, what can be harder to reconcile with Confucianism than the idea of conflict? Theirs is a vision of a co-operative and harmonious world, where antagonism and suspicion, strife and suffering, are largely unnecessary. It is true that Confucians are quite hard put to it to answer the pungent question raised by Stevan Harrell: 'Why does a culture that condemns violence, that plays down the glory of military exploits, awards its highest prestige to literary, rather than martial, figures, and seeks harmony over all other values, in fact display such frequency and variety of violent behaviour, that is of the use of

¹⁹ Li Xianghai, 'The content, significance and dilemma of contemporary Chinese cultural conservatism' [*Dangdai Zhongguo wenhua baoshouzhuyi de neihan, yiyi yu kunjing*], *Tianjin shehui kexue* 1, 1998, pp. 60-1.

²⁰ Tang Changli, 'Characteristics of the times and the function of Confucianism' [*Shidai tezhen yu rujia gongneng*], *Dongyue luncong* 1, 1989, p. 5.

physical force against persons?'²¹ That Confucians have never been able to realise that vision does not seem to do away with its attraction to them, nor does it make them any less dedicated to it.

Historical materialism, on the other hand, postulates societies divided by classes and fraught with class conflict. According to this view, what people are has little to do with ideas, beliefs, values or consciousness, which are of primary significance in the Confucian understanding of humanity and human relations. It coincides with their material production, including what they produce and how they produce it.²² In other words, the nature of individuals is determined by the material conditions of their production, especially their mode of production, and in production, they are moulded as social beings. The two sides of the mode of production - the productive forces and the relations of production - respectively define their relations with nature and with each other.

Thus, Man is set apart from animals by virtue of his ability to use tools and act on nature in accordance with his needs. Individuals are divided into social classes on the basis of their place in the system of production, as determined by their relationship to the means of production. Those classes, moreover, do not simply play complementary roles in the social organisation of labour but occupy different or even diametrically opposed positions in relations of exploitation, domination and subordination.²³ It is not surprising then that Engels spoke of 'these warring classes of society'.²⁴

To Confucians, and many other Chinese, historical materialism is a 'philosophy of struggle', responsible for all the traumatic political movements since 1949 and the consequent suffering and the loss of millions of lives. What is worse, it has fundamentally upset the traditional Confucian moral order, where people are expected to fulfil their obligations according to their social position; it has torn up the social fabric by setting sons against fathers, wives against husbands, sibling against sibling, classes against classes.

²¹ Stevan Harrell, 'Introduction', Jonathan N. Lipman and Stevan Harrell (eds.), *Violence in China: Essays in Culture and Counterculture*, Albany: State University of New York Press, 1990, p. 1.

²² See K. Marx and F. Engels, *The German Ideology*, Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1968, p. 32.

²³ See, for example, F. Engels, *Anti-Dühring*, Moscow: Co-operative Pub. Society, 1934, p. 37; K. Marx and F. Engels, *Selected Works*, vol. 1, Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1973, pp. 396 -7; and V.I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, vol. 29, London: Lawrence & Wishart, 1960, p. 421.

²⁴ See F. Engels, *Anti-Dühring*, p. 37.

Even today, class remains a political reality, as it still underlies China's constitution, national flag and insignia.²⁵ Moreover, class struggle has not disappeared, according to the preamble of the constitution, but will continue for a long time. What is most unacceptable to Confucians about the constitution, the flag and insignia, is perhaps not so much the notion of class as the pecking order of the classes in the current hierarchy and the idea of class conflict.²⁶ Topmost in a Confucian community would be scholars (*shi*), followed by the peasantry (*nong*), artisans (*gong*) and merchants (*shang*). More important still, Confucianism certainly does not see class conflict as inevitable, still less does it believe it is a desirable driving force of history.

For Confucians, the welfare of the national community, or the social organism, depends on the harmonious co-operation between all the individuals and units of the community, and cultural and moral values are capable of uniting the nation. If 'all under Heaven' (i.e., the Chinese world) has the Way, moral principles prevail, they believe, and there is total harmony - harmony between individuals, within the family and society, between the nation and state, and between states. Thus Confucius taught, 'Let the lord be a lord, the subject a subject; the father father; and the son son.'²⁷ In other words, if society operates like a harmonious organism or a family, its members, however high or low, will work in harmony for the common good.

This emphasis on social harmony, of course, is by no means unique to Confucianism; it can be found in most other Chinese schools of thought, including those that are in many ways antithetical to Confucianism. Mo Tzu (ca. 479-ca. 381 BC), for instance, like the Marxists, highlighted conflicting group interests and lamented that large states attacked small states, that large houses molested small houses, and that the strong plundered the weak. Unlike the Marxists, however, his solution was reform from above through moral indoctrination, or universal love (*jianai*), rather than revolution by the weak to overthrow the strong.

²⁵ Article 1 of the current constitution, for example, states that 'The People's Republic of China is a socialist state under the people's democratic dictatorship led by the industrial proletariat and based on the alliance of the workers and peasants.'

²⁶ Mencius, for example remarked that 'There are those who use their minds and there are those who use their muscles. The former rule; the latter are ruled.' For the English translation, see D.C. Lau (trans.), *Mencius*, London: Penguin Books, 1970, p. 101.

²⁷ *The Analects*, XII, Beijing: Yanshan chubanshe, 1995, pp. 102-3. For the English translation, see Simon Leys (trans.), *The Analects of Confucius*, New York and London: W. W. Norton & Co., 1997, chapter 12: 12.11, p. 57.

Before China started to see itself as a nation in a world of parallel nations, that emphasis on total harmony was typically articulated in universal instead of national terms, but there is no doubt today about the national nature of the vision of national harmony and unity. Now it is not just the Confucians who are attracted to the notion of national harmony but also Chinese Marxists and others of a range of persuasions, so that one would have to search hard in all quarters for comments in favour of conflict over harmony.

While the Confucian ideal of social harmony derives from its organicist understanding and interpretation of the world of nature, the Marxian theory of class struggle is premised on its materialist equivalent, or dialectical materialism. In order to better understand social harmony on the one hand and class struggle on the other, it is worthwhile to turn briefly to differing Confucian and Marxian conceptions of the world of nature. Moreover, it is not possible to have a sensible discussion about social change for the Confucians and historical development for the Marxists without referring to their outlooks on the natural world. Nor is it possible to see the meaning of national identity for Confucians and the depth of the contest over identity between Confucians and Marxists without taking account of their conflicting conceptions of change and development.

For Confucianism, the world is filled with dualisms, but the two component elements are generally not thought of as hostile and incompatible. Rather, seeming opposites merge into a unified harmony and co-exist peacefully in mutual interdependence as a harmonious organism. Thus, *yin* and *yang* each has its own indispensable function and they complement each other to form a balanced, although unequal, cosmic hierarchy. With few exceptions, Confucians - let alone Taoists - regard opposites as 'cosmic partners without whose joint activities the universal process would be impossible'.²⁸

We are told by Song Neo-Confucians, for example, that there is nothing antagonistic in the component elements, and that 'Law [i.e., *li*] pervades Matter [i.e., *ch'i*] as its directing principle, and Matter furnishes Law with its means of

²⁸ Quoted by Derk Bodde in 'Harmony and conflict in Chinese thought', in Arthur Wright (ed.), *Studies in Chinese Thought*, Chicago & London: The University of Chicago Press, 1967, pp. 46-7.

manifestation'.²⁹ This attitude can be traced all the way back to the *Book of Changes*, to which the Confucian cosmology is apparently indebted. Human society, analogously, is also an ordered hierarchy, whose components fulfil their own functions and complement and co-operate with each other to achieve human harmony.

Dialectical materialism, too, sees a unity of opposites, viewing each aspect of the whole as dependent upon its opposite for its existence. It argues, however, that much more vital than the interdependence of opposites is their mutual exclusion and negation as determined by internal contradictions. Such is the case with action and counteraction, attraction and repulsion, and so on. While the unity of opposites is said to be 'conditional, temporary, transitory, relative', the 'struggle of opposites' is 'absolute'.³⁰ It is the absolute struggle of opposites that constitutes the 'motive force', or the source of, development. As Marx put it, 'No antagonism, no progress.'³¹

In the case of social life, of course, the struggle of opposites takes the form of class struggle, and class struggle becomes the driving force of social development. Not only is this process of change constant, but it often takes place by leaps and bounds. What does the struggle lead to? It is most certainly not a compromise between the opposites but rather a 'break in continuity', 'transformation into the opposite' or the replacement of the old by the new.³² To put it in a different way, 'development' means fundamental change in the 'quality' of something, in that which makes it what it is, that which represents its unity, integrity, stability and its identity with itself. In short, a thing ceases to be what it is as a result of such a qualitative change. Social development, likewise, is envisioned as a revolutionary process that results in the replacement of old social systems by new ones. What is destined to disappear in the revolution, of course, is not just the economic basis of the old system but also the attendant superstructure - the sum-total of social ideas,

²⁹ See J. Percy Bruce, *Chu Hsi and His Masters*, London: Probsthain, 1923, pp. 121-4. This typical Song Neo-Confucian attitude on the subject can be traced to the *Books of Changes*, which says, 'The yin and yang unite their forces, and the hard and the soft gain embodiment, thus giving manifestation to the phenomena of Heaven and Earth.' See Appendix III of the *Book of Changes*, James Legge (trans.), in *Sacred Books of the East*, vol. XVI, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1899, p. 395.

³⁰ V.I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, vol. 38, p. 360.

³¹ K. Marx, *The Poverty of Philosophy*, Moscow, Foreign Languages Publishing House, 1956, p. 61.

³² V.I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, vol. 38, p. 360.

cultural traditions, institutions and economically determined relations - even though some remnants might linger on.

For Confucians, the communist revolution has done just that in China, and as a consequence, the self-identity of China and the Chinese has been 'negated'. In the same process, it has damaged national unity and caused a moral degradation across the country, which has dramatically worsened with commercialisation in the last two decades. To them, while class struggle proves most detrimental to national unity, the Marxian theory of social development has done the most damage to national identity. In order to identify the nation to itself again, the Confucian ideals must be rediscovered. No less importantly, Confucians have realised, they must deconstruct the conception of history as a forward movement along a straight line, which historical materialism shares with the Enlightenment discourse of progress, and bring back the Confucian notion of change.

Change in a Confucian sense differs fundamentally from the Marxian notion of development in that it is uncompromisingly predisposed against revolution. It is thought of as gradual and taking place in the means rather than the end, utility rather than principle, or usages rather than essentials, so that self-identity is maintained regardless of the change. In Marxian terms, Confucians envisage 'quantitative' changes but not 'qualitative' ones. Thus we have Kuo Hsiang's (d. AD 312) cosmology of permanence in change, i.e., the individual things in the universe are in perpetual flux but the universe as a whole is eternal and self-creating.³³ The human world, as part of the universal macrocosm, conforms to this pattern. In the words of Hsün Tzu (*ca.* 298-*ca.* 238 BC), 'Past and present are the same. Things that are the same in kind, though extended over a long period, continue to have the self-same principles.'³⁴

Whether the emphasis on permanence by Confucians, and other schools of thought, has contributed to a static, evolutionary, devolutionary or cyclic worldview need not detain us here. The point that must be made is that Confucians of all ages are definitely more interested in permanence than change and that the commonly accepted idea of progress is fundamentally alien to Confucianism.

³³ Cited by Feng Youlan (Fung Yu-lan) in *A History of Chinese Philosophy*, translated by Derk Bodde, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1952-53, p. 210.

³⁴ Hsün-tzu: H.H. Dubs (trans.), *The Works of Hsuntzu*, London: A. Probsthain, 1928, pp. 73-4.

Contemporary Confucians might find the latter more acceptable, but their preoccupation with the former remains strong.

Mou Zongsan, for example, argues in his critique of Mao's 'On Contradiction' that what gives philosophy meaning and significance is the search to differentiate that which does not change from that which does. He goes on to say, drawing on Plato's Idea, that 'any changing phenomenon presupposes an "unchanging Idea", without which it is impossible to judge whether any change has taken place'.³⁵ Thus white is white according to the Idea of 'white'; square is square according to the Idea of 'square'; and Man is Man according to the Idea of 'Man'. It is tempting to add, following the same logic, that the Chinese are Chinese according to the Confucian Idea of 'Chinese'.

3. The Confucian Orthodoxy and the Idea of Chineseness

That the Confucian challenge to Marxism and the Party-state is framed in the binary opposition of orthodoxy vs. heterodoxy is to be expected, given the fact that some standard of orthodoxy or fidelity to tradition has invariably been imperative to Confucians across the centuries. What Confucians regard as orthodox tradition is not just a code of conduct or a philosophical system but a life-style, an attitude of mind, a type of character formation, and a spiritual ideal.³⁶

According to Mencius (371?-279? BC), orthodoxy was a 'great road', while Wang Yang-ming used the analogy of a 'broad highway'. Its opposite, of course, is heterodoxy, which Wang Yang-ming (1473-1529) thought of as 'side-tracks' or 'dead ends'. To many contemporary Neo-Confucians in China, as well as overseas, heterodoxy is first and foremost Marxism and Westernism. Neo-Confucians concede that the Way of Man cannot be clearly defined, but it is precisely that, they contend, that makes China China and the Chinese Chinese. This, of course, is not just a Confucian conviction; Chinese cultural conservatives in general share the view that cultural tradition is some kind of chromosome for the nation and it alone defines Chineseness.³⁷

³⁵ Mou Zongsan (Mou Tsung-san), *Moral Idealism*, p. 78.

³⁶ Wm. de Bary et al., *The Unfolding of Neo-Confucianism*, p. 156.

³⁷ See, for example, Ma Qingyu, 'A critique on cultural conservatism' [*Duiyu wenhua baoshouzhuyi de jianxing*], *Zhongguo renmin daxue xuebao* 3, 1997, pp. 32-7; and Sha

It is worth noting that the Neo-Confucian rationale for reviving Confucianism is not simply premised on an assumption that China's indigenous tradition is superior to an exogenous culture; it also rests on a theoretical link between the Confucian Orthodoxy and the *tao*, or the Way. It is in this vein that Jiang Qing has pitted Confucianism against Marxism, arguing that

Confucianism embodies the *tao*, as it derives from the human understanding of the *tao* and the metaphysical world. Because it accords with the *tao*, it is sacred, universal and timeless. Marxism, on the other hand, is nothing but an ideology far removed from the *tao* and not rooted in any sacred tradition. For that reason, it is neither sacred to the Chinese people, nor relevant to the Chinese way of life.³⁸

Understood in this light, as it is by Jiang and his fellow Confucians, the Confucian Orthodoxy comes to embody the Way of Man, which is fundamentally a reflection of the Way of Heaven. As such, it also embodies the will of, and is sanctioned by, Heaven. Understandably, then, the *tao* is perceived by Confucians to be 'constant', 'unchanging', 'universal' and 'timeless', even while political power changes hands and dynasties come and go. It also appears to be thought of as a 'path', as it is often referred to in the *Analects*; to be more accurate, it should be taken to mean the 'path' ordained by Heaven for all to travel on. In less metaphorical terms, the *tao* is the way in which individuals, states and the world should both conduct themselves and be conducted. Confucians are convinced that neither a society nor individuals can deviate from the *tao* without suffering dire consequences - losing their own identity and the mandate of Heaven, going astray, or incurring social and moral chaos.

In this context, what contemporary Confucians mean by '*fanben*' (returning to the origin) can probably be interpreted as going back to this Heaven-ordained path, from which they believe China has strayed. At the same time, they also appear convinced, like the Song-Ming Neo-Confucians, that 'this Way could not be real or genuine for them unless somehow they could find it within themselves, as something not external or foreign to their own essential nature'.³⁹

Lianxiang, *Cultural Psychology in the Chinese Society* [Zhongguo shehui wenhua xinli], Beijing: Zhongguoshehui chubanshe, 1998, pp. 5-6.

³⁸ Jiang Qing, 'Politics and economics - under the cultural banner' [Zhengzhi yu jingji - yi wenhua wei qizhi], *Ehu* 171 (Sept. 1989), p. 146.

³⁹ Wm. Theodore de Bary et al., *The Unfolding of Neo-Confucianism*, p. 32.

There are many who approve this tendency to find the Way in the self, including Western Sinologists as well as Confucians. De Bary,⁴⁰ for one, commended it as a healthy instinct and lamented the frustrating of that healthy instinct as an unfortunate aspect of the modern experience of the Chinese. For it caused 'a temporary loss of their own self-respect and a denial of their right to assimilate new experience by a process of reintegration with the old'. 'To have seen all value as coming solely from the West or as extending only into the future, not also as growing out of their own past,' he added, 'has hindered them in recent years from finding that Way or Tao within themselves.' Nevertheless, he believed that the process of growth was hidden rather than stopped, and he predicted optimistically that the new experience of the Chinese people would be seen in significant part not just as a revolution inspired from without but as a growth from within.

Neo-Confucians in China might not have read de Bary, but they appear to be following the very track that he has marked. They not only see value as coming from China's own past and from a continuity between its past, present and future, but they have also begun to see, once again, universal value as coming from China. So far as Confucians are concerned, to reconnect with orthodoxy is to put China back on the right track, reaffirm its traditional values and reconstruct its national identity accordingly, and in so doing, restore self-respect and self-confidence to the nation.

In the Confucian lore, there is a common belief that the orthodoxy is embodied in the Confucian canonical texts, and exemplified and transmitted by a line of sage-kings and wise men who follow the *tao* by conforming their conduct to the ordainment of Heaven. The historical fact, however, is that those texts have undergone frequent, significant reinterpretations, and the authentic Confucian genealogy, especially since Han Yü (768-824), has been reconstructed again and again in accordance with the new visions and needs of different times.

Generally speaking, Neo-Confucians today appear less interested in the *Classics* and the genealogy, than in the fundamental Confucian ethical thought and the basic principles for the Way of Man worked out in the ethical system. There is something approaching a consensus among them that the Confucian orthodoxy

⁴⁰ Ibid.

best manifests itself as a spiritual ideal that is embodied in a system of values and attitudes of mind.

As is well known, underlying these values and attitudes is the central concept of *jen*, variously translated as love, man-to-man-ness, human-heartedness, humanity, humaneness or benevolence. Such is the primacy of *jen* in the Confucian conception that it is invariably postulated as the foundation of the Confucian Way of Man, or the summation of all virtues. According to Confucians, *jen* is what sets Man apart from animals. However, it must not be taken to mean a naturally endowed human quality but rather 'a sublime moral attitude, a transcendental perfection attained only by legendary heroes',⁴¹ although one can increase in *jen* through self-cultivation and by constant practice of it one reaches some measure of attainment. In this way, Confucianism enjoins people not just to believe in it as a spiritual ideal but, even more importantly, to keep up their efforts at attaining it.

At the same time, Confucians recognise that this sublime virtue does not grow in a vacuum or as an abstract ideal. The practice of benevolence means benevolent conduct in the practical affairs of everyday life in the form of, say, propriety (*li*), rightness (*yi*), loyalty (*zhong*), consideration (*shu*), filial piety (*xiao*), brotherly affection (*ti*), faithfulness (*xin*), sincerity (*cheng*) and reverence (*jing*). At this most fundamental level, *jen* becomes the central criterion by which Man is defined, and the belief in it and the practice of benevolent conduct are seen as the only means to maintain and perfect humanity. On a secondary level, it also defines 'Chineseness', for one cannot logically be 'Chinese' without being human first.

The above virtues - and innumerable others - constitute a code of conduct systematic enough to cover all the normal relationships of life and represent an attitude of mind with regard to Heaven, Earth and Man in all their dimensions and interrelations. What this Confucian notion of the Way of Man does, in terms of identity, is at least threefold. Firstly, it encourages the perfection of personality through the identification with, and the practice of, these Confucian virtues cherished by the community. Secondly, in the form of cardinal virtues (like loyalty and filial piety), it helps to forge a communal bond by interweaving the individual, family, clan and state. Thirdly, it supplies a framework in which the community is to be imagined, without much need for 'print capitalism'.

⁴¹ See Arthur Waley, *The Analects of Confucius*, London: Allen & Unwin, 1945, p. 28.

The framework enables individuals to place themselves in a historical perspective and view themselves as members of a community of men and women united by the same spiritual ideal and the practice of the same benevolent conduct. A way of life controlled by this code of conduct and this attitude of mind may very well be regarded as 'Chinese', even though some would rather modify 'Chinese' into 'Confucian'.⁴² In any case, one can hardly think of China and the Chinese as a community without thinking of the Confucian ideals and values that have probably shaped them more than anything else.

Admittedly, the Way of Man was conceived of in predominantly universal terms in pre-Qin and the greater part of imperial China, so that the Chinese world was more or less equivalent to the world, the Chinese to Man and Chineseness to humanity. This does not mean, however, that there was no awareness of, or distinction between, the Chinese self and some 'other'. The *Chou-li*, for example, makes mention of eight proto-states (*bangguo*) inhabited by the *Du*, *Bi*, *Yi*, *Man*, *Ming*, *Rong* and *Di*, apart from *Zhongguo* (China). The *Li-chi* (*The Book of Rites*) speaks of *Yi*, *Man*, *Rong* and *Di* as well as China. The *Tso-chuan*, in addition, makes a distinction between the Chinese and the non-Chinese in unequivocal terms: 'If one is not one of us, he must have a different mind.'⁴³

What appears obvious in both *Chou-li* and *Li-chi* is that all these proto-states were considered equal, by and large, but a Chinese superiority complex started to emerge as Chinese civilisation advanced. It is rather obvious, for instance, in Confucius' comment in the *Analects* that 'Even if the *Yi* and *Di* have rulers, they are inferior to *Xia* without a ruler.'⁴⁴ When explaining the Master's comment in *Tso-chuan*, K'ung Ying-ta wrote that '*Zhongguo* is called *Xia* because she is endowed with propriety and rightness; she is called *Hua* because her people wear beautiful apparel.'⁴⁵ We see in this the origin of the vision of China as 'a nation of

⁴² The most balanced view of Chinese culture is that it includes Taoism and Buddhism as well as Confucianism, but it is generally agreed that Confucianism has been, until recent times, the 'mainstream', 'backbone', 'central pillar' or 'mainstay' of Chinese culture.

⁴³ Quoted by Tan Bing in 'A cultural explanation of the coherence of the Chinese nation' [*Zhonghua minzu de ningjuli de wenhua chanshi*] in Li Zonggui (ed.), *The Confucian Tradition and the Coherence of the Chinese Nation* [*Rujia wenhua yu Zhonghua minzu ningjuli*], Guangzhou: Guangdong renmin chubanshe, 1998, p. 60.

⁴⁴ *The Analects*, III, Beijing: Yanshan chubanshe, 1995, p. 31. For a different translation from mine, see, for example, Simon Leys (trans.), *The Analects of Confucius*, p. 10. His rendering of 'Xia' into 'the various nations of China', though, is more than inaccurate from the speaker's - Confucius' - point of view, for it is hard to see how the Master would see China in those terms.

⁴⁵ Cited by Tan Bing, op. cit., p. 71.

propriety and rightness' (*liyi zhi bang*), which has lasted to this day, regardless of a number of humiliations and the moral chaos that China has experienced time and time again.

Not surprisingly, then, the Chinese were often said to be 'cultured' or 'civilised' (*youwen*), and they were accordingly distinguished from the 'incompletely civilised' (*wen bu bei*) *Yi* and 'uncivilised' (*wuwen*) animals. What was referred to as 'culture', most notably in *Tso-chuan*, included such objective markers as apparel, currency and language, but the ultimate criterion for 'Chinese' and 'Yi' was subjective rather than objective: it was the *hsin* (mind) which counted. The quote above from *Tso-chuan* illustrates this point. It is made still clearer by Ch'en An of the Tang Dynasty in his observation, 'What distinguishes *Hua* from *Yi* is *hsin*.'⁴⁶

In a broad sense, *hsin* might refer to an outlook, a way of thinking, a system of internalised notions; in a narrow sense, it refers to moral standards, as can be seen from Ch'en An's characterisation of 'the Chinese mind' in terms of humanity and rightness.⁴⁷ That is corroborated by Hu An-kuo's statement that 'The Chinese are Chinese because of their humanity and rightness. If their humanity and rightness decrease, they will be no different from the *Yi*, and if they decrease further, they will be no different from animals.'⁴⁸ Still more specifically, Shih Chieh (1005-45) opined that 'China is China because she values the ethics for the relations between rulers and subjects, fathers and sons, husbands and wives, brothers, friends. Peoples who do not value these ethics belong to the *Yi* and *Di*.'⁴⁹ In the writings of Wang Fu-chih (1619-92) and Shih Chieh, this distinction assumes such stringency that it is said that if not maintained, the Way of Man will be neglected, resulting in general social and moral chaos and disorder.

As can be seen clearly, all creatures under Heaven were ranged in the Confucian tradition not only on a scale of civilisation but also judged, with a singular moral criterion, as superior or inferior. It is most probably this practice of distinguishing between the Chinese and foreigners (a modern version of the *Yi-Xia*

⁴⁶ Ibid., p. 72.

⁴⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁸ Quoted by Hu Fagui, *Confucian Culture and the Patriotic Tradition* [*Ruijia wenhua yu aoguo chuantong*], Shanghai: Shanghai shehui kexue chubanshe, 1998, p. 214.

⁴⁹ Shih Chieh, cited in Li Zonggui, op. cit., p. 56.

distinction?) on moral grounds that has enabled the Chinese superiority complex to be maintained well beyond the Opium Wars and the Sino-Japanese wars into the twenty-first century.

It should be pointed out, however, that Confucians have rarely endorsed the view that 'it is not inhumane to annihilate (the barbarians) ... because faithfulness and righteousness are the ways of human intercourse and are not to be extended to alien kinds'.⁵⁰ Generally, the Confucians, as we have discussed, did not consider *Xia* and *Yi*, immutable; instead the morally superior could degenerate and the morally inferior could elevate themselves. It must be pointed out also that Confucians considered it perfectly all right to transform *Yi* with *Xia*, not the other way round. This is a thread that runs through Confucianism and Neo-Confucianism alike. Even today, Neo-Confucians continue to make a sharp distinction between the Chinese and the foreign, as has been mentioned, and one of their charges against Marxism and Westernism is that both want to transform China with an alien culture.

That is not to imply that Confucians refuse to learn from others. So far as Confucians are concerned, there are things they can learn and there are things they refuse to learn. In other words, their learning can only be additive or consist of fine-tuning. After the Opium Wars, Confucians gradually came to terms with the reality that China could only improve its lot by learning from the West. All they were ready to learn, though, was Western science and technology, and political systems were reluctantly added to the list later on, but at the same time, they reiterated that 'Chinese principle' must be adhered to.

Today, one and half centuries later, Neo-Confucians remain committed to the paradigm of 'Chinese learning as principle and Western learning as utility', although what they want to learn has expanded dramatically to include democratic politics and autonomous scholarship. Given their conception of the Way and the changeable and unchangeable, that commitment is inevitable. To contemporary Confucians, as to Confucians in the past, what cannot change is the Way, or what they think makes China China and the Chinese Chinese; to change that significantly is for China and the Chinese to cease to be.

⁵⁰ See John D. Langlois, 'Chinese culturalism and the Yuan analogy: seventeenth-century perspectives', *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies*, vol. 40, no. 2, 1980, p. 364.

Their central preoccupation at that level is 'Chineseness', or the retaining of it, and to them Confucianism is so 'Chinese' that one who does not accept it can hardly be considered Chinese, as prominent philosopher, Zheng Jiadong put it.⁵¹ Moreover, they are also concerned with what constitutes the Idea of 'Man', to borrow Mou Zongsan's phrase. One of the numerous reasons for their concern is the affinity or overlapping between the idea of the 'Idea of the Chinese' and the 'Idea of Man', as we have discussed earlier. A more important reason is that the Idea of 'Chinese' must be validated in the Idea of 'Man' and vice versa. If not, it then becomes inappropriate, invalid, or illegitimate. A Confucian Idea of 'Chinese' is validated in the Confucian Idea of the 'benevolent Man', for example, but not if 'Man' is established, say, as a creature able to use tools and act on nature according to his needs. In that sense, to affirm the Chinese Idea of 'Man' is to affirm the Idea of 'Chineseness', or vice versa. Accordingly, Neo-Confucians, like Confucians of the past, do not simply embed Chineseness in Confucianism, but they insist on the universality of Confucianism as well. This is manifest in their conviction that Confucianism can provide a remedy to the ills of China and the world

4. Moral Regeneration

The Neo-Confucians' call for moral regeneration is based on a perception of escalating moral degeneration in the last two decades. As Confucians see it, China's crisis of faith and 'vacuum of morality' jeopardise the moral health of society, national identity and social harmony and bring about disorder and chaos, while the global moral crisis is so grave as to threaten human existence. As Professor Tang Yijie of Beijing University has argued forcefully,

There exists in Chinese society a 'crisis of faith', a 'vacuum of morality', environmental pollution and all sorts of other problems, which are so serious that they have to be heeded. In a global context, there are even more problems and they are more complex. We can see that, with the advances in science and technology, humankind, in conquering nature, has mastered not only abundant means of destroying nature but also numerous weapons capable of annihilating

⁵¹ Zheng Jiadong, 'Confucianism as a religion and a modern interpretation of Confucian thought' [*Zongjiaoxing yu rujia sixiang de xiangdai chanshi*], in China Confucius Foundation (ed.), *Confucianism and the Twenty-First Century*, p. 1001.

humankind itself. ...The over-exploitation of nature, the waste of natural resources, the depletion of the ozone layer, the pollution of the seas and oceans, environmental pollution, and the damage to ecological balance have upset the 'harmony of nature' and the 'harmony between nature and Man' as well. These problems are threatening the conditions of human existence. The unbalanced pursuit of material interests, the competition over natural resources and the desire for power over nature have caused conflict and wars between nations, states and regions. The emphasis on money and pleasure has caused tense relations between peoples, social apathy, loneliness and an increasing sense of loss. ...A general imbalance between the material and spiritual has taken place in the world as a result of the insatiable pursuit of sensual pleasure; alcoholism, suicide and random killing have also to do with psychological inequilibrium. These social diseases, which have already posed a serious threat to social harmony, are a direct result of the neglect of the 'harmony between the inner and outer self and between the self and the outside world'.⁵²

These opinions are not just Tang's but highly representative. Other identified symptoms of moral degeneration include wide-spread corruption, bribery, mounting triangle debts, profiteering, fake and low-quality products, false advertisements, goldism, pornography, rampant prostitution, increasing divorces, family break-ups, de facto relationships, extramarital affairs, premarital sex, drugs, alcoholism, gambling, prevalent impolite or inappropriate social behaviour and a soaring crimerate. The list goes on. It is not just the Confucians who perceive a moral crisis, but also intellectuals, politicians and officials of many colours and persuasions, as well the majority of ordinary citizens. According to a recent survey, for example, 82.2% of respondents said they were 'dissatisfied with the morals of the country (*shehui fengqi*)'.⁵³

⁵² Tang Yijie, 'The significance of Confucianism in the modern world' [*Luelun ruxue de dangdai yiyi*], in *Confucianism and the Twenty-First Century*, pp. 249-50. This is apparently the consensus view amongst Neo-Confucians and supporters of the Confucian project, including Marxists and scholars of different persuasions. For more examples, see Liu Shuxian (Liu Sshu-hsien), *Chinese Philosophy and Modernisation* [*Zhongguo zhexue yu xiandaihua*], Taipei: Taiwan shihp'ao wenhua ch'upian kungssu, 1980; Guo Qiyong, 'Confucian concerns about life and death and their modern significance' [*Ruxue de shengsi guanhuai ji qi dangdai yiyi*], in China Confucius Foundation (ed.), *Confucianism and the Twenty-First Century*; Tang Changli, 'Characteristics of the times and the function of Confucianism' [*Shidai tezhen yu rujia gongneng*], *Dongyue luncong* 1, 1989, pp. 14-6; Dong Tianjia, 'Confucian ethics and its role today' [*Rujia lunli de xiandai zuoyong*], *Dongyue luncong* 1, 1989, pp. 16-8. Many more examples can also be found in *Confucianism and the Twenty-First Century*; Liu Zhifeng (ed.), *Moral China* [*Daode Zhongguo*], Beijing: Zhongguo shehui kexue chubanshe, 1999; Zheng Xiaojian et al., *Traditional Morality and Contemporary China* [*Chuantong daode yu dangdai Zhongguo*], Hefei: Anhui jiaoyu chubanshe, 1998.

⁵³ *China News Digest* 459 (7 Jan., 2000), website: <http://www.cnd.org:8013>.

In the face of this 'moral failure', Confucians seem to have no doubt in their minds that this is a deviant state of affairs that can only be attributed to straying from the Way. It reflects a political failure, a series of ill-advised and misguided improvisations that have led the nation away from its traditional moral order into chaos and spiritual ruin. The way out of the crisis, therefore, is to rediscover and embrace that 'eternal principle'.

To be sure, there is no longer any denying that these problems do exist in China, but one can surely argue that not all of them are moral problems. Yet, such is the momentum of the degeneration discourse, that many problems that can hardly be thought of as moral ones are thrown into the same basket. To Confucians, who are given to moralising even the amoral and insisting that 'all national crises are in essence cultural/moral crises',⁵⁴ the solution to a moral crisis can be nothing but a moral one. What they recommend, predictably, includes benevolence, rightness, propriety, wisdom, sincerity, the mean or harmony, loyalty and filial piety. It is as though they continue to believe, like their predecessors, that only when China embraces these values whole-heartedly once again, will the Way prevail across the land, that only then will the nation be blessed with order, harmony, stability and prosperity. That conviction, however much it might disagree with historical realities, is explicable in the context of the foundational Confucian vision. At the centre of that vision, as we have discussed earlier, is a moral order that is thought of as a set of 'true and invariable norms for the conduct of life in society'.⁵⁵

Not many people, however, agree with Confucians that these values can remedy China's ills, let alone the world's. Its detractors subject every Confucian value recommended to vigorous scrutiny and counter Confucians on every single point that they make about the merits of Confucianism. Prominent among the critics of Confucian values are dedicated modernisers, whose answer to the current moral crisis is legal-rational management based on instrumental values. Mainstream Marxists, in contrast, are extraordinarily integrational in this regard, promoting not only 'socialist virtues' but also citizenship and 'excellent traditional

⁵⁴ Liang Shuming, *The Complete Works of Liang Shuming*, Jinan: Shangdong renmin chubanshe, vol. 1, 1989, p. 335.

⁵⁵ Arthur Wright, 'Introduction' to *The Confucian Persuasion*, Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 1960, p. 4.

Chinese values', while insisting on making the first 'the grammar' and the other elements 'vocabulary'.

What Confucians are fundamentally against is neither citizenship - although they have to modify quite a few Confucian concepts to suit modern practice - nor 'socialist values', which often turn out to be little different from Confucian values, but the 'excessive scientific rationality' which they find in both Marxism and modernism. For to them, that is precisely what lies at the root of the problem and therefore must be tempered or balanced with humanist Confucian values.

The reason for this conviction can easily be found in their moralistic worldview and their propensity to assign different games of truth for the world of the nature and the human world, and subordinate the former to the latter. Contrary to the scientist argument that science applies to both nature and human society, contemporary Confucians believe, following Zhang Junmai and Liang Shuming, that a distinction must be made between the material world (*shishi shijie*) and the world of values (*jiazhi shijie*), or the world that is and the world that ought to be. While the former is the realm of science, the latter is the realm of philosophy and metaphysics. The games of truth for each are not transferable, because while one stresses objectivity, postulation, analysis, causality and affinity, the other centres on subjectivity, intuition, synthesis, free will and individuality.⁵⁶ In other words, scientific truth does not hold equal value in the 'philosophy of life'. Moreover, as Confucians insist that goodness take precedence over scientific truth, the latter must be subjected to the guidance of the former in order for science to stay on track and serve the right purpose.

Thus, Confucians say that the May Fourth intellectuals were fundamentally mistaken and caused severe damage to the nation's spiritual resources by placing science and democracy in opposition to traditional Chinese morality and cultural tradition, and in pursuing 'kingliness without' at the expense of 'sageliness within'.⁵⁷ They continue to question the wisdom of playing instrumental rationality against 'ultimate human concerns'. It is the consummatory values of a community, they argue, that regulate the relations among its members and provide identity for them. It is also these values that provide the basis for harmony and

⁵⁶ Zhang Junmai, *The Intellectual Foundation of National Revival* [*Minzu fuxing zhi xueshu jichu*], Beijing: Zaishengshe, 1935, p. 107.

⁵⁷ Mou Zongsan (Mou Tsung-san), *Times and Reflections*, p. 348.

solidarity in the community and ultimately shape its identity. Instrumental values and such intermediate ends as economic objectives, on the other hand, while not worthless, can only be 'utilities'. As China's moral degeneration has resulted from 'excessive instrumental rationality', so goes the Confucian argument, consummatory Confucian values can help redress the imbalance; as moral degeneration is a global problem, the world needs Confucianism as well.

Whether or not China and the world need Confucianism is something beyond systematic proof, and whether or not Confucianism can cure the world of its ills is even less certain. Yet, to Confucians, there is no doubt in either case. Their confidence may well stem from genuine convictions about the magic power of Confucianism. It is possible, too, that their confident assertion is primarily a hegemonic practice calculated to reinforce the discursive formation of Confucian values and thereby empower themselves in the contest for influence and control over national identity and the future directions of the nation.

5. Whither Confucianism?

The contest over the nation is capable of exerting a remarkable impact on who 'we' think 'we' are as a nation, and how 'we' should conduct 'our' life together today and tomorrow. To what extent Confucians will sway the course of events depends on, among other things, the strength of the Confucians and Confucianism. Westernisers tend to dismiss the Confucian discourse as mere cant and the Confucians as socially irrelevant. Confucians themselves, especially overseas Confucians, anticipate another golden age of Confucianism, or 'the third stage of Confucianism' (*ruxue disanqi fazhan*). The 'Confucian renaissance', particularly in the PRC, has proved beyond doubt that the Westernisers have underestimated the strength of the Confucians, although it remains to be seen whether or not 'the third stage of Confucianism' will materialise.

The Confucians' influence would be limited if Confucianism indeed became a 'wandering soul' detached from both the state and the populace, as some believe to be the case. It will certainly increase if it strikes an accord among the populace and wins their hearts and minds once again. In this regard, the biggest obstacle to Confucianism is Confucianism itself, or some elements of it. The precedence of righteousness over profit, as one example, is not suited to a market economy. As another example, not all the five cardinal relationships exist today, and not all the

Confucian ethics governing these relationships appeal to contemporary Chinese. Apparently, Confucians have been trying to reinterpret, reinvent or 'modernise' Confucianism in order to make it more relevant and appealing to contemporary Chinese. The question is whether or not Confucianism can be modernised without losing its self-identity. Another question is whether it can regain its traditional position as the 'grammar' of Chinese culture or whether it will be integrated into the 'vocabulary' of a hybrid culture.

Then, there is the question of how Confucians can convert the infidels. They can achieve this through an alliance with popular culture, as controversial philosopher Li Zehou has suggested.⁵⁸ Some efforts have already been made, for example, to take Confucius to the masses via TV. In the last few years four TV drama series based on Confucius' life have been screened on national TV, including *Confucius*, *The First Family under Heaven*, *A Story of the Kongs*, and *Confucius the Sage*. At the same time, Qufu, Confucius' hometown, is promoted nation-wide and it attracts hundreds of thousands of visitors each year, although it is not clear how many of those are pilgrims and how many are tourists.

Alternatively, Confucians can maximise their influence through an alliance with the Party-state, even though Confucians cannot countenance this option because of their opposition to the Party's ideology. Whether Confucians admit it or not, Confucianism seems to need the state as much as the state needs Confucianism. Such an alliance will enable Confucianism to reach out to the populace through the state propaganda apparatus, and more importantly, through the state education system. Even if Confucianism failed to reclaim the herd, an alliance with the Party-state could still enable it to exert influence on society by dint of its influence on the political centre. What hinders such an alliance is the Confucians' unwavering opposition to Marxism; it would be more likely if the Party-state renounced this in theory as well as in practice, or if the CCP transformed itself into a non-communist party of some sort.

⁵⁸ Li, Zehou, 'A conversation with Wang Desheng' [*Yu Wang Desheng de duitan*], in *New Dream of the Century* [*Shiji xinmeng*], Hefei: Anhui wenyi chubanshe, 1998, pp. 294-5.

7 Reclaiming the 'Othered' China: Nationalist Appropriations of Postcolonialism

This chapter continues to focus on the reconstruction of Chineseness as have the last four chapters. In this chapter, however, this theme will be examined in a different context, and we will look at how Chineseness is reconstructed under the influence of postcolonialism. This time, the frontier is drawn between Occidentalism and Orientalism, and national identity is defined via the prism of postcolonialism instead of against the revolutionary identity constructed by the Party. Vis-à-vis a common 'enemy' – Orientalism – anti-imperialists and postcolonialists find themselves side by side, and the differences between are largely 'trumped', although what constitutes Chineseness in the cultural nationalists' imagination still excludes socialist practices and elements.

The introduction of postcolonialism to China has had the effect of, as it were, thrusting the 'enemy' - the Orientalist and Cultural Imperialist - squarely in front of Chinese eyes, so that China, particularly its intellectual elites, is incited or forced to respond. The response has been substantial. As well as hundreds of articles and a few volumes, there were six high-profile symposiums on Orientalism and cultural imperialism between 1993 and 1997 alone, participated in by literati, historians and social scientists and establishment intellectuals.

What is most striking about the postcolonial discourse in China is that it is articulated by two groups of nationalists who are avowedly hostile to each other: official anti-imperialists and postcolonialists who are eager to distance themselves from the Party-state and official nationalism.¹ While postcolonialists have reinforced official anti-imperialist propaganda,² anti-imperialists have also shifted

¹ Chen Xiaoming, 'Postmodernism is not a heresy' [*Hou xiandai zhuyi bushi yiduan xieshuo*] *Ming pao yuekan* 2, 1998, pp. 64-6.

² A similar point was made in 1994 by Wang Hui, editor of *Dushu*, and later supported by Zhao Yiheng, Zhang Longxi, Xu Ben and Tao Dongfeng, among others, although none of them has elaborated on how postcolonialism reinforces the official discourse, nor have they explored its implications for national identity. See Wang Hui and Zhang Tianwei, 'Theories of cultural critique and the problem of nationalism in contemporary China' [*Wenhua piping liln yu dangdai Zhongguo minzu zhuyi wenti*], *Zhanglue yu guanli* 4, 1994; Zhao Yiheng, "'Postist learning' and Neo-Conservatism in China" [*Houxue' yu Zhongguo xin baoshou zhuyi*], *Ershiyi Shiji* 27 (Feb. 1995); Xu Ben, 'The condition of "Third-World criticism" in contemporary China' [*Disan shijie piping' zai dangjin Zhongguo de chujing*], *Ershiyi Shiji* 31 (Oct. 1995); Zhang Longxi, 'Debating "Chinese postcolonialism"', *Postcolonial Studies*, vol. 2, no. 2, 1999; and

their ground, reduced to falling back on cultural values, instead of official ideology, as a bulwark against 'cultural colonialism'.

Despite the sound and fury over Orientalism and Western cultural hegemony, two things appear to be at the heart of Chinese postcolonialism: national identity and recognition, both of which clearly centre on the interplay of knowledge and power. More specifically, the central assumption of the postcolonial discourse is that the power to represent 'us' produces what 'we' are and what 'we' can be, and it also influences how 'we' see 'ourselves' and the world. In the first instance, the central concern is how 'Chineseness' is defined, represented and by whom it should be defined and represented. In the second instance, national identity is linked to international recognition, or non-recognition, as Chinese postcolonialists apparently see identity and recognition/non-recognition as mutually reinforcing. That is to say, others deny 'us' recognition because they fail to see 'us' for who 'we' really are or because of who they think 'we' are, while 'our' representation and 'sustained discourses about who is possible or appropriate or valuable to be inevitably shape the way we look at and constitute ourselves'.³

What Chinese postcolonialism has valorised in its search for identity and recognition is the discursive formation of subjectivity and a politics of difference rooted in culture. Its emphasis on cultural uniqueness and native knowledge leads easily to the affirmation of a 'categorical identity'. It is not uncommon for such an identity to fall back on, and further encourage, some 'in-group essentialism',⁴ and by constructing an antagonistic Orientalism and reinforcing the boundary between 'us' and 'them', the postcolonialists have generated additional force for the search for the true Self. At this level, the postcolonial discourse goes far beyond authentic cultural identity and the recognition of Chinese culture and seeks to provide nationalism with new postcolonial concepts, a new philosophical foundation in cultural relativism, and a Chinese mode of knowledge that is able to capture and validate the Chinese experience.

Tao Dongfeng, *Social Transformation and the Contemporary Intellectual*, Shanghai: Sanlian shudian, 1999, p. 91.

³ Craig Calhoun, *Social Theory and the Politics of Identity*, Malden, Mass.: Blackwell Publishers Inc., 1998, p. 20.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 26.

This chapter explores these themes from three angles: the deconstruction of Orientalism, the contest for the power to represent China and the construction of 'Chineseness'. The two sections that follow focus on the deconstructive endeavours of the official anti-imperialists and the unofficial postcolonialists and show how the two discursive practices differ and yet converge. Section 3 will examine the contest between mainland and overseas Chinese scholars for the right and power to represent China. In sections 4 and 5, I shall turn to the project of 'cultural reconstruction' in Chinese academia and the reconstruction of 'Chineseness' by Chinese postcolonialists. In the concluding discussion, I shall further explore the implications of the postcolonial discourse in terms of national identity and national directions.

1. Official Campaigns Against 'Colonial Culture'

Although warnings against 'colonial culture' have been prevalent in the official media since 1989, a concerted offensive was launched in the *People's Daily* in September 1995, two years after postcolonialism made its debut in China. Unlike postcolonialists, who draw their inspiration from Said, Jameson, Spivak or Bhabha, anti-imperialist campaigners turn back to Mao Zedong. In addition, while postcolonialists treat Orientalism and cultural imperialism mainly as discourses and focus their attention on their ontological and epistemological bases, crusaders against 'colonial culture' are more concerned with its concrete effects on 'social consciousness' and with its ramifications for socialism.

Nevertheless, anti-imperialists and postcolonialists share the assumption that the West is wont to dominate the non-West and that Western culture participates in Western imperialism. Moreover, what is put forward as the bulwark against Western cultural encroachment in the official campaign is 'national culture' instead of the ideals and values of a bankrupt socialism. Like postcolonialists, anti-imperialists demand cultural differences be recognised as unique and legitimate in international communications and relations. On the basis of cultural relativism and cultural authenticity, the postcolonial discourse and anti-imperialist rhetoric tend to converge into an appeal for national identity and cultural autonomy.

'Colonial culture' is a vague concept which can refer to many things. According to the authoritative Marxist historian Gong Shuduo,

Foreign powers were intent on assimilating the people of their colonies and semi-colonies with their own culture in order to establish colonial rule and turn them into powerhouses for the development of the colonising countries. In other words, the Western bourgeoisie want to transform the world after their own image, and make the East subordinate to the West. Western culture is not exported to China for the sake of China's independence, democracy or prosperity; instead it facilitates military, political and economic invasion.⁵

One can find numerous instances of 'colonial culture', such as common analogies like 'the Venice of the Orient' and 'China's Wall Street', hair dyed blond, foreign names for people and shops, advertisements that promote Chinese products as China's Pierre Cardin, flats as 'European-style apartment houses', and the celebration of St. Valentine's Day, April Fool's Day and Christmas. The real concern for the regime, of course, is not these outward manifestations of 'phenomena of colonial culture' but what they see as underlying them. Foreign brands, foreign TV programs and Hollywood 'create a slave mentality, erode national consciousness, jeopardise national cultural products, and contaminate national culture'.⁶ To many, the 'colonial mentality' reflects a crisis in national culture, self-esteem, confidence and national spirit.⁷

For some international political specialists, the real danger of 'colonial culture' and 'Western cultural expansion' is the erosion of China's 'cultural sovereignty' and the loss of 'soft power', and that danger is more real than ever in the post-Cold War era. Professor Wang Huning, a key political adviser to President Jiang Zemin, for instance, has argued that there is in international politics a 'power shift' from the reliance on violence and wealth to a knowledge-based power structure. He concurs with Toffler that the control over knowledge will become the focal point in future global power politics.⁸

⁵ Ma Baozhu, Li Wenhui, Gong Shuduo and Zhang Haipeng, 'Eradicate the colonial cultural mentality and straighten the spine of the Chinese nation' [*Qingchu zhimin wenhua xinli, tingqi Zhonghua minzhu jiliang*], *The Guangming Daily*, 27 Feb., 1996, p. 3.

⁶ See Xia Yinying, 'Phenomena of colonial culture and cultural colonialism' [*Zhimin wenhua xianxiang yu wenhua zhimin zhuyi*], *Wehyi lilun yu piping* 2, 1996, p. 137.

⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 129.

⁸ Wang Huning, 'Culture as a component of national strength: soft power' [*Zuowei guojia shili de wenhua: ruan quanli*], *Fudan xuebao* (shekeban) 3, 1993, p. 91.

He writes elsewhere that as culture assumes increasing importance as a variable in international politics, 'Western countries have stepped up their efforts to control or influence international affairs and the development of developing countries by using cultural forces'.⁹ Instead of getting other countries to change using carrots and sticks, he adds, they are switching to a softer method of exercising power, namely, getting others to want what they want. He explains 'soft power', translating Harvard professor Joseph Nye, as resting on 'such resources as the attraction of one's ideas' or 'the ability to set the political agenda in a way that shapes the preferences others express'.¹⁰ China, he warns, must not jump on the bandwagon of others but respond to this new cultural stratagem for political hegemony by 'maintaining its own position and orientation'.¹¹ Moreover, China must also come up with strategies to enhance its 'soft power' because

If the power of a nation-state is legitimate in the eyes of others, its will is less likely to be resisted. If its culture and ideas are attractive to others, they will automatically follow it. If it is able to establish a set of international norms that accords with its internal behaviour, it will not have to change itself in international relations. If it is able to maintain an international system and if other states agree to co-ordinate their operations within this system, there will be no need for it to use costly hard power.¹²

It is not immediately clear from the quote above – nor indeed from his whole article – how China should go about maintaining its own position and orientation, legitimising its power, or making its culture and ideas attractive to others. Intertextual references seem to suggest that Wang is torn between cultural universalism and some sort of particularism. He suggests on the one hand that Chinese culture, in order to exercise 'soft power' on the global stage, must

⁹ Wang Huning, 'Cultural expansion and cultural sovereignty: challenges to the concept of sovereignty' [*Wenhua kuozhang yu wenhua zhuquan: dui zhuquan guannian de tiaozhan*], *Fudan xuebao* (shekeban) 3, 1994, pp. 9-10.

¹⁰ Wang Huning, 'Culture as a component of national strength: soft power', p. 92; Wang Huning, 'Cultural expansion and cultural sovereignty: challenges to the concept of sovereignty', p. 15. For Nye's original text, see 'Soft power', *Foreign Policy* 80, Fall 1990, p. 167; and *Understanding International Conflicts*, New York, London and Sydney: Longman, 1997, pp. 52-3.

¹¹ Wang Huning, 'Cultural expansion and cultural sovereignty: challenges to the concept of sovereignty', p. 13.

¹² *Ibid.*, p. 15. This quote is a paraphrase of Joseph Nye's exposition of the attraction of 'soft power' in 'Soft power', *Foreign Policy* 80, Fall 1990, p. 167.

rejuvenate itself and be transformed into a culture of universal human values.¹³ On the other hand, he insists that concepts such as human rights mean different things in different cultures and that the human rights diplomacy is nothing but a pretext for interfering in others' domestic affairs.¹⁴

There are others who believe that 'colonial culture' creates the ideal soil for 'peaceful evolution',¹⁵ or peaceful devolution of China's socialist system by capitalist forces. It is argued in fact that 'peaceful evolution' is accelerated through the agency of the 'voluntarily colonised'. In this view, there is behind the 'phenomena of colonial culture' not only conspiracy between imperialists but also co-operation between 'foreign worshippers' and imperialists. In his lengthy article on 'colonial culture' in *Qiushi*, for example, Liu Runwei details America's 'cultural invasion' through Hollywood, the VOA, NGO's, American Sinology, and a large body of media and cultural networks. He then turns on 'foreign worship' and the 'Westernisation of value judgement', asserting forcefully that colonisation cannot succeed without the collaboration of the 'voluntarily colonised'.¹⁶

In order to eradicate 'colonial culture', many strategies are suggested by the campaigners. It is generally argued that this cannot be done without, first and foremost, subverting the dominance of Eurocentrism. That in turn is impossible unless Chinese culture is recognised by the world (*zou xiang shijie*). For these reasons, great effort should be put into 'producing world-class products, creating a world-class literature and arts, purifying the national language, spreading and enhancing outstanding national culture through the mass media, enhancing national self-esteem, self-confidence and awareness of state sovereignty among the Chinese young'.¹⁷

In addition, it is proposed that laws should be put in place with regard to the use of foreign languages on product packing, that foreign names for shops and businesses should be handled strictly when submitted for approval, quotas should

¹³ Wang Huning, 'Culture as a component of national strength: soft power', p. 96.

¹⁴ Wang Huning, 'Cultural expansion and cultural sovereignty: challenges to the concept of sovereignty', p. 10 and p. 14.

¹⁵ See Xia Yinying, op. cit., p. 133, and p. 135.

¹⁶ Liu Runwei, 'On colonial culture' [*Zhimin wenhua lun*], *Qiushi* 5, 1996, p. 29; and see also Xia Yinying, op. cit., p. 129.

¹⁷ Xia Yinying, op. cit., p. 137.

be imposed on foreign films, and that domestic films and TV programs that promote national culture should be subsidised.¹⁸ At the same time, anti-imperialist propaganda has increased since 1989, particularly in *The People's Daily*, *Qiushi*, the Party's mouthpieces, *Banyue tan*, an organ of the CCP Propaganda Department, and *Zhongliu*, a radical left-wing popular magazine co-edited by veteran cadre-writers Wei Wei and Lin Mohan.

In spite of all the recent laws and regulations to promote national culture and restrict foreign cultural products, there are no signs to show 'colonial culture' has decreased in the country. What the propaganda has achieved is a discursive victory over the Westernisation discourse of the 1980s. Whereas the most audible voice of that decade claimed that 'modernisation cannot happen in China without three hundred years of colonisation',¹⁹ the post-Tiananmen era is clearly marked by the resurgence of cultural conservatism, anti-imperialism and postcolonialism.

2. Postcolonialist Bombardment on Misrepresentations of China

The importation of postcolonial theory has led to something like a witch-hunt in post-Tiananmen China, and so many are found guilty of misrepresenting China that it is not easy to decide where to begin. They include Western Orientalists as diverse as Montesquieu, Hegel, Kant, Wittfogel, Weber and Marx to John Fairbank, Joseph Needham and Gerald Segal. They also include 'internalised Orientalists' ranging from Chinese film makers to overseas Chinese academics and writers, in particular, Chang Jung, Zheng Nian, and Wu Ningkun, respectively authors of *Wild Swans (Hong)*, *Life and Death in Shanghai (Shanghai shengsi jie)*, and *The Last Drop of Tear (Zuihou yidi yanlei)*.

It should be pointed out at the outset that these and numerous other individuals are not indiscriminately targeted by all. Marxists, for example, concentrate on Wittfogel, and Confucians and cultural nationalists on Weber and Marx. Western Sinologists and overseas Chinese writers are accused by both mainland academics and overseas Chinese scholars of misrepresenting China, but more ferociously by overseas Chinese, with their advantage of knowledge that is

¹⁸ Ibid., pp. 136-7.

¹⁹ Quoted by Ma Baozhu, Li Wenhui, Gong Shuduo and Zhang Haipeng, op. cit., p. 3.

not easily accessible to their mainland compatriots. It is quite ironical, however, that these 'patriotic' overseas Chinese are not spared scathing words even from relatively open-minded academics, let alone from those who continue to believe that leaving China for the West is nothing short of treason. Both mainland and overseas Westernisers target the 'overseas New Left', while the latter have come under concerted attack from the New Left as well as from the mainland postcolonialists and nationalists of other descriptions. In short, such is the scramble in the postcolonial discourse that the differing positions and agendas are often obscured even to careful observers of the Chinese cultural scene.

The most virulent words are directed at 'internalised Orientalists'. In the sarcastic words of Zhang Kuan, one of the three exporters of postcolonialism to China, 'It would perhaps be too cruel to blame them for deliberately catering to the taste of Western readers and soliciting pity and money with their wounds and pus-oozing scars.'²⁰ That type of comment has given many observers good reason to suggest that Chinese do tend to consider internal enemies more dangerous than external ones and are more relentless towards the former. A more plausible argument is that how the Chinese self is represented by Chinese is of more immediate concern than what others say or write about China in foreign languages and in foreign lands. In any case, there is less postcolonialists can do about what is said and written. It is probably this insurmountable limitation that compels Chinese postcolonialists to concede that any attempted subversion of Western cultural hegemony is only possible within China.

Film makers like Zhang Yimou and Chen Kaike are often referred to as the 'voluntarily colonised' by Chinese postcolonialists, and they are said to have done more to misrepresent China than any other single group of 'Orientalists'. Postcolonialists complain that their films 'offer some unthinkable and improbable objects to make Westerners feel stimulated, intoxicated or sickened, to produce in Western audiences what in aesthetics is called the "sense of the sublime", the feeling of pity and racial superiority in culture'.²¹ According to Zhang Yiwu, the 'writing and encoding' of China according to its Western image appears in the

²⁰ Zhang Kuan, 'The "Other" in the eyes of the Europeans and the Americans: from Orientalism to Occidentalism' [*Ou mei ren yanzhong de 'feiwo zulei': cong 'Dongfangzhuyi' dao 'Xifangzhuyi'*], *Dushu* 9, 1993, p. 7.

²¹ *Ibid.*

form of spatial allegory. It characterises China as a production of a 'non-temporal', 'ambiguous', and 'static' culture in an 'exotic' locale, and also in the form of temporal allegory, which emphasises the confinement of Chinese culture in a 'chronologically backward state'. This narrative projects a China, along with its culture, which is a region lagging in time, eager to catch up and 'anxiety-ridden'.²²

Zhang Yimou's critics barely stop short of accusing him of high treason. Most of them use words and phrases like 'degradation', 'killing his Chinese conscience', or 'selling out', as what his movies offer to Western audiences are images of an 'othered' China that conform to Orientalist perceptions, thus entrenching and perpetuating these perceptions. His 'othered' China is exotic, primitive, mysterious, quaint and abnormal, and it is exaggerated out of proportion with images of incest, concubines, sexual rituals (like red lanterns and foot massaging), and so on and on. Above all, it is quite deliberately portrayed as inferior. It is the suppression of sexuality and individuality in *Judou*, the oppression of women in *Raise the Red Lantern*, and social injustice in *Qiuju* that feature prominently as definitive marks of the 'othered' China. It bears little relevance to Chinese, they assert, but is created for Western consumption with an eye to awards and prizes. What is worse for postcolonialists, 'politics serves as the identity of China, without which all the stories about human beings would lose their exotic appeal as representing an absolute Other'.²³ Or, as Chen Xiaoming put it, 'In some sense, politics, as the external subtext and the internal context, maintains its mysterious omnipotence in Chinese film.'²⁴

It appears that postcolonialists are totally blinded to individual points of views in the films they criticise; nor do they see anything artistically true therein; nor do they remember that politics was an inseparable part of Chinese life in an era of 'politics in command'. In fact, they see nothing and allow nothing but subjectivity constructed by the ideology of Orientalism in these films. 'Westerners', likewise, are homogenised into a collectivity of 'Orientalists'. Postcolonialists have no

²² Zhang Yiwu, 'The anxiety of interpreting China' [*Chanshi 'Zhongguo' de jiaolu*], *Ershiyi Shiji*, 28 (Apr., 1995), p. 132.

²³ Chen Xiaoming, 'The mysterious Other: postpolitics in Chinese film', *boundary 2*, 24(3), Fall 1997, p. 132.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 135-6.

doubt that all those films are invariably made and received as microcosms of China and Orientalist representations of it. On the part of the directors, what it takes to win international awards is not so much artistic calibre as the willingness and ability to figure out what Westerners want and come up with the wanted products - Orientalist codifications of China.²⁵ Western Orientalists (in this case judges), for their part, demonstrate clearly what they want in their choice of films to be invited and selected for viewing at the film festivals, and eventually to receive awards. It is further deduced that the sort of Chinese movies that they want are the sort that they encourage, and that Western audiences prefer what these judges prefer as well.

Since the award-winning Chinese movies are stamped with the Orientalists' approval (or 'baptised', as sarcastically put by some), they bring home disgrace instead of honour.²⁶ They also bring a message for other award aspirants: if you too want to win the Golden Palm or a Silver Bear, follow the example of Zhang Yimou and Chen Kaige. In this way, it is often claimed, Orientalists indirectly exert influence on the film-making industry in China. In addition, they find more straightforward, stronger and more effective foreign influence in the form of direct intervention in China's film industry through investment, sponsorship, or co-production.

Judging from their deconstructive impulse, Chinese postcolonialists seem much more radical about the national image than the German romantic nationalists of the 18th century. Unlike Herder, for example, Chinese postcolonial critics are simply not content to say: 'Let us follow our own path...let all men speak well or ill of our nation, our literature, our language: they are ours, they are ourselves, and let that be enough.'²⁷ They have to hunt down those who 'misrepresent' China. As to how China is to be represented, they give no other answer than that it should not be distorted. By that they seem to suggest, in a very un-Saidian fashion, that an undisputed authentic representation of China and the Chinese is not only possible but also achievable. That is, so long as it is they - the Chinese postcolonialists -

²⁵ Chen Xiaoming, Dai Jinhua, Zhang Yiwu and Zhu Wei, 'Orientalism and postcolonial culture' [*Dongfang zhuyi yu hou zhimin wenhua*], *Zhongshan* 1, 1994, pp. 138-44.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, p.135; Wang Yichuan, Zhang Fa, Tao Dongfeng, Zhang Rongyi and Sun Jin, 'Margin, centre, east, west' [*Bianyuan, zhongxin Dongfang, Xifang*], *Dushu* 1, 1994, pp. 150-51.

²⁷ Cited in Isaiah Berlin, *Vico and Herder*, London: Hogarth Press, 1976, p. 182.

who do the representing. This is a point driven home by Professor Wang Ning in his comment that

I believe the East should belong to the peoples of the East. Its existence is not dependent upon Western perceptions of it. In other words, the East...ought to be described and evaluated in accordance to the intrinsic values of the peoples of the East.²⁸

Postcolonialists, however, do not give a single example of faithful or truthful representations of China, realising, of course, that any blueprints and samples they offer would be immediately subject to disputes or accusations of distortion. Indeed, if they agree with Said that representations, because they are representations, are really no different from misrepresentations, then there is no guarantee that they can be prevented from distortion just because they are indigenous. Yet, so far as they are concerned, that is simply not an issue, as they presume simplistically that 'we' do not and cannot misrepresent 'ourselves'.

The argument about truthful representation cannot easily be settled, either within the Saidian framework of debate - where truth itself has become nothing but a representation- or within the polarised structure of the Chinese postcolonial discourse. For that reason, the battle over truth can only be one of signifiers rather than of the signified. The rhetorical use of 'truth' notwithstanding, the postcolonialists' polemic has boiled down to one thing, namely, what sort of image to assign to China. The most obvious consequence of the postcolonialists' thorough-going deconstructionism is that Chinese academics, directors and writers are driven into a cul-de-sac: damned if you represent China this way; damned if you represent China other ways; damned if you make unflattering comments on China; and damned if you make flattering ones. One can only conclude that the best thing to do is to do nothing at all.

3. The Right and Power to Represent China

This contest over the right and power to interpret and represent China has centred on who are the masters of Chinese studies. It has taken place largely between

²⁸ Wang Ning, 'Orientalism, postcolonialism and criticism of cultural hegemony' [*Dongfang zhiyi, hou zhimin zhuyi he wenhua baquan zhuyi pipan*], *Beijing daxue xubao* (shekeban) 2, 1995, p. 59.

mainland scholars and overseas Chinese academics - nicknamed 'pidgin academics' - who are accused of producing nothing but Orientalist images of China or 'academic fake to satisfy the appetite of the Western academia'.²⁹ No small number of mainland scholars believe that overseas Chinese academics are responsible for many 'cultural misreadings' and misrepresentations of China in Western academia. Postcolonialists attribute these academics' 'misrepresentations' of China to their lack of intimate knowledge of Chinese realities, their failure to identify with 'the Chinese mode of knowledge' and Chinese experience, and their insistence on privileging 'the Western mode of knowledge' in interpreting China. In addition, Chinese postcolonialists seem quite resentful of what they see as a propensity of overseas Chinese academics to dominate mainland scholars on the strength of their familiarity with Western theories as well as their 'Pidgin English'.³⁰

The most well-known battle took place in 1995-1996 in the Hong Kong-based *Twenty-First Century*, one of the most popular forums for 'Cultural China'. Singled out in the first round by mainland academics, Liu Dong and Lei Yi, were mostly New Leftists, such as Cui Zhiyuan, Ji Weidong and Gan Yang. Cui and Ji's offence, according to Liu and Lei, was to celebrate China's trial-and-error transition from a planned economy to a market economy as a much vaunted 'third way' - an alternative model of modernisation differentiated from either capitalism or socialism. Gan, similarly, was said to be callously mistaken in his judgement that the development of rural industry and the huge surplus rural labour force drifting into the cities had contributed to the reconstruction of rural China, regardless of all the resultant social consequences.³¹

Another round of the battle - this time between mainland postcolonial critics and overseas assimilationists - was much more extensive, touching on modernity versus postmodernity and postcoloniality, Western versus Chinese modes of

²⁹ Liu Dong, 'On the alert against "pidgin academics"' [*Jingti renwei de 'yangjingbang' xuefeng*], *Ershiyi Shiji* 32, Dec. 1995, pp. 4-13, excerpted in *Dushu* 3, 1996, p. 147.

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ Ibid. For the views of Cui Zhiyuan, Ji Weidong and Gan Yang, see Cui Zhiyuan, 'Institutional innovation and a second thought emancipation' [*Zhidu cuangxin yu dierci sixiang jiefang*], *Ershiyi Shiji* 24, Aug. 1994; Ji Weidong, 'A second thought emancipation or a utopia?' [*Dierci sixiang jiefang haishi wutuobang?*], *Ershiyi Shiji* 25, Oct. 1994; and Gan Yang, 'The reconstruction of rural China and prospects for Chinese culture' [*Xiangtu Zhongguo chongjian yu Zhongguo wenhua qianjing*], *Ershiyi Shiji* 16, (Apr. 1993).

knowledge, universalism versus particularism, and globalisation versus localisation. The postcolonialists reject what they think the assimilationists take for granted: that Western hegemonic knowledge holds ready answers to how to interpret China and what sort of image to assign to China.³² According to Zhang Yiwu, overseas Chinese scholars patronise native critics with a pedagogical rhetoric. They portray themselves as autonomous interpreters and critics of China, blessed with the freedom of speech that they enjoy in the West, while portraying the native critics as oppressed subjects neither free of thought nor action, who are therefore in no position to speak about or for China.³³ In this way, postcolonialists argue, the overseas academics legitimise and validate their Eurocentric knowledge at the expense of 'native knowledge', thereby elevating themselves to a higher epistemological and moral ground, where they can construct knowledge and identities and speak for the Chinese as master ventriloquists.

Their interpretations and representations of China, however, are anything but true or authentic, assert the postcolonialists. Zhang Yiwu, for instance, took Zhao Yiheng to task for depicting the contemporary Chinese cultural scene as 'a cultural carnival without direction, without depth and without any sense of history' and for scolding Chinese intellectuals for their potentially fatal identification and complicity with popular culture.³⁴ Zhao Yiheng also incurred much postcolonialist wrath by putting all the recently introduced Western theories of poststructuralism, postmodernism and postcolonialism under the rubric of post-ism and arguing that the spirit of cultural critique is lost in the facile and tendentious talk about postmodernism and postcolonialism on the mainland. Postcolonialists dismiss Zhao's suggestion that they compromise with the cultural orthodoxy and political authorities in China and discuss issues of history and culture with a simple 'blame-it-on the West' approach.³⁵ Zhao Yiheng, Xu Ben and Zhong Longxi drew

³² Zhang Yiwu, 'The anxiety of interpreting "China"', p. 128.

³³ Ibid. Zhang's comments were made in response to Xu Ben's essay, 'The condition of "Third World criticism" in contemporary China' [*Disan shijie piping' zai dangjin Zhongguo de chujing*], *Ershiyi Shiji* 31, Oct. 1995; and Zhao Yiheng's essay, "'Postist learning" and Neo-Conservatism in China' [*Houxue' yu Zhongguo xin baoshou zhuyi*], *Ershiyi Shiji* 27, Feb. 1995.

³⁴ Cited by Zhang Yiwu, 'The anxiety of interpreting "China"', p. 129.

³⁵ Zhao Yiheng, op. cit., p. 14; see also 'Cultural critique and postmodernist theory' [*Wenhua pipan yu douxiandai zhuyi lilun*], *Ershiyi Shiji* 31, Oct. 1995, p. 150.

much wider criticism for their indifference to the postcolonialists' questioning of the 'universal and indisputable value of modernity'.

It is important to note, however, that postcolonialists falsify these opinions not so much as a result of substantive engagement, but on the basis of a Saidian logic. According to this logic, there can simply be no true representations of anything, as representations are 'embedded first in the language and then in the culture, institutions, and political ambience of the representer'.³⁶ Hence, it really does not matter whether or not there is sufficient evidence, or whether or not texts are read accurately, because nothing has an objective existence outside the discourse in which it is represented.

Underlying all these and other misinterpretations and misrepresentations of China, postcolonialists claim, is Western-centrism. Nowhere is this more manifest to them than in the assimilationists' 'absolutist' notion of modernity, and nowhere is the Western-centric modernity given better expression than in the TV series, *River Elegy*. As summarised well by Zhang Longxi,

With its six parts thematically organised around the Yellow River, the dragon, the Great Wall, and some other such potent images long considered to be symbols of Chinese culture and the Chinese nation, *River Elegy* mounts a strong critique of the entire Chinese tradition, especially Confucianism, and unabashedly calls for a 'great flood' to wash out 'the dregs of the old civilisation'. Moreover, it further identifies that great flood as 'none other than the industrial civilisation', the open, 'blue-water', maritime civilisation, best represented by the culture, science and democratic system of the West. By declaring that Chinese civilisation has declined and become decrepit, and by selectively presenting and commenting on certain historical moments and images of the Chinese, screenwriters Su Xiaokang, Wang Luxiang and their collaborators adopted a number of typical nineteenth-century Western notions - from Hegel's Eurocentric philosophy of history to Marx's problematic notion of the Asiatic mode of production - and constructed a grand narrative that tells of the decline and fall of the earth-bound civilisations of the East...while at the same time speaks of the rise and rapid progress of the West.³⁷

Postcolonialists contend that 'Eurocentric modernity' is not an absolute truth applicable to all historical periods or all cultures; nor is it a pure utopia

³⁶ Edward Said, *Orientalism*, London, England: Penguin Books, 1978, pp. 272-3.

³⁷ Zhang Longxi, 'Debating "Chinese postcolonialism"', *Postcolonial Studies*, vol. 2, no. 2, 1999, p. 192.

unmediated by ideologies. It is, in fact, deeply entangled in a global discourse of power-knowledge, together with the power relations of domination and subordination, upon which it bestows legitimacy.³⁸ To project modernity as an absolute universal, postcolonialists argue, is therefore to 'forget' and 'erase' the fact of power relations and cultural hegemony. What is worse for postcolonialists, the seemingly descriptive or scientific studies of China by those overseas academics are really premised on obvious normative judgements, except that they transmute a prescriptive into a descriptive, the putatively rational into the real, an ought into what is. Consequently, their representation of China, while assigning an unsavoury image to China and placing it in subordination to the West, also implies a prescription for China as well as an attempt to shape and voice China as the West's Other. To postcolonialists, this in itself is new colonialism.³⁹

The overseas Chinese academics are hard put to it to defend themselves against the postcolonialists' accusation that their scholarship is ideologically driven. In fact, the former make no secret of their conviction that the postcolonial discourse is detrimental to China's modernisation, the realisation of democracy in China, and the advancement of 'the rights and interest of each individual Chinese in real life rather than of the abstract, collective and reified People'. They also declare that the challenge for them is 'how to avoid turning the theory of Orientalism and postcolonialism into some kind of endorsement of cultural conservatism, political orthodoxy and religious fundamentalism in the East'.⁴⁰ Besides, Zhao's observations about the contemporary Chinese cultural scene are certainly not totally accurate; putting all those post-ism's under the rubric of post-ism does obscure some of their differences, as some Chinese postists argue; and a universal modernity is not unproblematic, either. Still, does that give one sufficient reason to conclude that those who are of those opinions are concerned to constitute Orientalist knowledge about China? Even if it is proved beyond reasonable doubt that they are guilty of Eurocentrism, does it mean that their views are necessarily untrue just because they are 'Eurocentric'?

³⁸ Zhang Yiwu, 'The anxiety of interpreting "China"', p. 130.

³⁹ Ibid., p. 128.

⁴⁰ Zhang Longxi, *op. cit.*, p. 195 and p. 191.

Postcolonialists cannot be said to be solely concerned with disinterested scholarship, either. They cannot work out a convincing defence against the accusation of complicity with officialdom. Protestations of innocence of intention are also pointless, as what critics of postists mean by 'complicity' refers to effectivity rather than intentionality.⁴¹ The conflicting, partisan nature of the debate on postcolonialism in China has left little possibility for postists to endorse their opponents' accusation even if they might agree with them on this particular point. It is not surprising in this context that they bypass the issue of political oppression by and large. Furthermore, they also engage in a thoroughgoing deconstruction of Orientalist representations of China in Chinese films and literature, as has been mentioned, where 'politics serves as the identity of China'. It is hard to imagine how they can deconstruct the Orientalist 'political recoding of the Chinese cultural identity' and the official political discourse at the same time.

In all fairness, neither the assimilationists nor the postcolonialists are flawless in their arguments, and different opinions are only to be expected. Yet what has happened in the debate on postcolonialism in China is the polarisation of most opinions into 'Orientalist' or 'conservative', and such labels are bandied about to discredit each other. So far as the postcolonialists are concerned, their offensive against overseas Chinese academics clearly signifies a claim that only 'we' can understand China, and therefore 'we' are the most qualified to represent and interpret it.⁴² Accordingly, they are keen to deny access to mainland forums to those overseas Chinese and others from opposing camps and minimise their impact by discrediting them morally and ideologically. To this extent, while the whole argument about China's image centres on 'authentic' national identity and international recognition, a still stronger driving force is probably the desire to claim the right and power to 'interpret' and represent China according to particular visions at the expense of others, and the power to influence China's future.

Whether that goal is achievable or not, there is good reason to be more cautious than to dismiss the Chinese postcolonial discourse, as Zhang Longxi does, as just 'an old strategy' of deflecting any criticism of themselves as anti-

⁴¹ Sylvia Chan, 'More problems and more -isms', *Postcolonial Studies*, vol. 2, no. 2, Jul. 1999, note 29, p. 183.

⁴² Liu Dong, *op. cit.*, p. 147.

Chinese.⁴³ For one thing, if Anthony Smith's hypothesis of 'the crisis of dual legitimisation' sheds any light on the Chinese postcolonialists' search for identity, it may well be justifiable to view their 'old strategy' as 'a nationalist solution', which 'embeds the individual identity within the collective cultural identity of the nation, so that "we are who we are" because of our historic culture'.⁴⁴ For another, if the postcolonial discourse is placed in the intellectual and political context of post-Tiananmen China, as Zhao has done, one is more likely to recognise a cultural-political trend instead of an isolated 'old strategy'.

4. Between Cultural Hybridity and Purity

The prevalence of Western terminology in the social sciences and humanities in China is deplored by many a traditional scholar, who either disdains it or has little idea what it means. One of the country's most eminent scholars, Wu Zuxiang, for example, complained indignantly at a seminar, 'I graduated from the Chinese Department of Qinghua, and have been specialising in the Chinese language for decades, but now there're so many articles I can't read.'⁴⁵

Concerns about the domination of Western social science theories in China's universities and research institutes and the resultant 'collective aphasia' have led to growing emphasis on 'national learning' and earnest calls for theoretical indigenisation as part of the project of 'cultural reconstruction'. To many nativist academics, the application of Western theory to the Chinese subject epitomises China's domination by the West and constitutes the 'soft' dimension of Western imperialism. What is worse, native knowledge falls into decay as it is subjugated and represented as retrograde and therefore unable to guide the nation, and China's self-identity steeped in that knowledge also suffers as a consequence.

The 'postcoloniality' or 'colonial situation' in Chinese academia is probably more thoroughly examined than anywhere else in Professor Yi Dan's studies on China's foreign literature research. In his opinion, its 'cultural position' is doomed to be non-Chinese, as its object of study is foreign literature, and its terminology

⁴³ Zhang Longxi, *op. cit.*, p. 196.

⁴⁴ Anthony Smith, *National Identity*, Reno, Las Vegas and London: University of Nevada Press, 1991, p. 97.

⁴⁵ Cited in Xia Yinying, *op. cit.*, p. 130.

and methodology are fundamentally alien to China. What is worse, the research serves no other purpose than self-colonisation. In his own words,

The role that foreign literature research has played in our literature and culture is that of 'colonial literature' or 'colonial culture'. What we do in this field is no different from foreign missionaries. We are even doing a far better job than they because we have a better knowledge of our culture, our people's psychology, and our language... We have become perfect propagators of foreign culture and excellent salesmen of colonial literature.⁴⁶

Framing his arguments in terms of power and knowledge, Yi forcefully reminds foreign literature researchers of cultural differences and cultural confrontation over issues as diverse as definitions of human rights and democracy, cultural uniqueness and cultural domination. He also reminds translators that to translate into Chinese Western notions and ideas, such as human rights, democracy and liberty, is to reproduce the conditions of Western hegemony. This one-way traffic from a strong to a weak culture, he adds, demonstrates an 'automatic identification' of the weak with the strong, and implies China's surrender to alien discursive systems, together with their conventions, norms and values.⁴⁷

Given this antagonistic power relationship between Chinese and Western cultures, it is not easy to see, by any stretch of the imagination, the point of translation and foreign literature research. Yi Dan's advice for translators is as vague as that of all postcolonialists: '[T]ranscend the existing discourse in translation' in order to ensure 'an equal relationship of dialogue' between 'our' and 'their' cultures.⁴⁸ His advice for foreign literature researchers is that their objective should be a genuine Chinese understanding and interpretation of foreign literature, as if that would be more accurate, appropriate or desirable than a 'foreign' understanding and interpretation of foreign literature. In either case, it is hard to follow his reasoning; what one cannot fail to notice in his articles is a strong resentment over the power differential between Chinese and Western cultures and the desire for equality.

⁴⁶ Yi Dan, 'Beyond the cultural dilemma of colonial literature' [*Chaoyue zhimin wenxue de wenhua kunjin*], *Waiguo wenxue pinglun* 2, 1994, p. 112.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 111-3.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 115.

Such sentiments are certainly not hard to find amongst nativist academics in China today. At the same time, Yi Dan has touched on a major theme of Chinese postcolonialism, that is the belief that the incursions of alien ideas, concepts, terminology and methodology have first resulted in a Russianised and then a Westernised discursive system. It has penetrated and permeated Chinese academia to such an extent that Chinese academics can no longer function outside of it.⁴⁹ Their Hobson's choice, therefore, is to use this 'language of the trade' in order to speak at all as professional academics; the refusal to do so would mean self-exclusion from the game and from the profession. Thus, Chinese academics can only tell 'our' story in 'their' language, as Professor Cao Shunqing put it. When 'we' resist Western cultural hegemony, 'we' find 'ourselves' incapacitated by aphasia, and eventually 'we' can only speak the Western language of postmodernism and postcolonialism.

As an example, Professor Cao examines the 'colonial situation' in the studies of traditional Chinese literary theory, where he finds little theorising or application but rather systematic attempts to match Chinese concepts and literary conventions with Western terms and to force Chinese literature and literary theory into Western theoretical frameworks. Cao proves this point by recalling the enormous damage inflicted upon Chinese literature by Mao Tun's all-influential paradigm of 'realism vs. anti-realism'. As this monolithic framework was imposed onto millennia of Chinese literature, the whole Wei, Jin, and Northern and Southern Dynasties (AD 220-550) were erased from literary history, together with numerous schools and individual writers who were deemed 'anti-realistic'.

Cao also ridicules the claims by some literary theorists to have discovered the term '*fengge*' (style) in Liu Xie's foundation work *Wenxin Diaolong* and their assertion of equivalence between '*fengge*' and 'style'. On closer examination, however, others found out that '*fengge*' as used in the book really means '*fengju*' (conventions) or '*fengsu*' (customs).⁵⁰ The mistake, according to Cao, is not attributable to sloppy scholarship but results from some 'colonial mentality' and a slanted Eurocentric perspective. Such is also the case with descriptions of the

⁴⁹ Cao Shunqing, 'Cultural aphasia and cultural abnormality' [*Wenhua shiyu yu wenhua bingtai*], *Wenyi zhengming* 2, 1996, p. 50; 'Basic approaches to the reconstruction of Chinese literary criticism' [*Congjian Zhongguo wenlun huayu de jiben lujing jiqi fangfa*], *Wenyi yanjiu* 2, 1996, p. 12.

⁵⁰ For detailed discussions, see Cao Shunqing, 'Cultural aphasia and cultural abnormality', p. 53.

Chinese concepts of '*wenfeng*' and '*fenggu*' in terms of form and content, Cao adds. According to some theorists, '*feng*' refers to content and '*gu*' means form. Others think it is the other way round. Still others believe that '*gu*' combines form and content. And many others throw their arms in the air in despair and say these concepts are too vague and too unscientific to be of much use. The problem here does not lie with the concepts, says Cao, but with the form-content dichotomy which is alien to Chinese literary theory and writing and which is therefore incapable of explaining these Chinese concepts accurately.

Mismatch is the most obvious problem here for Cao, although it is not just one between alien theories and Chinese actualities but also one between Western and Chinese standards and judgements, moral, aesthetic, academic and pragmatic. To him, the application of exogenous theories to the Chinese subject, while resulting in either skewed interpretations or pure misinterpretations of it, has serious ramifications for native knowledge.⁵¹ As the Western discourse takes hold and establishes its domination in Chinese academia, Chinese concepts, theories and practices are judged by its standard. Anything that fails to meet the standard naturally becomes 'sub-standard', 'vague', 'unscientific' or 'inferior', regardless of its intrinsic values within the Chinese literary tradition and regardless of its own merits. As these concepts, theories and practices are devalued in this way, they are marginalised and gradually die out. To Cao, the fact that not many specialists in Chinese literary theory have much idea about it demonstrates clearly the extent to which this branch of native knowledge has degenerated.

It must be stressed that Cao is not the only one who laments this state of affairs in Chinese literary studies; nor is a 'colonial situation' found only in literary studies. Similar arguments to Cao's can be found easily in debates on the state of affairs in Chinese philosophy, historiography, poetics, aesthetics, philology, painting, music and just about every other discipline in the social sciences and humanities. Across all these disciplines, it is quite a common view that, with the subjugation of the whole body of native knowledge, 'China loses its

⁵¹ Wang Zigen, 'The cultural milieu at the end of the century and our way out - a report on the symposium on "parallel studies" and "discourse construction"' [*'Shijimo' de wenhua jingyu yu women de chulu - Beijing daxue bijiao wenxue yanjiusuo Zhong Xi wenhua 'pingxing yanjiu' yu 'huayu jiangou' taolunhui jiyao*], *Wenyi zhengming* 2, 1994, pp. 32-5.

cultural self' and becomes 'a cultural colony of the West in spite of its political independence'.⁵²

These scholars apparently believe that China and the Chinese are unique, that China abounds with indigenous, authentic theories that can best explain itself, and that Chinese culture, 'national learning' in particular, are better suited to and better served by indigenous theories. In comparison with the generally younger and mostly American-trained postcolonial critics, nativists seem to guard their 'national treasure' much more jealously. It is as if they are so passionate and sensitive about 'the national heritage' that they simply do not want outsiders to make any comments on it, least of all unflattering comments. After all, they are mostly 'national learning' specialists - specialists in Chinese history, philosophy, philology and literary theory, and they regard themselves as the natural guardians of 'national essence' and the chief bearers of 'national tradition'. Their call to their fellow Chinese academics is to be more 'Chinese' in outlook and approach, to get past all the Western interpretations and representations to the pure Chinese phenomenon, to rediscover the subjugated and neglected native concepts and theories and explain Chinese realities with Chinese theoretical tools. Or, as Professor Xia Yinying put it even more strongly,

As Chinese, we do not have to take our cue from Westerners in our studies of Chinese problems. Nor should we adopt Western criteria in judging what is right and what is wrong. We will not be independent or prosperous unless we uphold our own national cultural tradition, value the unique quality of our national culture and our national symbols, and maintain our own discourse.⁵³

Fortunately, few follow the postcolonial logic to the extreme and suggest that social science theory, almost all of which is Western in origin, should be rejected in toto. Few agree with the purist position that 'China is China, the West is the West, Confucianism is Confucianism and democracy is democracy.'⁵⁴ Theoretical

⁵² Jiang Qing, 'Transcend Western democracy and return to the Confucian roots' [*Choyue Xifang minzhu, huigui Rujia benyuan*], *Zhongguo shehui kexue jikan* 17, winter, 1996, p. 121.

⁵³ Xia Yinying, op. cit., p. 138.

⁵⁴ See Jiang Qing, op. cit., p. 122. In this review of Deng Xiaojun's book *A Logical Synthesis of Confucianism and Democratic Thought* [*Rujia sixiang yu minzhu sixiang de luoji jiehe*] (Chengdu: Sichuan renmin chubanshe, 1995), Jiang argues that the right question to ask is not whether Confucianism and Western democratic thought could be combined but whether they ought to be. He is equally adamant that the right answer to that question ought to be a negative

hybridity is apparently acceptable to the majority of postcolonialists and nativists, although it is clearly accepted more as a matter of necessity than as a matter of desirability. Moreover, it is emphasised by most, if not all of them, that such hybridity must be an assimilation of foreign elements by the Chinese culture, not the other way round, so that Chinese culture maintains its self-identity regardless of foreign incursions and foreign influence.

It is not clear, however, how postcolonialists and nativists intend to go about Sinicising Chinese academia. What we have at present are mainly arguments as to why this should happen but few suggestions as to how it is to be implemented. Besides, there are many academics who balk at the notion of a 'Chinese' system of social sciences, as they believe it can only erect barriers between China and the West and isolate China from the rest of the world. There are also those who are convinced that 'Traditional Chinese culture provides us with no answers to modern market economy, personnel management or film and TV production'.⁵⁵

However, as enthusiasts urge their colleagues to bring traditional concepts and theories back into circulation, great effort is now put into the 'exploration' (*fajue*) and 'sifting' (*zhengli*) of the national heritage. Cao Shunqing and his small army of postgraduate students, for example, are currently preoccupied with individual and collective research on traditional Chinese literary theory. The 'renaissance of national learning' in post-Tiananmen China is, among other things, a response to the demand for academic indigenisation as well as a part of the search for cultural roots.

In addition, as Chen Xi's study of what he called 'academic nationalism' in China reveals, some discernible trends are emerging in Chinese academia.⁵⁶ Western studies appear to have lost much of the glamour they had in the 1980s, while Chinese philosophy, particularly Confucianism and Taoism, has now shed much of its stigma and is attracting more followers and enthusiasts. This has been accompanied by multiple efforts to deconstruct social science narratives, such as stage theories and famous polarities like Protestant and Confucian ethics. Many a

one. He argues that Chinese culture should be separated from Western elements in order for China to restore its own cultural identity.

⁵⁵ Chen Xiaoming, Dai Jinhua, Zhang Yiwu and Zhu Wei, 'Orientalism and postcolonial culture' [*Dongfang zhuiyi yu hou zhimin wenhua*], *Zhongshan* 1, 1994, p. 135 and p. 137.

⁵⁶ See Chen Xi, 'Nationalism among Chinese intellectuals', *China Strategic Review*, vol. 1, no. 6, 1996.

specialist has in the last decade turned away from Western studies, and no small number of young academics now proudly confess ambitions to become 'masters of national learning'. One can also hear assertions to the effect that 'our research is not any worse than theirs'.

If all these trends tell us anything, it is first of all of a generally enhanced national consciousness among Chinese academics, which is most likely to boost the rediscovery and rehabilitation of traditional culture and diminish to some extent Western influence in the form of social science theory. However, whether or not Chinese academia can be Sinicised is a different matter. In fact, the chances of Sinicising the social sciences are not rated as optimistic even by those who entertain such aspirations. The difficulty lies in its problematic rationale as well as its lack of feasibility. It is true that one can find evidence of Western-centric scholarship that fails to explain Chinese phenomena and subjugates native knowledge, but there is also evidence of rigorous scholarship which has nothing to do with Orientalism or imperialism and which explains Chinese phenomena very well.

5. From Modernity to Chineseness

For constructive postcolonialists, 'cultural reconstruction' is a central task of the 'Post New Era'. This new episteme began in 1989, leaving behind a 'New Era', which was dominated by the hegemonic power of 'Western knowledge of China'. The games of truth as laid down by this power, they argue, were those of the modernity discourse of European Enlightenment, which relegated China to the position of the West's 'backward' and 'exotic' Other, and thus induced China to remake itself in the West's image.

The power-knowledge of Enlightenment, they go on to argue, produced for Chinese intellectuals such truths as progress, reason, justice, democracy and liberty as absolutes and universals and led China onto a course of modernisation to catch up with the West. In cultural production and criticism, postcolonialists claim, 'the New Era also takes the Western discourse of "modernity" to be the basic discourse for interpreting "China", thereby intensifying the cultural situation of "self-otherisation". The 'Post New Era', according to postcolonialists, is characterised by a new consciousness: the awakening of the self in defiance of the

colonised identity as an 'Other' of the West as well as in defiance of the Enlightenment discourse that has contributed to China's 'self-otherisation'.

The task that Chinese postcolonialists have set themselves is to encourage and take an active part in this process. The reconstruction of Chineseness as part of this endeavour aims to explore various possibilities to rebuild an authentic cultural identity by rediscovering, legitimating and promoting subjugated native knowledge.⁵⁷ It implies at the same time a deconstruction of the hegemonic knowledge of 'Western-centred modernity'.⁵⁸ The desired cultural identity is not just national, however, as it expands into a 'Rim of Chinese Culture'. What is more, what postcolonialists want to reconstruct is a new culture, a new mode of knowledge, a new socio-political and cultural-moral system, 'a framework of universal values, which contains the best of the East and West, the past and present', and a 'Chinese' alternative to modernity.⁵⁹

The recommended formula for 'Chineseness' is Chinese culture as the basis, with the essence of world civilisation to be integrated. 'Chineseness' is characterised by three distinctive features: a Chinese world outlook, a unique identity, and free assimilation of whatever is useful. What postcolonialists mean by 'Chineseness', as is easily noticeable, is clearly meant to be free from socialist and Western influence, although it is not as pure as it sounds but turns out to be a hybrid. The economy, for example, is to be restructured into a *xiaokang* (being comfortably off) - an economic model with its own cultural accompaniment that 'transcends modernity', rejects Westernising strategies, and conduces to the continuity of unique national cultural traditions. Yet it will be restructured according to 'international standards', which are explained as Western standards.⁶⁰ The aesthetics of the system is even more sketchy but tautologically more 'Chinese'; the ethics and mode of thinking, while mainly a rehash of Confucianism, also incorporates Kantian elements; and the mode of thinking will

⁵⁷ Zhang Fa, Zhang Yiwu, and Wang Yichuan, 'From "modernity" to "Chineseness" - in search of a new mode of knowledge' [*Cong 'xiandaixing' dao 'Zhonghuaxing' - xin zhishi xing de tanxun*], *Wenyi zhengming* 2, 1994, pp. 10-20.

⁵⁸ Chen Xiaoming, 'The mysterious Other: postpolitics in Chinese film', p. 130.

⁵⁹ Zhang Fa, Zhang Yiwu and Wang Yichuan, *op. cit.*, pp. 18-20.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 15

be a synthesis of Western rational and analytical thinking with Chinese traditional 'holistic' thinking.⁶¹

A 'Chinese world outlook', according to the constructive postcolonialists, rejects those unilinear theories that divide human society into pre-modern, modern and post-modern stages, or, in the case of Marxian historiography, primitive communism, slavery, feudalism, capitalism, socialism and communism. To that end, a central task is the deconstruction of the grand narrative of 'modernity', so that China can no longer be placed automatically in the pre-modern category, and modernisation no longer means Westernisation, let alone Americanisation. Moreover, they believe that the dominating global discourse of modernity annihilates Chineseness by assimilating it. What China must do, postcolonialists argue, is to assume a multi-angle viewpoint and envision a multi-form world that could be set apart laterally rather than linearly, in terms of religious, cultural or regional differences. In addition, it is believed that development presents infinite possibilities, or an infinite variety of models.⁶² What all this probably amounts to is a refusal to accept 'modernity' as more than 'a specific cultural and temporal form' and the acknowledgement of 'a consciousness of lived historical time that differs according to differing social forces, which rely on experience of place as much as they do on time'.⁶³

The proposed free assimilation of foreign ideas and practices is highly reminiscent of Lu Xun's catch-phrase, 'grabbism' (*nailai zhuyi*), and it is obviously modelled on the integrationist formula of cultural development proposed by Professor Zhang Dainian and others. To this extent, 'Chineseness' is reconstructed in a reformist rather than assimilationist or traditionalist spirit. Nevertheless, one can hardly fail to detect traces of the *ti-yong* formula at work, in spite of all the intentions to 'transcend' it. For amongst the three constitutive components of 'Chineseness', a Chinese world outlook and a unique Chinese identity serve as the definitive ones, or the 'principle', while the free assimilation of whatever is useful to China is apparently subject to it.

⁶¹ Ibid., pp. 19-20.

⁶² Ibid., p. 18.

⁶³ H.D. Harootunian, 'Postcoloniality's unconscious/area studies' desire', *Postcolonial Studies*, vol. 2, no. 2, Jul. 1999, p. 134.

Moreover, the objective of the project differs markedly from that of either Lu Xun or Zhang Dainian. Although the desire for self-enrichment remains the same, the reconstruction of 'Chineseness' is also motivated by a new agenda - the Project of Cultural China and a more ambitious 'Chinese Culture Rim'. There is a reminder of the Middle Kingdom in the way the Rim is imagined: it is made up of four concentric (Sinocentric) rings, with mainland China located right at the centre. Around the centre of this utopia are Taiwan, Hong Kong and Macau; beyond that comes the Chinese Diaspora; and finally, on the outer circle, there are East Asia and South-East Asia which have been subject to Chinese influence one way or another. An overarching identity can be, and is, imagined, it is argued, on the basis of a shared written Chinese language, 'economic pragmatism', similar aesthetic standards, Asian values and Confucian ethics.

It is obvious at this point that the postcolonialist reconstruction of 'Chineseness' has gone well beyond national identity and international recognition. Underlying the construct of the 'Chinese Culture Rim' is an unmistakable vision of a regional identity radiating from China and constituting a core sphere of Chinese influence in the new world order. The post-Cold War world, as conceived by Chinese postcolonialists, comprises four blocs: Europe, North America, the Islamic world, and East and South-East Asia - namely Japan, 'the four little dragons' and Greater China. In the last bloc, China is said to be the most likely to emerge as the centre. This is not merely because it is the largest country and is modernising rapidly, but also because it has a 5,000-year-old civilisation which is capable of providing the bloc with indispensable cohesive agents in the form of Confucian world views and Confucian values. In addition, it is asserted, not without some arrogance, that no other language can compete with Chinese as a potential common language for the bloc, and it is taken for granted that Chinese will be accepted by all in the 'Rim' as their *lingua franca*.

To be sure, China is no longer situated at the centre of the world in the postcolonialists' imagination. In fact, it is widely acknowledged that the West now occupies the centre. The East, even if it becomes a centre in the future, cannot replace the West but will merely become one of a multitude of centres which inspire each other and co-exist in harmony, all as part and parcel of a plural global civilisation. This is no doubt a welcome retreat from the entrenched notion of the

Middle Kingdom; nonetheless it is stressed in this view that 'neither the West nor the East is the world, but they are both part of it'.⁶⁴

In this way, the West is pushed out of the centre, *discursively*; while China, although unable to replace the West as the centre, can assume equal status with it for the time being. In the meantime, China can become the centre in the 'Chinese Culture Rim'. Not only that, some prominent scholars, including Professors Chen Lai, Ji Xianlin, Tang Yijie and Zhang Dainian of Beijing University, have announced in recent years that the 'Age of the Orient' or the 'Age of Chinese Culture' is almost here.⁶⁵ Professor Ji backs his new optimism in Chinese civilisation by quoting Toynbee and evoking the myth of *fengshui* that a change in fortune takes place every 30 years (longer in the case of civilisation dominance). He believes the West has had its turn; now it will be the turn of China and the Orient.⁶⁶

One can probably attribute the newly-found confidence about the Chinese cultural heritage amongst Chinese intellectual elites to the comparative success of the Chinese and East Asian economies in the last two decades or so. There is little reason to heap reproaches on that self-confidence after a century or so of frontal assault on the cultural traditions in China. But self-confidence is one thing and cultural chauvinism or expansionism is quite another. It seems apparent that, in the postcolonialist construction of a 'Chinese Culture Rim', self-confidence has once again activated a dormant Middle Kingdom Complex. Besides, the construct of the 'Chinese Culture Rim' rather smacks of a chauvinism and expansionism that conjures up the Japanese 'East-Asian Sphere of Co-prosperity' (*da dongya gongrong quan*).⁶⁷ Even if it is not informed by assertive or aggressive nationalism, it is safe to assert that it is not simply confident nationalism at work.

⁶⁴ Wang Yichuan, in Yang, Naiqiao et al., 'Chinese culture from a postcolonial perspective' [*Hou zhiminzhuyi yujing xia de Zhongguo wenhua*], *Wenyi zhengming* 2, 1994, p. 38.

⁶⁵ Zhang Dainian, 'A new epoch for Chinese culture' [*Zhongguo wenhua de xin shidai*], *Chuantong wenhua yu xiandaihua* 1, 1993, p. 153.

⁶⁶ Ji Xianlin, 'Eastern culture and literature' [*Dongfang wenhua yu dongfang wenxue*], *Wenyi zhengming* 3, 1992, pp. 4-6; 'A turning point in Eastern and Western cultures' [*Dong xi fang wenhua de zhuanzhe dian*], pp. 65-7; 'The Eastly wind overwhelming the westly wind' [*Dongfeng yadai xifeng*], p. 91, and 'Thirty years' prosperity for the East of the river and thirty years' for the west' [*Sanshi nian hedong, sanshi nian hexi*], pp. 80-4, in *A Collection of Essays* [*Langrun suoyan*], Shanghai: Shanghai wenyi chubanshe, 1997.

⁶⁷ Guo Jian, for one, has little doubt that 'the Chinese Culture Rim' evokes the 'the old fascist Japanese dream'. See Guo Jian, 'Politics of othering and postmodernisation of the cultural revolution', *Postcolonial Studies*, vol. 2, no. 2, Jul. 1999, p. 220.

6. Concluding Discussion: Another Kind of Occidentalism

The escalation of the postcolonial discourse is a clear indicator of the changing mood in post-Tiananmen China. Even though *Orientalism* was published as early as 1978, it was unheard of in China throughout the 1980s, but suddenly became a discursive event in China after 1993. It is worth noting, too, that much of what is labelled 'Orientalist' since 1989 represented throughout the previous decade an open, 'blue-water, maritime civilisation', and 'a great flood' to wash out 'the dregs' of the old Chinese civilisation. Modernisation, as most understood it then, was tantamount to Westernisation, or Americanisation. The West, particularly the US, existed as an object of admiration and imitation for China: not only did it embody material wealth but also freedom, liberty, democracy, rationality and modernity.

That dominant discourse of Westernisation in the 1980s, or what Xiaomei Chen called 'anti-official Occidentalism', was clearly encouraged with a political end in view.⁶⁸ Wittfogel's *Oriental Despotism*, as an example, was translated in 1989, to be used as a stone that could kill two birds: a critique of traditional Chinese despotism and a swipe at its Maoist variety. The central political aim of that discourse was the acceleration of China's hampered economic and political reforms as well as the strengthening of the vulnerable reform faction within the Party. Moreover, the political end was also pursued in the cultural sphere, by rediscovering the cultural iconoclasm of May Fourth.

To that extent, Xiaomei Chen was only partly right to point out that 'anti-official Occidentalism' used 'the Western Other as a metaphor for a political liberation against ideological oppression within a totalitarian society'.⁶⁹ She could have added that it also aimed at liberation from Chineseness. She was certainly partly wrong to draw a clear-cut distinction between 'official Occidentalism' and 'anti-official Occidentalism' and assert that 'the Chinese government uses the essentialisation of the West' to 'discipline, and ultimately to dominate, the

⁶⁸ Xiaomei Chen, *Occidentalism - A Theory of Counter-Discourse in Post-Mao China*, New York: Oxford University Press, 1995, p. 5.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 8.

Chinese self at home'.⁷⁰ What Chen referred to as 'official Occidentalism' can only be regarded as official in so far as its purveyors were mostly conservatives within the CCP, whereas Hu Yaobang and Zhao Ziyang - former general secretaries of the CCP - and their reform factions are better put into the 'anti-official' category, because both are said to have encouraged Westernisation.

The purpose of mentioning Chen's work here is to call attention to the fact that the actuality of post-1989 China does not quite answer to her descriptions of it. Since June Fourth, the boundary between official and unofficial discursive practices vis-à-vis the Western Other has been even less clear-cut than in the 1980s. 'Official Occidentalism' and 'anti-official Occidentalism' are no longer simply two discursive practices that primarily counter each other instead of countering Orientalism; there is also a large degree of congruence and convergence between the two.

Many might be convinced that the cultural distinction between the East and West is a false dichotomy in the era of globalisation, but Chinese postcolonialists certainly do not think so. In the light of the postcolonial discourse, it appears quite plausible that there has been in the West an Orientalism, a corporate institution for dealing with the Orient, 'dealing with it by making statements about it, authorising views of it, describing it, by teaching it, settling it, ruling over it'.⁷¹ In addition, Mao Zedong's theory of 'peaceful evolution' has regained some credibility and takes on a cultural or civilisational dimension. In consequence, the basis of conflict in the Cold War era between a socialist China and a capitalist West is now perceived in China to have been fundamentally transformed. Arguments about a whole range of political issues, such as democracy, liberty and human rights, are 'essentialised' to such an extent that they have come to centre on cultural values and national characteristics.

The reinforcement of a categorical 'in-group' identity by postcolonialism has entailed a sharpened categorical distinction from an 'out-group'. There is nothing unusual about this in so far as the imagining of 'us' almost always involves the imagining of 'them', from whom 'we' are distinct; this pattern of similarity-cum-

⁷⁰ Ibid.

⁷¹ Edward Said, *Orientalism*, London, England: Penguin Books, 1995, p. 3; and *Culture and Imperialism*, London, England: Vintage, 1993, p. 8, and p. 292.

dissimilarity is one meaning of national identity⁷². What is unusual is the amount of antagonism that postcolonialism has constructed between an imagined Orientalist 'them' and a subjugated 'us'. Not only is this Occidentalism diametrically opposed to Orientalism, cultural imperialism and the West, but it also collapses the three into one another, so that Westerners are Orientalists, are cultural imperialists. This Occidentalism is totalising partly because Orientalism, to Chinese postcolonialists, as to Said, is a 'totalising orientalism', 'a monolithic, developmental discourse that uniformly constructs the Orient as the Other of the Occident'.⁷³

In identifying a close relation between the discourse of Orientalism and imperialism, Chinese postcolonialists, like Said, simply do not allow for any other possibilities. In addition, a 'totalising effect' also takes place in China's postcolonial discourse as a net result of the aggregate of offensives by postcolonialists, Marxists and establishment intellectuals, among others, who not only target 'negative' portrayals of China and the Chinese but also 'positive' ones that do not suit certain agendas. Consequently, such an enormous range of positions, interpretations and representations are branded 'Orientalist' or 'imperialist' that one wonders what is not so branded.

It would be unfair to blame Occidentalism totally on Said or postcolonial theory, but there is no point in telling Chinese postcolonialists, as Said would, that they have misunderstood and misappropriated him. Certainly they are not the only ones who have 'misunderstood' him. One aspect of *Orientalism*'s world-wide reception that Said is at pains to overcome is precisely its alleged anti-Westernism. Interestingly enough, both hostile and sympathetic commentators have arrived at the same conclusion, that in Said's postcolonial canonical work, 'the phenomenon of Orientalism is a synecdoche, or miniature symbol, of the entire West as a whole'.⁷⁴ Such being the case, the West is an enemy of all the non-European peoples who have suffered Western colonialism and prejudice.

Many in China now think of Orientalism and the West in very much the same terms. A testimony to this is what some observers have described as a

⁷² Benjamin Akzin, *State and Nation*, London: Hutchinson, 1964, ch. 3.

⁷³ Lisa Lowe, *Critical Terrains: French and British Orientalisms*, Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1991, p. 4.

⁷⁴ Edward Said, *Orientalism*, pp. 330-31.

'spontaneous' process of 'de-romanticising' their opinions about the US among Chinese intellectuals inside and outside China.⁷⁵ The popular image of the US, according to a Sino-US relations analyst, has also shifted from 'the U.S. as a source of help for China's modernisation to the U.S. as a source of trouble'.⁷⁶ As a consequence of the 'nationalistic environment' in post-Tiananmen China, most of the country's American watchers feel compelled to refrain from challenging publicly the common perception that the US is bent on containing China, even though they disagree with that conclusion. Some research institutes have shelved analysis supporting a more conciliatory US policy.⁷⁷

By 'occidentalising' the West into a single essentialisation or a uniform 'Other', Chinese postcolonialism locks the East and the West into a discursive binary opposition of 'us' against 'them'. That opposition in turn provides a framework that helps focus all sorts of anti-Western and anti-foreign sentiments and constitutes a grid for filtering the Occident into Chinese consciousness.⁷⁸ Through this grid, whatever 'they' say about 'us' is Orientalist, and whatever is 'Orientalist' must be countered. In the words of Zhang Yiwu, China as the West's Other must be 'othered'.⁷⁹

As a result, Westernisation as a project and discourse is deprived of formal legitimacy at least, and the US, as a model and teacher for China, becomes morally and socially untenable. It is not surprising in this context that the Chinese political and intellectual elites have turned away from the US and look instead to Singapore, South Korea and other East Asian dragons for inspiration. What they want is a Third Way which enables China to modernise without having to renounce and lose its 'Chinese characteristics' and without having to subject itself to the political and cultural hegemony of the West. In this sense, the reconstruction of national identity under the influence of postcolonialism has clear implications

⁷⁵ See Chen Xi, op. cit., pp. 11-2.

⁷⁶ See Philip Saunders in 'China's American watchers: changing attitudes towards the United States', *The China Quarterly*, number 161, Mar. 2000, p. 58.

⁷⁷ Ibid.

⁷⁸ Here I am describing Occidentalism in China using Said's words for Orientalism. See *Orientalism*, p. 6.

⁷⁹ Zhang Yiwu, 'Re-evaluate the argument of "modernity" and written Chinese' [*Chongguo 'xiandaixing' yu habyu shumianyu lunzheng*], *Wenxue pinglun* 4, 1994, p. 109, p. 111 and p. 113; Zhang Yiwu et al., 'Re-evaluate "modernity"' [*Chongguo 'xiandaixing'*] *Huanghe* 4, 1994, pp. 195-207.

for China's future directions; the right and power to shape national identity is thus the right and power to influence China's future as well.

While anti-Westernism grows, traditional culture has come to be foregrounded in the politics of difference and recognition. This has resulted not only from the postcolonialists' persistent endeavour to 'reconstruct Chinese culture' in a bid to resist Western cultural encroachments and to retain the Chineseness of China but also from the instrumental promotion of traditional culture by anti-imperialists, who are retreating further from their discredited Marxist ideology and taking refuge in cultural relativism. Wittingly or unwittingly, unofficial postcolonialists and official anti-imperialists converge on a philosophy of will that emphasises difference and glorifies choice as such.

Few would dispute the claim that each culture is unique and each nation is entitled to its own identity and to demand respect for it, but while it is true that people are distinct from each other, it is also true that plurality and hybridity are basic to the human condition. Just as there is no sameness unmarked by difference, so there is no distinction dependent on some background of common recognition.⁸⁰ When recognition is involved, the significance of identity cannot be claimed simply against other identities but rather within 'a particular field of relevance'.⁸¹ It is not easy to see how insistence on difference and scepticism about the background of common recognition could win China recognition and equivalent standing in the world of nations. For those who glorify difference for the sake of difference or biological diversity, this field of relevance becomes irrelevant, and so does recognition itself in large part.

By dramatically inflaming the insistence on difference, Occidentalism has the potential of driving the search for identity into insulation and isolation. What is worse, China can only be ill-served by the type of postcolonial 'whateverism' that we have discussed, which rejects whatever is Orientalist or Western, be it good or bad, and which celebrates whatever is Chinese, the bad as well as the good. One thing that can be injected into the Chinese postcolonial discourse is an additional dose of deconstructionism. Both the 'West' and the 'East' are in fact 'totalising

⁸⁰ Charles Taylor, *Multiculturalism and the Politics of Recognition*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992; and *The Ethics of Authenticity*, Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1992.

⁸¹ Craig Calhoun, *op. cit.*, p. 25.

fictions', and essentialism is constructed to a high degree. Just as there is no monolithic, uniform or homogeneous West, there is no totalising Orientalism; just as Orientalism can be deconstructed, so too can Chineseness, Easternness and essentialism. In a word, neither the constructionist assumption of Orientalism nor the essentialist reason for identity ought to be taken at their face value.

Besides, essentialism is not without its problems in terms of domestic politics. Above all, it creates a single category of experience, which overrides or suppresses crosscutting internal differences. The postcolonialists' dissent from the official discourse of state nationalism is only one of the differences overridden by the essentialist Chinese identity, and among the many suppressed differences are a range of claims of 'basic' or 'root' or essential identities, like gender, regional and ethnic identities.

The irony is that while these claims are suppressed, they are also provided with a strategy of resistance, namely, the politics of difference, which postcolonialists and anti-imperialists have legitimised in their resistance against Orientalism and cultural imperialism. This politics might be effective in inducing situational identity enactments or reinforcing an essentialist identity amongst those who could be united vis-à-vis some common Other, but it is likely to render a common identity less viable where this Other is seen as irrelevant and therefore fails to override internal differences or conflicts.

8 Conclusions

The study has explored the discourse and project of cultural nationalism from a number of angles and analysed its challenge to state nationalism and the circumstances under which the two discourses contradict and overlap with each other. I have demonstrated that cultural nationalism's dispute with state nationalism centres primarily on what constitutes authentic experience and authentic community, and that the focal point of contention is the Party-state's configurations of the nation and its monopoly on the right to name the nation. At the same time, it has been illustrated that cultural nationalism is not diametrically opposed to state nationalism in every single way, as became most manifest in my analysis of the postcolonial discourse, which by and large converges with the official anti-imperialist propaganda. This unique dynamics is without a doubt a crucial determinant of the outcome of the politics of national identity between cultural and state nationalists.

In this concluding chapter, I will summarise the central arguments of each chapter and make some general observations about cultural nationalism and state nationalism, the politics of national identity between the two, the implications of the politics, and its likely prospects.

1. Cultural Nationalism as a Counter-Discourse to State Nationalism

I began in Chapters 1 and 2 by noting the lack of distinction in analyses of national identity and nationalism between 'state' and 'nation' and the tendency to treat nationalism as loyalty to the state rather than as identification with the nation. Following this, I examined state nationalism and cultural nationalism separately as well as in their relation to each other. In Chapter 3, I discussed the Party-state's intensified patriotic indoctrination following the dramatic events of June Fourth and the objectives of the state nationalist project. I proceeded to examine its articulatory and hegemonic practices, the Party-state's problematic 'nation' as a two-tiered structure and its reliance on pan-Chinese nationalism as a supplementary ideology.

As we have seen, a distinct feature of state nationalism is its Party-centredness; it regards the Party as an embodiment of the nation's will and the nation as a means

rather than an end in itself. Accordingly, state nationalism attempts to hegemonise such signifiers as 'national interest', 'stability', 'national unity', 'love of country', 'national prosperity' and 'outstanding national traditions'. These themes are fused together by the drawing of a political frontier excluding practices and elements associated with 'national nihilism', secessionism and 'peaceful evolution', which are made responsible for eroding national confidence, weakening central authority, and threatening China's political system and territorial integrity.

The Party-state, however, does not conceive a unified nation, but a two-tiered structure consisting of the 'people' on the one hand, and the citizens of the PRC and the 'children and grandchildren of the Yellow Emperor' on the other. This characteristic makes it necessary for the CCP to opt for two-tracked ideologies and gives state nationalism an irreplaceable role as a unifying ideology for the Pan-Chinese nation. This supplementary ideology now carries more weight consequent on the increasing erosion and irrelevance of Marxism-Maoism.

Although state nationalism is achieving some of its objectives, it has created new difficulties for the Party-state at the same time. One of the difficulties is that the 'nation' presupposed by the CCP, which straddles class, race and citizenry, is growing increasingly problematic as the contradictions therein are now magnified in the light of changed social realities. This hampers the CCP's efforts to foster a polyethnic and multinational state-nation by blending cultural identity, socialist identity and civic identity. In addition, state nationalism encounters stiff challenges from numerous groups that articulate cultural or ideological differences. Cultural nationalists, in particular, challenge both the CCP's definition of patriotism and its monopoly on the right to name the nation.

Ironically, the discourse of state nationalism has facilitated the challenges to the Party-state by cultural nationalists. A reason for this irony is its co-option of the mythology and symbolism of a community of historical, cultural and ethnic lineage. In other words, it does not simply cultivate a useful 'civic nationalism' but also seeks to foster among the members of the national community a sense of belonging together as an organic nation stretching back into the past. In this respect, the discourses of state nationalism and cultural nationalism more or less overlap; they work with a few common sets of ideas and themes.

Cultural nationalism is thus able to feed on the official discourse, or articulates its hidden agenda under the camouflage of statist rhetoric. Thus, the cultural

nationalists' challenge to state nationalism centres not so much on the signifiers as on the signified. As a counter-discourse, cultural nationalism seeks to impose its will on the Party-state by contesting the meaning of the same signifiers that the Party-state seeks to hegemonise, such as patriotism, 'national interest', 'national tradition', 'national spirit', 'national harmony' and 'Chineseness'. It is their aim to dissolve some key components of state nationalism and to constitute an alternative, cultural nationalist discourse.

In Chapters 4, 5 and 6, I focused on the way in which three groups of cultural nationalists - novelists, historians and Neo-Confucians - contest the Party-state's configurations of the nation, its Party-centred version of patriotism and its monopoly on the right to name the nation. They are quite unanimous that China has strayed from its natural path as a result of a century of revolution and Westernisation, and that revolutions and Westernisation are responsible for the dissipation of the national spirit and the inner degeneration of the nation. It is this conviction that motivates their search for 'roots' and cultural authenticity.

Primitivist writers find the remedy for China's ills in some sort of 'primitive vitality' emanating from the folk, while historical novelists are set on rediscovering the 'soul of the nation' in national heroes of the past or on recreating fictional heroes to personify the best of the Chinese (Chapter 4). The central theme of the historical novels, the bulk of which are the popular genre of stories about the Anti-Japanese War, is the 'heroic spirit of the Chinese people' manifested in their fearless resistance against foreign aggression. These stories produce and reproduce a sense of collective pride and humiliation, as well as memories of collective suffering and victimisation. A sense of suffering and victimisation not only generates hatred for the victimisers but also imposes duties and demands common effort from the victimised to ensure that China will not be subject to the similar humiliations in the future. For these reasons, both state and cultural nationalists have devoted enormous energies to the reproduction of war stories.

The cultural nationalists' 'search for roots' is also manifested in the revaluation and rediscovery of Zeng Guofan (Chapter 5). In fact, the escalation of the Zeng Guofan phenomenon, the 'national essence fever' and the 'search for roots' are largely attributable to the cultural nationalists' endeavour to rediscover 'our' authentic cultural tradition and redefine Chineseness on that basis. The 'national spirit', of course, is not simply there in the past to be rediscovered; it must be

reinvented to some extent. That entails a historic perspective that reads the appropriate trends into events, accompanied by a revaluation of historical figures to identify instruments of national destiny or obstacles to it or to create new heroes to personify the cultural tradition of China to be emulated.

Furthermore, as the selection of the significant and relevant in the new interpretations of cultural tradition and historical figures has evolved with the gradual emergence of new goals in the present, the 'search for roots' represents a dialogue between the past and future ends. From this perspective, the central aim of nationalist historians is to project a historical consciousness or a feeling of continuity backward as well as forward amidst the massive uncertainties that confront a modernising China.

The Neo-Confucians' discourse of *xutong* is equally motivated by the desire to 'search for roots' (Chapter 6). At the centre of the Confucian vision is a set of invariable moral norms of social conduct, which approximates to the Way. Confucians believe that identity crises, moral degradation, social chaos and disorder follow from the dissolution of these norms. They are convinced that Confucianism is not only able to strengthen national identity and unity but also to counter moral degeneration and enhance national confidence and self-respect. They believe that the Way will prevail across the land and the nation will be blessed with order, harmony, stability, certainty and prosperity only if the nation rediscovers the values of benevolence, rightness, propriety, wisdom, sincerity, harmony, loyalty and filial piety.

Like nationalist novelists and historians, Neo-Confucians seek to rediscover their Edenic moment in China's pre-modern and pre-revolution past. This itself is a clear statement with respect to the socialist legacy. What is more, cultural nationalists in general confront Marxism head-on, denouncing class struggle for jeopardising China's national unity and the theory of social development for undermining its national identity. They also blame theories of class struggle and social development for causing the current 'vacuum of morality', as they have demolished China's traditional norms of conduct and therefore its cultural-moral orders. A similar charge is levelled at modernism.

For the Confucians, what lies at the root of China's moral crisis and its identity crisis is 'excessive scientific rationality', which they find in both Marxism and modernism. They insist that it is the consummatory values of a community that

provide the basis for harmony, identity and solidarity in the national community; they also insist that goodness take precedence over scientific truth in the 'philosophy of life'. What Confucians recommend is the notion of Great Harmony, and they argue that the welfare of the national community depends on harmonious co-operation between all the individuals and units of the community and that cultural and moral values are capable of uniting the nation.

Like the Confucians, nationalist historians reject the theory and practice of revolution. In their new perspective of modern Chinese history, revolution is depicted as a historical aberration and thus deprived of its historicity. The case against revolution is that it rejects cultural tradition as an obstacle to revolution and demands a break with the past. Thus, for nationalist historians, revolution is not just an undesirable alternative but an un-Chinese concept that has led China astray from its Heaven-ordained path. In order for China to resume its self-identity from the point where it was disrupted, history must be 'edited' to erase the aberration. The paradigmatic shift from revolution to evolution raises questions about historical materialism, the prime mover of history, the pattern of historical development, historical destiny, and 'the people' that make up the political community. As nationalist history subverts the revolutionary narrative of a revolutionary past, it also challenges the polity upon which that narrative bestows legitimacy.

Much the same can be said about the novels which rigorously challenge the Party-state's configurations of the nation and the content of its 'patriotism'. The cultural nationalists' rejection of the revolutionary hero is accompanied by their creation of new national heroes who are first of all Chinese rather than communists, proletarians or individuals loyal to the CCP. What makes the new hero a hero is not class consciousness or partisan affiliation but national consciousness and cultural attributes. By supplanting appropriate class background and loyalty to the CCP as bases of heroism, nationalist novelists actually imagine a different nation, 'a nation in existence capable of representing itself' rather than one to be named and represented by the Party-state.¹

The cultural nationalist project to reconstruct Chineseness was further explored in Chapter 7. This time, however, the project is situated in a quite different context;

¹ John Fitzgerald, *op. cit.*, p. 80.

national identity is defined via the prism of postcolonialism instead of against the revolutionary identity constructed by the Party. In the face of the common 'enemy', Orientalism or cultural imperialism, the postcolonial discourse merges with the official anti-imperialist rhetoric, even though what constitutes Chineseness in the cultural nationalists' imagination excludes socialist practices and elements. Occidentalism, official and unofficial, fortifies 'a categorical identity' by providing it with a warrantable philosophical basis in cultural relativism and in-group essentialism.

In consequence, postcolonialism has driven cultural and state nationalists together in two areas. On the one hand, it has lent new credibility to the theory of 'peaceful evolution'. In the light of postcolonialism, the basis of conflict in the Cold War era between a socialist China and a capitalist West has transformed into a more fundamental clash of national interests and cultural values. The Party-state thus gains a measure of legitimacy for combating 'colonial culture'. At the same time, cultural and state nationalists are thrown back on a preexisting, essential basis of identification, whereas internal differences are 'trumped', at least temporarily. On the other hand, postcolonialism has justified cultural protectionism, and 'national essence' has appreciated greatly as state and cultural nationalists are both preoccupied with a cultural bulwark against colonial culture.

In spite of all the postcolonialists' protest against the cultural hegemony of the West, however, their project is predominantly inward-looking. Conceding that they are powerless to subvert the Western cultural hegemony, postcolonialists seek to minimise its effect on China's national identity and look for international recognition. They see power relations in representations and sustained discourses about who is to possible or appropriate or valuable to be, which shape the way 'we' look at and constitute 'ourselves'. They also see power in the defining of what constitutes Chineseness, as the right and power to define it is, at the same time, the right and power to shape it and influence the future of the country.

2. The Objectives of Cultural Nationalism

The information I have presented in this study and my analyses of the information allow some general observations to be made about the cultural nationalists' reconstructed national identity, its implications for the legitimacy of the Party-state

and the potential impact of the identity politics on China's future directions. Cultural nationalism articulates a set of themes and ideas that often contradict state nationalism. The cultural nationalists' refusal to identify with the Party-state and their competing notion of the national self raises questions about the legitimacy of a Party-state that portrays itself as the sole legitimate representative of the nation. Furthermore, the revision of national identity alters existing systems of meaning – the meaning of Chineseness, the hierarchy of values and the vision of historical destiny. In doing so, it transforms the basis upon which the nation makes decisions about its collective life and thereby potentially influences those decisions. These interrelated observations can be spelt out by gathering up the main threads of the previous chapters and exploring them a bit further.

Reconstructing National Identity

The cultural nationalists' reconstruction of national identity has taken place in three contexts: international, ethnic and, most importantly, ideological. Cultural nationalism articulates quite different themes and constructs different 'enemies' in each case. In the first instance, the frontier is drawn between Occidentalism and Orientalism, excluding such ideas as Westernisation or Americanisation, assimilation, universal models of modernity, linear progress, hybridity, and instrumental rationality. It finds a philosophical basis for identity in cultural relativism and stresses the importance of ultimate concerns, indigenous traditions and authentic experience in the formation of national identity. It also redefines modernity as a specific cultural and temporal form and adheres to the formula of 'Chinese essence as principle, Western learning as utility' in a bid to avoid China's 'self-otherisation' in the process of modernisation.

In the second instance, as elaborated in Chapter 5, cultural nationalism imagines a Pan-Chinese nation whose membership includes all ethnic groups and rejects the ethnocentric notion of China as a Han nation, concurring with state nationalism in defining the nation by cultural, historical and territorial criteria. On the other hand, cultural nationalists, like state nationalists, ascribe the pan-Chinese identity to all ethnic groups within the territorial boundaries of the PRC and expect the ethnies to identify with the pan-nation regardless of the fact that the pan-nation actually presupposes a Han culture and a Han past.

In the third, and most important, instance, cultural nationalism reconstructs national identity against the discourse of state nationalism. In its refusal to identify with the latter, it disarticulates the latter's central themes and ideas and combines different elements in a cultural national identity opposed to the disintegrating socialist identity. In doing so, it also seeks to determine the rules in the formation of national identity by separating identification with the nation from loyalty to the Party and by construing the Way as something not external or foreign to the essential nature of the nation. What cultural nationalism constitutes is a framework that welds together such elements as loyalty to the people, the will of the nation, the life principle of the nation, national spirit, the 'inner voice' of the community, national character, national essence, cultural tradition, traditional values, harmony, self-identity, authentic experience and authentic community. -

In the cultural nationalists' articulation, state nationalism represents loyalty to the CCP, the monopoly to name the nation as something to represent, socialist consciousness, socialist values, socialist identity, a class-people, proletarian dictatorship, class struggle, revolution as an endless series of negations of self-sameness, iconoclasm, and un-Chinese, exogenous ideologies. It is this official project of fostering a revolutionary identity, together with the Westernisation discourse, that cultural nationalists hold responsible for causing an identity crisis in China and the dissipation of the national ethos. In order for an alternative identity to emerge and establish itself, cultural nationalists see it as imperative to clear the ground and 'erase' the revolutionary identity.

Challenging the Party-State's Legitimacy

The cultural nationalists' reconstruction of national identity is evidently a political action with political consequences. If the 'image of China' (Whiting's phrase) as perceived and articulated by the Party-state does not express the way members of the nation view themselves, it can only be regarded as a symbolic official construction, not a substantive national identity. If 'the people of that nation' (Dittmer's term) do not identify with the Party-state, or with its version of national identity, then no 'relationship of identification' obtains between the nation and the state. In short, if the nation that the Party-state claims to represent is not represented in the Party-state's perception and articulation of the 'the image of China', or if it

refuses to be represented by the Party-state, its legitimacy is immediately called in question.

Furthermore, the traditional Chinese notion of legitimacy requires much more than a congruence between the state's imagined nation and the people's perception of themselves; more important still, it demands conformity to the Way and to the nation's cultural tradition.² According to this notion, a regime that fails to conform to the Way is one that 'does not have the Way' (*wudao*), and it is therefore illegitimate. Equally illegitimate is a regime that is deprived of 'the legitimacy of tradition', or 'cultural legitimacy'. As such a regime 'does not have the Way culturally' (*wenhua wudao*), the people have the right and duty to resist it and transform it so that it falls into line with the cultural tradition and national essence.

To cultural nationalists, what is most problematic about the Party-state's notion of nation is its class nature. While the class concept has been played down since the mid-1990s by the current regime, it remains a cornerstone of its official ideology. The CCP's dilemma is apparent. On the one hand, it is acutely aware of the glaring constitutional anachronism now that few in China have much idea what Chinese socialism means. On the other hand, a revamping of the national flag and the state insignia is likely to be perceived as a 'change of dynasty' (*gaichao huandai*). It is true that 'class' may indeed be merely symbolic, as many analysts believe, but it is 'flagged' nonetheless and thus remains a political reality for those it alienates. Its lasting significance lies in the fact that it has not been 'erased' but remains embedded in the official historical narrative and the 'official story' of legitimisation. From the cultural nationalists' perspective, that official story still defines what the Party-state is, and what it fails to express or sustain the nation's self-identity. Challenges to it are hence brought forward in the name of the nation.

Admittedly, the Chinese cultural nationalists are not equivalent to China the nation in the same way that the state nationalists do not embody the will of the nation *de jure*. Yet part of the strength of cultural nationalism stems from its claim to speak for the nation and to represent the national essence. This is not a claim

² According to Jiang Qing, the Confucian notion of legitimacy has three components: 'sacred legitimacy' (*shensheng hefaxing*), 'secular legitimacy' (*shisu hefaxing*) and 'the legitimacy of tradition' (*chuantong de hefaxing*), or 'cultural legitimacy' (*wenhua hefaxing*), and a legitimate regime is one that satisfies all the three criteria. (See Jiang Qing, 'Transcend Western democracy and return to the Confucian roots' [*Chaoyue xifang minzhu, huigui rujia benyuan*], *Zhongguo shehui kexue jikan* 17, winter, 1996, p. 121.

that state nationalists could dismiss out of hand, given the intellectuals' traditional role as guardians of national essence and their tradition of formulating and articulating 'moral norms and ideologies' which legitimise or delegitimise political regimes.³ Today, cultural nationalists quite consciously carry on this tradition and keep up their endeavour to guide, regulate and control politics (*zhengtong*) with the Confucian Orthodoxy (*daotong*). This endeavour became insignificant when the Orthodoxy was delegitimised and suppressed in the Maoist era, but as it restores its respectability in intellectual discourses and in the eyes of the Party-state, the significance of their endeavour increases accordingly.

A central argument with which Chinese cultural nationalists justify their challenge to the Party-state is the notion of popular sovereignty, which was intrinsic to nationalism as it emerged through the English Civil War, and the French and American Revolutions. In all these instances, the source of authority was relocated into something more fundamental - the nation. Henceforth, nationalism assumed an important role in the discourse of political legitimacy. It is argued on that account that nationalism emerged partly from 'challenges to the authority and legitimacy of those at the top of the modern states'.⁴ For the same reason, nationalism is often understood, first of all, as 'a doctrine of popular freedom and sovereignty'.⁵

Equally appealing to Chinese cultural nationalists, English anti-loyalists and French revolutionaries is the idea that the nation is the source of authority and that political power can only be legitimate if it is endorsed by those subject to it. There is, however, a fundamental difference. The French and American revolutionaries were inspired by a political nationalism which sought to gain or exercise state power. Thus they declared, 'The nation is everything. It is the source of everything. Its will is always legal; indeed it is the law itself.'⁶

Chinese cultural nationalism, in contrast, is not set on gaining state power but on remaking China's moral-cultural order so that it will sustain the nation's self-identity. On that account, it is primarily 'nationalism as a form of culture',⁷ and the

³ Baogang He, 'Legitimacy in the Deng era in China: a critical reappraisal', *The Journal of Communist Studies*, vol. 7, no. 1, pp. 22-3

⁴ Craig Calhoun, *op. cit.*, p. 69.

⁵ John Hutchinson and Anthony Smith (ed.), *Nationalism*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994, p. 4.

⁶ E.J. Sieyès, *What Is the Third Estate?* London: Pall Mall Press, 1963, p. 124.

⁷ Smith, *National Identity*, p. 94.

Chinese cultural nationalists are better seen as 'nationalist pressure groups', which seek to reform the state and justify their action on nationalist grounds.⁸ While cultural nationalism's project of national identity is political action with political consequences, its top priority is apparently not collective political liberty or popular sovereignty. For those reasons, Chinese cultural nationalism is not nationalist enough.

Not only do Chinese cultural nationalists contrast sharply with the French and American revolutionaries, they also contrast with the Chinese *chaitian* (dismantling the state) nationalists of the 1980s, who were opposed to 'the system of despotism' and the political leadership that failed to represent the people, as well as 'the muddle-headed rulers and corrupt officials'.⁹ The cultural nationalists' discourse of national spirit and national essence is far less political than Fang Lizhi's stated position that the Party-state should be based on the support of the people.¹⁰ It is still less so than Liu Xiaobo's call 'to abolish this despotic system' and be loyal to the nation rather than to 'political power at any level'.¹¹

Nevertheless, the cultural nationalists also differ from the *butian* (repairing the state) nationalists of the 1970s and early 1980s. Unlike the latter, cultural nationalists do not believe in the 'second kind of loyalty' advanced by Liu Bingyan, that is, the loyalty to the country, society and the CCP instead of loyalty to the Party leadership and its shifting political line. Rather, they distinguish between loyalty to the country, people and culture from loyalty to the Party, and it is clearly not their aim to help make the CCP and socialism more popular, even though they do not demonstrate any ambition to overthrow the regime either. One of cultural nationalism's essential objectives is to reform the state in accordance to its perception of national essence and national will.

In the cultural nationalists' perception and articulation of the national will, there is an implicit yet unmistakable assumption that the state should be congruent with the nation. This is an essential criterion by which cultural nationalists rate the

⁸ John Breuilly, *op. cit.*, pp. 8-9.

⁹ See Liu Xiaobo, 'Contemporary Chinese intellectuals and politics', pt. 2, *Zhengming*, 4, 1989, pp. 78-81, JPRS, No. 89-088, p. 11.

¹⁰ See Merle Goldman, Perry Link and Su Wei, 'China's intellectuals in the Deng Era', in Lowell Dittmer and Samuel Kim (eds.), *China's quest for National Identity*. Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1993, p. 53.

¹¹ See Liu Xiaobo, 'Contemporary Chinese intellectuals and politics', pp. 78-81.

legitimacy of the Party-state. This desired congruence, however, is not interpreted solely in ethnic or territorial terms. Instead, the major premise of Chinese cultural nationalism is that the state is illegitimate unless it represents the community as defined by its culture. Differently stated, it 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.¹² This notion of congruence between the nation and the state, while making foreign rule in general appear illegitimate, provides a basis for the people of a country to claim that their government is illegitimate even if it is domestic. To this extent, Durkheim was very perceptive in observing that it is not the strength of the nation-state but usually the apparent *disjunction of people and state* (my italics) that brings the category of nation and the phenomenon of nationalism into play.¹³

It is noteworthy that the Party-state has not dismissed the challenge of cultural nationalism out of hand or responded to it negatively; its response is characterised by compromise rather than wayward resistance or suppression. The CCP's compromise with cultural nationalists might be a response to the will and interests of the nation as articulated by the cultural nationalists. It might also be a matter of necessity for the Party-state to reposition itself in the wake of the irreversible erosion of its official ideology. In either case, the Party-state can no longer hold its ground or continue to dictate the terms for national identity or monopolise the right to name the nation. Having shifted away from its traditional goal-rational basis of legitimisation, it has now lost much of its autonomy and its immunity from social influences and demands. While performance legitimisation in the economic realm fills part of the gap, an unavoidable test for the Party's legitimacy is whether or not the Party-state conforms to the nation's conception of itself, as well as to its vision of its historical destiny.

Guiding China's Developmental Strategies

In so far as national identity provides the accent and tone in which everyday life is carried out, it will help to shape China's future. The keynote of the cultural

¹² For a detailed discussion of popular sovereignty and nationalism, see Calhoun, *op. cit.*, pp. 69-79.

¹³ Emile Durkheim, *Textes*, vol. 3, ed. by V. Karady, Paris: Editions de minuit, 1950, pp. 179-8.

nationalists' reconstructed identity is clearly authentic experience and authentic community. One thing that cultural nationalism emphasises is that social progress comes, not from the imposition of alien norms on the community, but from the inner reformation of the traditional status order. It also calls on the nation to be 'truly free from alien ideas and ways that are liable to destroy and stunt their development'.¹⁴

According to the critics of nationalism in China, this emphasis on cultural authenticity and historical continuity is regressive and bodes ill for China's modernisation. The fact is, however, that Chinese cultural nationalism puts forward a reformist, integrative and revivalist vision of the community instead of simply beating a retreat into the simplicity and comfort of the past. This vision seeks to blend the traditional and the modern, or modernise tradition, as their slogan goes. This sets cultural nationalists apart from Westernisers, or assimilationists, who attempt to reject the traditional status order for a new cosmopolitan world of educated citizens through the agency of the 'scientific state'.¹⁵ By the same token, they are also differentiated from traditionalists, who take refuge in some version of the traditional outlook. Behind their call to 'return to our roots' is a vision of the nation as a unique civilisation and the desire to revive or recreate the nation, so that it will once again rise to the forefront of world civilisation.

In contrast to the 1980s, when the majority of Chinese intellectuals were caught up in the recurring assimilationist fervour of cultural iconoclasm and political nationalism, greater numbers of intellectuals have been converted to reformism since 1989. Assimilationists, on the other hand, have been forced to abandon iconoclasm, at least in rhetoric. With the removal of their champions in the top leadership, Hu Yaobang and Zhao Ziyang, and the consolidation of the much more conservative leadership of Jiang Zemin, they have lost much of their

¹⁴ According to Anthony Smith, authentic experience and authentic community are essential objectives of nationalism. See Anthony Smith, *National Identity*, p. 77.

¹⁵ Anthony Smith has identified three typical responses to the wider crisis of dual legitimation: assimilationist, traditionalist, and reformist. Chinese cultural nationalists can be seen as reformist in so far as their aim is 'the achievement of a workable and theoretically viable "higher synthesis" of all that appears most valuable in the outlooks of and spirit of the traditional world-images and the modernising ones.' They see their situation as 'the classical confrontation of tradition with modernity, of the meeting of two apparently opposed, but secretly complementary, worlds - if only one could find the key to their higher union'. See *Theories of Nationalism*, London: Duckworth, 1971, pp. 133-8.

leverage in Chinese politics for the time being. Traditionalists are still harder to find now that modernisation is so sanctified in China that even the staunchest of traditionalists are compelled to justify tradition in terms of its benefit to China's modernisation.¹⁶ In consequence, post-Tiananmen China has witnessed a reformist ethos that finds no parallel since May Fourth.

This ethos obviously favours models that enable the nation to realise itself in an authentic manner and requires that developmental models be selected and adapted in order to realise the natural talents and resources of national culture. At the same time, it militates against the arguments for socialism and Westernisation. As a result, socialism, with or without 'Chinese characteristics', is virtually irrelevant outside of the official discourse, whilst Westernisation has been deprived of discursive legitimacy in the public realm. Hence few in China mention the American model or the 'Eastern European model', which proved immensely popular amongst China's political and intellectual elites in the late 1970s and throughout the 1980s. By contrast, 'capitalism Confucian-style' and 'the East Asian model' have come to figure prominently in political and economic debates and are widely believed to be the optimum model for China. Not only that, some actually believe that China is already transforming itself in the image of the East Asian dragons.¹⁷

Many developmental models have been proposed in recent years. Yet diverse as these models may be, most of them are strikingly similar to the 'East Asian model' in one way or another. Such a model is the postcolonialists' new socio-political and cultural-moral system, or 'Chinese' alternative to modernity (Chapter 7). The centrepiece of this comprehensive developmental model is a Chinese world outlook and a unique national identity. Another component is a *xiaokang* economy - an economic model with its own cultural accompaniment that 'transcends modernity', rejects Westernising strategies, and conduces to the continuity of unique national cultural traditions. The third component is a democratic political system.

¹⁶ Zhang Rulun, 'Postmodernity in Asia' [*Yazhou de houxiandai*], *Dushu* 11, 1994, p. 26.

¹⁷ One of the many who hold this view is Wang Yizhou, a highly regarded specialist on international politics at the Institute of International Economy and Politics of the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences. See, for example, Wang Yizhou, 'The Eastern European model, the East Asian model, and China's road' [*Dongou fangshi, dongya fangshi, Zhongguo daolu*], *Tianjin shehui kexue* 1, 1993, pp. 33-7.

As another example, eminent Confucians, Mou Zongsan and Cai Renhou, have called for a new socio-political and moral-cultural order based on the Confucian Orthodoxy (*daotong*), a democratic system (*zhengtong*), and a scientific epistemology and academic autonomy (*xuetong*).¹⁸ Their vision seems to have struck an accord amongst mainland Confucians, although many do not share their confidence that democratic thought and a scientific epistemology could be derived from Confucianism.

Similarly, mainland Confucian Jiang Qing recommends a new 'kingly way' (*wangdao*) embedded in 'political Confucianism', which is characterised by a democratic politics and conformity to tradition and to the Way.¹⁹ In Jiang's 'kingly way', the rule of law will be complemented by moral rule (*lizhi*) and non-action (*wuwei*) will be emphasised to minimise the size of government and avoid a welfare state. Moreover, legitimacy does not just derive from a democratic system that expresses the will of the people; a legitimate regime must also conform to tradition and the natural order of things and uphold natural justice.

Even Liu Junning, one of China's leading liberals, proposes a so-called 'Confucian liberalism' – a socio-political model that combines representative democracy, a market economy and Confucian ethics. In contrast to the majority of Chinese liberals, he rejoices that Confucianism has turned into a driving force for modernisation, even while many others are expounding how Confucianism obstructs modernisation, and he claims that Confucianism and democracy have proved compatible regardless of the common belief that they are not. According to him, what has made the East Asian model successful is the combination of Confucianism and Western liberalism, whereas neither Confucianism nor liberalism alone can enable any of the East Asian countries to modernise as

¹⁸ For detailed discussions of 'the theory of three orthodoxies' (*santong kaichushuo*), see, for example, Mou, Zongsan, *Moral Idealism* [*Daode de lixiangzhuyi* (*Taote te lihsiang chuyi*)], Taipei: Hsuehsheng shuchu, 1985; Cai, Renhou, *The Modern Significance of Confucian Thought* [*Rujia sixiang de xiandai yiyi* (*Juchia ssuhsiang te hsientai yiyi*)], Taipei: Wenchin ch'upanshe, 1999.

¹⁹ Jiang Qing, *Political Confucianism – the Transformation, Characteristics and Development of Modern Confucianism* [*Zhengzhi ruxue – dangdai ruxue de zhuanxiang, tezhi yu fazhan*], Beijing daxue chubanshe, 1998.

successfully as they have done.²⁰ So far as Liu is concerned, Singapore and East Asia should be an inspiration for China.

In the same vein, but using different terms, Zhou Qing and Zhuang Youming, specialists on South-East Asia, recommend what they call 'Asian democratic socialism', which they believe has been vindicated by the Singaporean experience.²¹ This model is characterised by a stable, democratic political system that guarantees economic development, a market economy that provides equal opportunities to all, and a moral-cultural order based on Confucian values.

To Xiao Gongqin, a noted political historian, the key to the success of the 'East Asian dragons' is 'new authoritarianism', which relies on the traditional Chinese value system in galvanising society. Xiao has been proposing this doctrine since the 1980s; since then, he has repeated the point that Westernisation would result in an identity crisis as it disrupts the continuity between the past and present. He has also argued forcefully that there is no solution to such problems as local mafias and economic cartels in Western nostrums or in any political alternatives to a strong state.²²

All these various versions of the 'East Asian model' of development resemble each other in emphasising a strong state, democracy, a market economy and authentic experience or historical continuity. This seems to suggest that the Chinese elites are attracted to the 'East Asian model' because it has enabled the East Asian countries to maintain their self-identity and political stability while modernising successfully. No less importantly, Chinese elites are encouraged to find that the success of this model is attributable to some 'Chinese' values, such as collectivism, diligence, self-reliance, thrift, regard to education, loyalty and filial piety. It seems

²⁰ For his discussion of 'Confucian liberalism', see Liu Juning, 'Singapore: the challenge of Confucian liberalism' [*Xinjiapo: rujia ziyoushuizhi de tiaozhan*], *Dushu* 2, 1993, pp. 9-15.

²¹ Zhou Qing and Zhuang Youming, 'Theories of governance of the pioneers in Singapore's modernisation' [*Xinjiapo xiandaihua dianjiren de zhiguo lilun*], *Dongnanya yanjiu* 5/6, 1993, pp. 58-63.

²² See Xiao Gongqin 'Nationalism and ideology in China during the period of transformation' [*Minzuzhuyi yu zhongguo zhuanxing shiqi de yishi xingtai*], *Zhanlue yu guanli* 4, 1994, pp. 21-5; and 'East Asian authoritarianism and modernisation' [*Dongya quanwei zhengzhi yu xiandaihua*], *Zhanlue yu guanli* 2, 1994, pp. 28-34. Similar views have been expressed by a number of Chinese analysts and government advisers. See, for example, Wang Shaoguang and Hu Angang's 1993 report on the state of the Chinese economy and central government power, discussed by Shuang Yi in 'Academics offer policy advice, the powers-that-be make the decisions' [*Xuezhe xiance, quanzhe juece*], *Zhongguo shibao zhokan* 94, 17-23 Oct., 1993, pp. 16-8.

to be a common assumption that if these 'Chinese' values work miracles in East Asia, there is no reason why they should not do so in China.

Moreover, behind the promotion of the East Asian model in China is also the vision of some regional identity in the form of a 'Chinese culture rim', a 'Confucian culture rim', or a '*Hanzi* (Chinese characters) rim'. While these utopias may be taken seriously by some, they might also be used to entice China into embracing 'the East Asia model'. In this way, the perceived success of the model lends support to cultural and other kinds of nationalisms that identify with Chinese cultural traditions, and these nationalisms in turn push China closer to East Asia.

Some may argue that these are merely theoretical constructs that are not worth serious attention. Two points can be made in reply to this argument. First, it appears obvious that these proposed models are not merely inventions or figments of the imagination; they are generally based upon developments or trends that have emerged or are emerging. Second, the Chinese government might eventually accept some of these models, if they have not already done so. Indeed, Zhao Ziyang publicly endorsed 'new authoritarianism' in the late 1980s, and there is hardly any doubt that China's current leadership practises 'new authoritarianism'. The 'East Asian model' is still more relevant to the Chinese leadership; its well-documented interest in the Singaporean experience testifies to its inclinations towards the East Asian model. It is more likely that the chosen model will be one of those on offer instead of one that is unheard of.

3. Prospects for the Politics of National Identity

To what extent cultural nationalism will shape China's national identity and its future largely depends on its strengths and weaknesses, the balance of power in China's identity politics, as well as the conditions under which the politics is played out.

The Strengths of Cultural Nationalism

One of the strengths of cultural nationalism is that it is a force that sustains cultural identity and national allegiances. If Anthony Smith is correct, such a force will

prove stronger than any countervailing trends.²³ In addition, the call for national unity and moral regeneration can easily strike an accord in a community that is generally concerned about social disorder and the widely perceived moral malaise in China. Moreover, revivalism is of considerable political import, and the notion that what once was could be again is of wide appeal. In these respects, cultural nationalism is based on high moral ground.

Regarding themselves as the guardians of national essence, moral innovators and transmitters of the creative life-principle of the nation, cultural nationalists take on the Party-state and Westernisers in the name of the nation. In this, they can certainly not be said to be under a delusion. Historically, as Tu Wei-ming has summarised well,²⁴ the Confucian scholars defined their worth by tapping a wellspring of symbolic resources. As guardians of national traditions and transmitters of national culture, they saw it as their duty to preserve for posterity the fund of irreplaceable culture values and assumed the central role of defining the meaning of being Chinese. They saw themselves as the emissaries of the Mandate of Heaven, who saw as the people saw and heard as the people heard, and they styled themselves as spokesmen for the well being of the people. As venerable teachers in the cultural realm, they were sometimes even more influential than powerful ministers.

Even though contemporary Chinese intellectuals are far less influential than their predecessors in much of imperial China, they remain one of the most influential social groups in Chinese society. As Christensen has suggested, the Chinese intellectuals' view of the world is important because it influences the thinking of the government decision-makers.²⁵ Their lasting influence is attributable to at least three obvious factors. The first is the remnants of their past glory. As Pye put it, 'What is striking about modern Chinese political culture is not so much the declining influence of the traditional scholar but rather the failure of any other skill group to emerge as the new experts.'²⁶ This comment still rings true today, as it did

²³ Anthony Smith, *National Identity*, p. 143.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 30; see also Preface, p. ix.

²⁵ Thomas Christensen, 'Chinese realpolitik', *Foreign Affairs*, vol. 75, no. 5 (Sept.-Oct. 1996), pp. 37-52.

²⁶ Lucian Pye, *The Spirit of Chinese Politics*, Cambridge, Mass. & London: The M.I.T. Press, 1968, p. 40.

in 1968, when his book was published. A second factor is the resilient 'cultural-intellectualistic traditions' in China.²⁷ Even today, it remains a familiar notion that every aspect of society and culture could somehow be controlled and that conscious ideas could play a decisive role in transforming human life. This is intimately linked with the third factor, the intellectuals' primary role in the production of ideas, knowledge and 'discursive formations'.

The resurgence of Confucianism, together with the emergence of cultural conservatism, postcolonialism, and the upsurge of the 'national essence heat' across the country bears witness to the strength and influence of Chinese intellectuals today. Besides, as Merle Goldman reminded us recently,²⁸ Chinese intellectuals are not just academics but many are political activists as well; they not only set up political parties and opposition groups but also collaborate with underground trade unions. In the same article, she also reminded us of the pivotal role that intellectuals played in the May Fourth movement, the communist movement and the historic events of June Fourth, to name the most obvious.

What is more, there are a number of conditions favourable for the growth and spread of cultural nationalism in China. The most obvious is the current conservative leadership of the CCP and its increased reliance on traditional culture in its patriotic education and nation-building. Its condemnation of Westernisation and anti-traditionalism since 1989 has given cultural nationalists and cultural conservatives the upper hand over Westernisers in the cultural debates. Renewed interest in the national cultural heritage as a result of the promotion of national culture by cultural and state nationalists has increased further as national confidence is buoyed by a booming economy. Moreover, the need for cohesive agents to bind together the mainland, Hong Kong, Macau and Taiwan has invigorated efforts to highlight cultural commonalities, to capitalise on the myth of common descent, and to foster cultural ties. These efforts are also encouraged by the grand vision of a 'cultural China' stretching over the mainland, Hong Kong, Macau, Taiwan, and the whole Chinese Diaspora.

²⁷ Lin Yu-sheng, *The Crisis of Chinese Consciousness*, Madison, Wisconsin: the University of Wisconsin Press, 1979.

²⁸ Merle Goldman, 'Politically engaged intellectuals in the 1990s', *The China Quarterly*, no. 159, Sept. 1999.

More specifically, in the rise of nationalism, intellectual elites have a seminal role to play. This is certainly the case in its early stages of formulation and dissemination, if not in later stages or in the organisation of nationalist movements. As Anthony Smith has argued,

It is the intellectuals - poets, musicians, painters, novelists, historians and archaeologists, playwrights, philologists, anthropologists and folklorists - who have proposed and elaborated the concepts and language of the nation and nationalism and have, through their musings and research, given voice to wider aspirations that they have conveyed in appropriate images, myths and symbols. The ideology and cultural core doctrine of nationalism may also be ascribed to social philosophers, orators and historians...²⁹

Smith therefore concludes that 'the nation and national identity must be seen as a creation of nationalism and its proponents, and its significance and celebration too is the handiwork of nationalists.'³⁰ In China, the intellectuals' position in generating the concepts, myths, symbolism and ideology of nationalism is also apparent. It is almost impossible to talk about the history of nationalism in China without mentioning a cohort of intellectuals, from Zhang Binglin, Liang Qichao, Zhang Taiyan, Sun Yat-sen, Liang Shuming and Wang Guowei to Fang Ning, Han Shaogong, He Xin, Ji Xianlin, Jiang Qing, Qiao Bian, Song Qiang, Wang Hui, Wang Xiaodong, Zhang Yiwu and Zhang Zangzang

Intellectuals are able to play this vital role because intellectuals and intellectualism are needed in formulating and disseminating the ideology of nationalism. More importantly, their role is determined by the nature of nationalism. For nationalism is more than 'a style and doctrine of politics', it is '*a form of culture* - an ideology, a language, mythology, symbolism and consciousness...and the nation is a type of identity whose meaning and priority is presupposed by this form of culture'.³¹ Hence, in formulating its language and symbols, nationalism draws heavily from the works of artists and intellectuals that embody a 'heightened expressive subjectivity'.³² It is this type of subjectivity that

²⁹ Anthony Smith, *National Identity*, p. 93.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 91-2.

³¹ *Ibid.*

³² *Ibid.*, p. 93.

underlies the rediscovery of the 'the inner self' – a chief end of nationalism in general.

The Weaknesses of Cultural Nationalism

One of cultural nationalism's most obvious weaknesses is its elitist nature, as Baogang He has correctly pointed out.³³ Like other Chinese intellectual and political elites, cultural nationalists appear to believe in the elites' 'rights to arrogance' and take for granted 'the monopolies of officialdom'.³⁴ They seem to assume that it is the scholars who know what is best for the people.

There is nothing unusual about the elitism of cultural nationalism, of course. As Pye observed, elitism is deep-rooted in the Chinese political culture, constantly reinforced by the Confucian and communist elites. In his own words, 'Chinese politics after chaos and revolution has always returned to being elitist and hierarchical in organisation, closed and monopolistic in spirit',³⁵ and the structure of Chinese politics remains a largely 'self-contained system very little influenced by citizens'. In addition, the political and intellectual elites have also been 'self-sufficient, feeling no need for the intellectual or moral support of any group in society'.³⁶

It must be stressed, however, that the elites' 'rights to arrogance' are much harder to sustain today than in the Maoist era, let alone imperial China. Besides, while their first priority is to reform the state from the top by demolishing its systems of meaning, cultural nationalists certainly wish to inspire a spontaneous love of the cultural nation in its different members by educating them to their common heritage. In other words, their alternative systems of meaning and national identity are also produced for public consumption. Unless they manage to re-create the idea of the nation as a living principle in the lives of the people - that is to say, unless their 'goods' are purchased and consumed by a significant proportion of the population - they cannot be said to have succeeded completely.

³³ Baogang He, 'Concluding remarks', in Baogang He and Yingjie Guo, *Nationalism, National Identity and Democratisation in China*, Aldershot, England: Ashgate, 2000, pp. 193-4.

³⁴ Lucian Pye, op. cit., p. 13.

³⁵ Ibid.

³⁶ Ibid., p. 13 and p. 40.

In this respect, the biggest obstacle to the cultural nationalists' project is probably the fledgling market, which is apparently more interested in 'use value' and 'exchange value' than traditional values. To make things worse, cultural nationalists do not have unlimited access to the market, as it is still controlled by the Party-state to a large extent. They are thus restricted in what they can promote and how to promote it. These unfavourable conditions are compounded by the fact that cultural nationalism is a small-scale movement and that cultural nationalists are not well organised or well co-ordinated. This means that their challenge to the Party-state and their national identity project are, by and large, confined within official constraints, even though they keep on pushing the boundaries or resist the domination of the Party-state by using creative guerrilla tactics of poaching and of guileful ruses and tricks.³⁷ What that means in turn is that their challenge to the Party-state will remain a war of attrition and any change to national identity that they manage to bring about is likely to be gradual and incremental.

Furthermore, the discourse and project of Chinese cultural nationalism are certainly not without defects or flaws. First of all, what cultural nationalists offer is but one version of the collective self, whereas many kinds of national self present themselves in practice, and there is also a wide range of human attitudes and perceptions.³⁸ It is thus hardly surprising if cultural nationalists, their critics and others disagree on the criteria for national self-definition. Secondly, it is not hard to detect the 'indeterminacy of national criteria' and their 'vague, shifting, often arbitrary character'³⁹ in the writings of Chinese cultural nationalists. These characteristics of national criteria in nationalist discourses make the idea of the nation appear 'sketchy and elusive', even 'contradictory and incoherent'.⁴⁰ This is a problem that undermines not only the credibility of Chinese cultural nationalism but also that of nationalism in general. This is probably because all nationalism, to

³⁷ Michel de Certeau, one of the most sophisticated theorists of cultural politics of everyday life, observed that underlying this politics is a series of metaphors of conflict. His analyses reveal that the weak are creative, nimble and flexible, and typically, they make poaching raids on the structures and texts of the dominant and constantly play tricks on the system. See Michel de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, translated by Steven F. Rendall, Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1984, especially p. 41.

³⁸ Anthony Smith, *National Identity*, p. 17.

³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰ For one of the best critiques of nationalism in general, see Elie Kedourie, 1960, *Nationalism*, London: Hutchinson, 1960, especially pp. 99-101.

varying degrees, asserts a mystical organic bond between culture, land and community. An imagined collective identity based upon such a bond does not admit of great precision, nor can it be codified. Instead, it 'can only be grasped as a living whole' and 'understood genetically and intuitively as a *gestalt*', as Hutchinson succinctly put it.⁴¹

In addition, the discourse and projects of the Chinese cultural nationalists are not entirely logical, coherent or convincing. In my discussion of the 'search for roots' in literature, for example, I demonstrated how the native writer/narrator vacillates between all-embracing humanitarianism and self-indulgence, between altruist commitment and elite escapism, and between earthy 'soil' and imaginary utopia. The dilemma for those who search for 'roots' in the past or in the folk is intensified when they are forced to choose between a romantic vision and an industrial and modern reality. Besides, what they discover and uphold as outstanding Chinese tradition is often more presentable in the abstract than in the concrete.

The nationalist historians' notion of 'Chineseness', as another example, has not gone far beyond the vision of such Confucian modernisers as Kang Youwei and Zhang Zhidong, who imagined a Chinese nation based on Confucian principles and only including ethnic minorities provided they accepted those principles. Since this 'cultural Chineseness' is predominantly Han, it gives the non-Han ethnies good reason to compete with it or renounce it altogether. As for Confucianism, its biggest obstacle, as we have discussed, is some of its own tenets. One of the challenges that the Confucians confront is how to adapt Confucianism to modern realities while maintaining its self-identity.

Chinese postcolonialism is still more problematic in that it 'Occidentalises' the West into a single essentialisation or a uniform 'Other', and locks the East (China) and the West into a discursive binary opposition of 'us' against 'them'. Through the postcolonial grid, whatever 'they' say about 'us' is Orientalist, and whatever is 'Orientalist' must be countered. By thus dramatically inflaming the insistence on difference, Occidentalism has the potential of driving the search for identity into insulation and isolation. What is worse, China can only be ill-served by the type of postcolonial 'whateverism' that rejects whatever is Orientalist or Western and

⁴¹ John Hutchinson, *op. cit.*, p. 13.

which celebrates whatever is Chinese. While this type of simplistic whateverism might continue to drive the search for cultural authenticity among some academic circles, it will not hold much appeal for open-minded intellectuals and the general public at a time when China is increasingly integrated into the international community.

Possible Alliances

Another crucial factor to shape the outcome of the identity politics in China is how the major players will become allied in the future. Of critical importance will be the permutations of the cultural nationalists and three groups of political nationalists: the state nationalists, the Chinese New Left, and the Chinese liberals. 'Chinese nationalism' split into iconoclastic political nationalism and reformist cultural nationalism as early as the May Fourth era. In the last two decades or so, political nationalism has further split into two mutually hostile currents of thought and projects: state nationalism and pro-democracy nationalism. In the last few years, the New Left has emerged quite unexpectedly and proved itself to be a major opponent of the liberals while appearing ambivalent towards the CCP.

The possibility of an alliance between state nationalism and the liberals and between the liberals and the New Left can be safely ruled out. This is because the liberals' vision of a democratic system can only be realised at the expense of the Party-state, and the differences between the liberals and the New Left can hardly be overcome. For example, while the liberals are suspicious of direct democracy and mass participation, the New Left rejects representative democracy as elitist and 'pseudo-democratic'; the former are often seen as spokespeople for the 'have's', while the members of the New Left believe they stand for the 'have-not's'. In addition, they also disagree on capitalism; what the New Left wants is a Third Way that differs from both socialism and capitalism.

Apart from these, any other permutation is possible. First of all, let us look at the possibility of an alliance between cultural nationalism and pro-democracy nationalism. Given that they are both opposition movements, one would expect some sort of alliance between them, whereas the fact is that they are kept far apart by the former's alleged regressive tendencies and the latter's alleged iconoclastic stance. In spite of this, however, an alliance is still possible if pro-democracy

nationalists relinquish iconoclasm and if cultural nationalists, especially postcolonialists, moderate their anti-Western stance. Cultural nationalism and pro-democracy nationalism combined would constitute an integrated project that blends the cultural language of national spirit and national essence with the political discourse of collective liberty and popular sovereignty. Such a force would pose a much greater challenge to the Party-state than either cultural nationalism or pro-democracy nationalism has done or is capable of doing and generate a stronger demand for an alternative political and cultural identity.

There is already some sort of ad hoc alliance between the cultural nationalists and the New Left. This is evidenced by the fact that some leading members of the New Left, such as Wang Hui and Han Yuhai, are also cultural nationalists. It can also be seen from the recent co-operation between some New Leftists and cultural nationalists in a co-ordinated assault on the liberals via *Tianya*, edited by a prominent cultural nationalist, Han Shaogong. Given their resistance against imperialism and exogenous models of social development, as well as their common hostility towards the Chinese liberals, this ad hoc alliance should come as no surprise. It is apparent, however, that cultural nationalists and the New Left in general are not keen about such an alliance. Cultural nationalists have good reason to be wary of the New Left's Marxist and socialist inclinations, particularly its tacit assumption of economic determinism and its general apathy towards culture. Even if the two groups can co-operate with each other, their co-operation will probably be confined to certain issues only.

Now, let us turn to the possibility of an alliance between cultural and state nationalists. To cultural nationalists, this would probably be a preposterous proposition, as they are obviously predisposed against state nationalism. It must be stressed, however, that they are by no means opposed to every tenet and every aspect of state nationalism. As I have demonstrated, cultural nationalism as a counter-discourse to state nationalism mainly counters its Party-centred nature and its class overtones, whereas the two discourses are congruent in many other respects. Conflict will be further reduced as the CCP continues to retreat from Marxism and the notion of a class-nation and steps up its attempt to transform itself into 'a representative of the whole Chinese nation, of advanced productive forces, and of advanced culture'. Conflict will also be reduced as the CCP continues to play down its demands for loyalty to itself as a component of patriotism and if its

sustained promotion of national culture succeeds in creating the impression that it is indeed an indispensable protector of national culture.

In short, what cultural nationalism is fundamentally against is the ideology of the Party, not the state, nor even state nationalism as a whole. Even though it gives precedence to the spontaneous love of culture and nation over the allegiance to the state, it has little reason to resist a state formation that protects national culture, sustains a national identity in accordance to the nation's cultural traditions and maintains national unity and autonomy. Indeed, such a state would appear quite legitimate in the eyes of the cultural nationalists, whether it be democratic or authoritarian. What is important for them is a state formation that maintains or retains national autonomy, unity and identity, while it is at most of secondary importance whether it is democratic or authoritarian.

There are already 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 be de-revolutionised more thoroughly, although the source of political authority might not be relocated from the Party to the nation. At the same time, China will be Sinicised further from what it was in the 1980s whilst retaining some of the social legacy.

4. Implications for Further Research

This study has concentrated on the articulation and formation of the discourse of cultural nationalism as well as on its disarticulation and dissolution of state nationalism. Its focus is the production and reproduction of meaning, particularly the meaning of Chineseness. Neither cultural nationalism nor state nationalism, however, can possibly exhaust all the available meanings in society. In order to generate an overall picture, the politics of national identity could be pursued further horizontally to take into account the input of, say, the Taoists, Buddhists, Muslims, liberals, feminists, overseas Chinese and so on. At this level, we are mainly concerned with elite constructs of the nation as an object of consciousness, elite identifications, and the public embodiment of the nation's conception of itself.

As well as this, we need a better understanding of the inter-penetration and interaction between the elites and the populace. More importantly, we need to better understand what Chineseness and being Chinese mean to the ordinary people,

people of different age groups, of different regions and of different cultural and ethnic backgrounds. What is of particular interest in this regard is not just the nation as an object of consciousness as imagined by large numbers of Chinese but also the formation of a conception of themselves as existing in relation to that object. In other words, we focus here on the nation as a form of identity that exists as individual self-awareness and on national identity as a relationship of identification between members of the national community and between members and the object of consciousness.

What is also of interest is the struggle for hegemony in dictating what constitutes Chineseness and the mobilisation or enactments of national identity for all sorts of political purposes and in all sorts of political contexts. This will probably require both in-depth interviews and large-sample survey research. Such a project would be no doubt quite costly and politically risky. A real challenge is how to design the questions in a way that avoids politically sensitive issues and yet ensures that the necessary information is obtained.

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