

**UCLA**

**UCLA Electronic Theses and Dissertations**

**Title**

Imagined Communities: Patriotic Sentiment Among Chinese Students Abroad in the Era of Xi Jinping

**Permalink**

<https://escholarship.org/uc/item/80j0t2w0>

**Author**

Sinski, Eric

**Publication Date**

2020

Peer reviewed|Thesis/dissertation

UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA

Los Angeles

Imagined Communities:

Patriotic Sentiment Among Chinese Students Abroad

In the Era of Xi Jinping

A master's thesis submitted in partial satisfaction of the

requirements for the degree Master of Arts

in Anthropology

by

Eric Andrew Sinski

2020

© Copyright by

Eric Andrew Sinski

2020

ABSTRACT OF THE THESIS

Imagined Communities:

Patriotic Sentiment Among Chinese Students Abroad

In the Era of Xi Jinping

by

Eric Andrew Sinski

Master of Philosophy in Anthropology

University of California, Los Angeles, 2020

Professor Yunxiang Yan, Chair

Using a combination of participant-observation and semi-structured, person-centered interview techniques, this thesis examines nationalist subjectivities and patriotic sentiment among Chinese university students abroad during the late Xi Jinping era. By approaching this phenomenon from an anthropological, bottom-up approach, this paper concludes that rather than tempering their nationalist sentiment through exposure to other cultures and political systems,

time spent abroad actually increases the magnitude and salience of patriotic sentiments, as well as reshapes Chinese nationalist subjectivities in ways that are unique, but whose roots can be found in the social facts and narrative lens imparted during Patriotic Education Campaign initiated by the Chinese Communist Party following the political turmoil of the 1980s, as well as in the lived experiences of Chinese students abroad today. Tracing back to its incipient roots during pre-Dynastic China, this paper contributes to anthropological studies of nationalism by arguing that nationalism, rather than being understood as a broad phenomenon that arises only when certain universal conditions are met, must be understood in a situated, localized context and centered in the lived experiences of everyday people who at once shape, and are shaped by nationalistic narratives and sentiments.

The thesis of Eric Andrew Sinski is approved.

Douglas Hollan

Laurie Kain Hart

Yunxiang Yan, Committee Chair

University of California, Los Angeles

2020

# Table of Contents

## Part I: Introduction

Preface.....	1
Methods and Limitations.....	3
Anthropological Theories of Nationalism .....	7

## Part II: Historical Roots of Present-Day Chinese Nationalism

A) Pre-Qing Chinese Subjectivities.....	17
B) Foreign Colonialism and the Shaping of Chinese National Consciousness (1557-1911).....	28
C) The Incipience and Emergence of Chinese Nationalism (1911-1949).....	38
D) From Culturalism to Nationalism.....	48
E) Mao Era Nationalist Subjectivities (1949-1978).....	55
F) Nationalist Subjectivities During the Reform Era (1978-1989).....	59

## Part III: Construction of Post-Tiananmen Nationalist Subjectivities (1991-Present)

A) Introduction.....	63
B) The Patriotic Education Campaign and the Crisis of CCP Legitimacy.....	63
C) Emotional Contours of Post-Tiananmen Subjectivities.....	66
D) Construction of In-Group Identities.....	71
E) National Rejuvenation and Imagined Futures: Territorial Integrity and Economic Performance .....	78

**Part IV: Encounters With The Outside World: Chinese Students Abroad and Nationalist**

**Subjectivities**

A) Introduction.....	87
B) The Lens of Patriotic Education – Conscious Aspects and Personal Experience.....	89
C) The Lens of Patriotic Education – Subconscious Aspects.....	92
D) Constituting and Re-Constituting the Patriotic Lens.....	99
E) Patriotic, Yet Practical: The Role of the CSSA in Shaping Nationalist Subjectivities.....	104
F) The Chinese Internet Bubble, Censorship, and Nationalist Subjectivities.....	108
G) The Strengthening of Nationalist Subjectivities Through Encounters With Foreign Media and Students.....	114
H) Encounters with America and the Strengthening of Chinese Nationalist Subjectivities.....	121
<b><u>Part V: Conclusion</u></b> .....	126
<b><u>Bibliography</u></b> .....	131

## Acknowledgments

I want to thank a number of people, without whom, this MA thesis would not have been possible.

I first want to thank my committee chair, Yunxiang Yan, for all of the time spent discussing the themes of this paper, as well as helping to shape the manner in which I thought about various concepts which permeate this thesis. I also wish to thank Doug Hollan and Laurie Hart, who both made themselves generously available to me during the various stages of this project.

I also want to thank my parents (Carol and Jeff Sinski) as well as my brother (David) who have supported me unconditionally throughout the course of the previous eighteen months, as well as for my entire life prior to it. Thank you also to Aunt Luanne, Uncle George and Lucie Sinski who provided me a home when I needed it most.

I wish to thank my friends, who helped me survive and anchored me through these tumultuous eighteen months through long phone conversations and moral/spiritual support. I could have not done this without you. Thank you especially to IAT, Bruna, Andy Espinosa, Rushabh Shah, Gary Bierman, Heather Loase, Nick Choy, Tony Amoury Alkhoury, Robin El Kady, Nabil Hoq, Felicia Blomquist, Monika Bednarova, Keshu Pan, Chuqiu Peng, Sam Selsky, Gerardo Torres-Flores, who nourished my heart and soul with our conversations. Thank you to my friends in China: James, Newsun, Rona, and Monica, as well as to all of my students for helping to attune me to life in a small town. Thank you for putting up with the worst and best sides of myself during the long process of cultural adjustment and taking care of me in both big and small ways. Finally, thank you to Dennis – you shared every part of yourself with me and let me see China through your eyes. My whole world in China truly begins and ends with you.

## Preface

It was a mild, sunny day when I met Rui Zhong for the second time, lounging outside a café on the luxuriant UCLA campus. The first time we encountered each other, both of us had been attending a seminar on cultural inclusivity in the classroom and immediately took to each other. Eyelids drooping with boredom at the virtue signaling which he considered as a mere formality (*xingshi*) on the way to being able to assume a TA position, he was surprised to learn that I had lived in China and was in fact, familiar with the small rural towns that dotted the mountainous landscape in southwestern Zhejiang province that he had travelled to visit relatives during his younger days. We chatted intermittently throughout the seminar, exchanged numbers and agreed to meet the following week.

“Maybe I shouldn’t say it,” he said, as he glanced worryingly at my phone sitting face-up on the metal table, “but a thought just came to my head.” “What’s that?” I asked him curiously, picking up on the apprehensive tone in his voice as his gaze flitted up from the cell phone to my face. “Well,” he hesitated with a nervous smile, pausing a brief second before fixing his eyes on my phone, “is that...on?” “No,” I replied, turning it on and showing him that no voice-recording software was in fact, keeping record of our conversation. “Ok,” he said, pausing nervously again and glancing down at the table. “What’s up?” I asked worriedly, thinking that I had unwittingly done or said something intrusive. He paused again, perusing my facial expression, carefully discerning whether or not to continue. “I was just thinking,” he reiterated, “that maybe you are a spy.”

Admittedly, I was a bit taken aback by the sheer paranoia in his response. However, my presence had garnered similar responses in the small Chinese town that I lived in during the four years between 2012 and 2016 and upon second thought, wasn’t all that surprising. My research

topic, which I disclosed to him previously, combined with my tall, muscular build, and short, military-style cropped hair, along with the audacity I displayed in asking him to have coffee with me after only the first time meeting together, probably in hindsight, came off very much as behavior stereotypical of an American counter-intelligence officer.

Conducting research on a topic as contemporaneous and relevant to current affairs as Chinese nationalism in the year 2019, is fraught with both difficulty and reward. On the one hand, it is immediately gratifying to explore a topic that constantly evolves by the day, and requires intense engagement with not only previous scholarship, but with the current news cycle, both in Chinese and in English. On the other hand, the difficulties in conducting ethnographic research on such a topic, even in the United States, are considerable. For one, my positionality as a tall, white, American male, placed me immediately within the category of potential foreign agent in the eyes of many of my informants. Although Rui was the only one bold enough to directly confront me with his misgivings, I suspect that many of my interactions and interviews were silently affected by this elephant in the room. Although as an American, the US-China trade war is only one small blip on the proverbial radar of stories that inundate the 2019 news cycle, and one's identity *vis a vis* China is rarely made salient in the media or even in daily interactions, it is equivocal to assume this is true the other way around. In fact, as I was to discover, for my informants, their Chinese national identity and its accompanying narrative and moral discourse was one of the most salient aspects of their experience in the United States. Once remotely comfortable with me, every informant expressed a vocal and ardent defense of their Chinese identity and their patriotic sentiment in one way or the other. Most of the time, this was expressed as unabashed support for the Chinese government and their handling of the various incidents that made their way into the headlines of the international media. For the

summer and fall of 2019, when I did my research, these incidents and stories included the Hong Kong protests, the US-China trade war, the Taiwan presidential elections, and the presence of the internment camps that currently house between one and two million Uighur Muslims in Xinjiang province.

### **Methods and Limitations**

In order to explore the contours of present-day nationalist subjectivities in Chinese students abroad, I utilized a mixed-methods approach which included both participant observation and person-centered ethnographic interviews. In total, I conducted recorded interviews with twelve undergraduate and graduate students at UCLA and also at universities in Scotland and Germany, and spent many hours with students in settings which evoked nationalistic sentiment, including protests in and around Los Angeles surrounding the events that transpired in Hong Kong during the summer and fall of 2019. After engaging my informants in those settings by displaying an open curiosity towards their political actions and stances, I would often follow up with a one-on-one interview where I would inquire more deeply into both their nationalistic attitudes and into their personal life history and habits more generally. Some informants were open to me recording the interviews, where others were not. Most preferred to communicate with me in English, while some preferred using Mandarin Chinese. In all cases, I use pseudonyms in order to protect the identities of my informants during such a sensitive period in the relations between China and the United States.

The limitations of my methods with regards to pursuing my research objective are numerous. My approach lacks the advantage of large sample sizes and randomly selected informants. Nevertheless, I did my best to diversify the types of informants that I engaged with. While I did attend many protests and counter-protests, as well as events and talks which inevitably

generated some pushback amongst Chinese students, I was also careful to engage with students who were not involved in any way with such overt political activities. I interviewed the head of the CSSA (Chinese Students' and Scholars' Association) at one university, but also visitors on three-month summer exchange programs, and graduate students completely immersed in their topic of research. The students I interviewed hailed from a wide variety of majors, ranging from economics to history, from public health to engineering, and came from a wide variety of economic backgrounds within China itself. However, I must note that most students were urban-dwellers from the middle-class and above; most lower and working-class suburbanites and rural residents were not included, as they comprise an invariably low percentage of Chinese students studying abroad. In addition, most of my informants were probably more extraverted and open to experiences and interaction with non-Chinese individuals than the average student abroad.

As previously mentioned, I utilized a number of ways to interact with as many types of Chinese students as possible. Some were encountered through friends and colleagues, while I approached others in public locations such as in school dining halls, the student gym and cafes. In these cases, I would introduce myself as an anthropologist working on China and Chinese nationalism and ask if they were open to having a short conversation about it. Other informants were found through friends and colleagues, and still others through snowball sampling and previous informants. Although the number of recorded interviews was limited to twelve, I engaged with over thirty informants in relevant conversations surrounding the topic of Chinese nationalism.

With regards to positionality, it was clear that my stance as a white American male presented barriers to rapport-building with some of my informants, as well as affected the types of responses garnered from them in ways that I can only partially anticipate. Many may have been reluctant to share their true feelings with me because, despite my assurances to the contrary, they

may have been afraid that their responses could be traced back to them and used against them, whether by the American or Chinese government. When asked directly, my informants would often articulate the fear of both cases. With both potentialities real and present, it is impossible to predict how it would shape their accounts of their own nationalistic feelings and patriotic sentiment, except for the assumption that in general, being wary of both possibilities would likely temper extreme responses in either direction. In addition, on a relational level, there may have been times that informant would not want to offend me by appearing to be too outwardly patriotic.

However, in some cases (especially in those that did not have much contact with Americans), it may be possible that I took on the identity as the Western (or American) Other. By appearing non-threatening in such a scenario, it is possible that in such cases, my presence may have tacitly encouraged the emphatic assertion of Chinese nationalist sentiments in ways that they felt they could not express to the other Americans in their life that were most often in positions of authority (professors, TAs) or strangers. In other words, by attempting to be neutral and unobtrusive as an interviewer, it is possible that my relative silence in terms of overt identity proclamation, enabled them to project onto me, the qualities of the American Other that were the most salient in their minds. In the context of discussions around patriotism and nationalist sentiment, that American Other was an enemy in disguise, conspiring to hold China back on the world stage and ultimately to revert it to its fragmented and subordinate state that it occupied during the Century of Humiliation. In a position where I could not threaten them and was prepared to receive their responses without a word of rebuttal or protest, they may have seen this as an opportunity to partially avenge present and historical wrongs by enacting a display of defiant patriotism to my face.

Although my positionality significantly complicated the interactions I had with my Chinese student informants in certain negative aspects, I felt paradoxically that my identity sometimes constituted an advantage for me in eliciting responses that may have conformed closely with the private thoughts and feelings of my informants. Being removed from their immediate social networks as an American, may have allowed them space to express their real feelings in a way that they would rarely do with people with whom they have recurring social contact. A few informants also explicitly told me that they preferred using English because they were unused to having such discussions in Mandarin and found it awkward. To them, speaking English about such sensitive subjects spared them the emotional baggage that Mandarin phrasing and vocabulary imbued the terms and topics with. Although English was only acquired fluently later in life for many of them, some viewed it as conferring a greater space of freedom of thought and expression, particularly in cases involving emotions and politics.

Given the wide array of possibilities in how my own identity and appearance may have impacted the conversations and dialogue that took place between my informants and I, it is impossible to locate exactly what affect it induced in a particular interaction with a specific individual. Although I could not identify any regular pattern that elicited a particular reaction, what should be noted is that my identity and appearance was a salient factor in our discussions that many of my informants responded to, both consciously and subconsciously. That being said, I discovered that my more protracted engagements with Chinese students yielded more reliable and interesting information. As they grew more comfortable with me, their body language became more relaxed and they proved more willing to divulge personal stories and to discuss their experiences without the self-conscious filter that accompanies most people's social interactions.

## **Introduction: Anthropological Theories of Nationalism**

“And if the (Hong Kong) protestors do not comply with police orders to disperse, yet still don’t resist violently, what should happen to them?” I pressed one informant. Pausing with one hand on his lukewarm coffee cup, he slightly averted my gaze, staring at the unadorned wall opposite to him. After a few seconds of tense silence, he looked at me and uttered with a hint of exasperation, “they should be killed.”

It was chilling responses like this emanating from the mouths of several mainland Chinese acquaintances and friends of mine that prompted my initial foray into the contours of Chinese nationalism in the present-day. How could otherwise kind, rational and intelligent people be convinced of the veracity and necessity to label millions of overwhelmingly peaceful demonstrators from an in-group that they consider their own, as treasonous cockroaches (*zhanglan*) that deserved the ultimate punishment for non-violent acts? What accounted for the ubiquity of the idea that these protestors were “against China” and “funded by the CIA” and “worthless youth,” (to use several of the most common terms associated with them). What about the descriptions of protestors as “violent,” “garbage youth” and “rioters?” Unlike within the borders of mainland China where the media environment is highly censored by a well-funded team of government-sponsored internet monitors and commentators, in a free media environment where mainland Chinese individuals had access to high-quality information based on uncensored, factual reporting, why did such one-sided and extreme ideas divorced from the reality and message of the protests themselves, not only continue to exist, but to flourish?

The short answer to this question is: nationalism. In the introduction to his seminal work National Identity, Anthony Smith acknowledges that, “we cannot begin to understand the power and appeal of nationalism as a political force without grounding our analysis in a wider

perspective whose focus is national identity treated as a collective cultural phenomenon” (Smith 1991: vii). In other words, when endeavoring to describe or understand the origin and subjective experiences of nationalistic beliefs, sentiments and practices as they manifest amongst a collectivity, one must conceive of nationalism as a phenomenon that is not expressly located within the political realm; rather, the scope and breadth of nationalism transcends the political and becomes a collective social experience, enmeshing itself in the familial, educational, vocational and private realms, whose salience permeates the everyday consciousness of a collectivity.

When writing on the multiplicity of identities that the self can hold at once, Smith focuses explicitly on religious and ethnic identities, noting that both share similar qualities and can serve to unite broad swaths of a population in such a way that gender, social class, and regional identities fail to accomplish (Smith 1991: 4,5,8). According to Smith, national identity involves an idea of political community predicated on common institutions, a system of rights and responsibilities to those who constitute it, as well as an explicitly delineated physical space that is occupied by those same constituents (Smith 1991: 9). While well-articulated, it must be noted that this sense of national identity, elucidated in terms of “systems of rights and responsibilities” marks an explicitly Western conception of the *body politic*, their relationship with structures of governance and what “belonging” to a nation entails. For instance, while Smith includes the idea of a common historic territory, legal-political community with a common will, legal-political equality of members and a common civic culture and ideology, this concept of a nation contains implicit hidden assumptions as to what nationalism is and what it constitutes, rendering certain elements of nationalism in non-Western contexts invisible to those who take this and other Western epistemological assumptions for granted and assume that this conception of nationalism can apply to all nations that exist in the

world today (Smith 1991: 10). Furthermore, even when discussing nationalism and nationalistic sentiments in non-Western contexts, Smith's definition of what constitutes a nation equally emphasizes the four aforementioned constituent elements, rather than privileging one over another. For example, some strains of nationalism that verily conform to Smith's definition may accentuate the elements of a shared national territory and *patria*, while downplaying the importance of legal and political equality of all members, either in rhetoric or in practice.

Later on in his work, Smith attempts to expand his definition of a nation to accommodate the emerging nation-states and nationalist movements of Eastern Europe, the Middle East, and Asia that were emerging at the time. These non-Western nations, he explains, are primarily communities of common descent as opposed to the Western concept of a nation which bestows on individuals a certain degree of flexibility to choose which nation they belong to, despite the historical ties of their family and bloodline. Smith terms this kind of nationalism "ethnic nationalism" due to its emphasis on lineage and ancestral roots as opposed to the Western conception of a civic community which stresses the physical location of the member (Smith 1991: 11). He also notes that in what he terms 'ethnic' nations, that "the people" are the object of nationalist aspirations even if they are not called on to be mobilized. Oftentimes, the objects of these nationalist aspirations are also endowed with myths, history and linguistic traditions which form an irreducible part of their membership in this nation (Smith 1991: 12). Taking into account this expanded definition to account for his conception of non-Western nations, Smith settles on a definition of a nation as a "named human population sharing a historic territory, common myths and historical memories, a mass, public culture, a common economy and common legal rights and duties for all members" (Smith 1991: 14).

During my time spent with my mainland Chinese informants, I sought to map and understand the discursive logic and experience of nationalist sentiment among these mainland Chinese individuals studying abroad in the United States. In attempting to understand this logic, as well as the subjective, embodied experience of it, settling on Smith's basic definition for what constitutes a nation, especially when his definition is expanded to include components of 'ethnic' nationalism is helpful because it provides anthropologists with a basic conceptual framework to engage. In addition to the basic latticework of how modern nationalism is constructed, both discursively and in practice, Smith asks the poignant questions of "Who is the nation?" "Why and how does the nation emerge?" and "When and where did the nation arise?" (Smith 1991: 19). In his work, *Nations and Nationalism* (1983), Ernst Gellner anticipates some of these questions, arguing that shared cultures which coincide with political boundaries can only arise when social conditions allow for standardized, homogenous and centrally sustained high cultures which permeate entire populations with which people willingly identify and which seem to be the "natural repositories of political legitimacy" (Gellner 1983: 55). Only under these circumstances, Gellner notes, can nations be defined both in terms of will and in terms of culture and on a more macro-level, be defined as the convergence of the aforementioned two aspects with explicitly delineated political boundaries (Gellner 1983: 55). According to Gellner's theory of nationalism, it is nationalism which creates nations and not vice versa. This occurs during periods of transition from agrarian to industrial societies in environments which creates an environment where mobility and context-free communication render one distinctly aware of one's own language and culture, which is reinforced and disseminated through an educational system borne out of a need to educate workers to run and to manage industrial production (Gellner 1983: 61,63). This period of transition harkens the dissolution of what Gellner terms

older “low-cultures” which were dependent on a fixed, largely immobile agrarian society (Gellner 1983: 57). As workers travelled far from their localities, and became substitutable laborers in the industrial factory, they lost the idiosyncrasies pertaining to their old social structure, local sub-culture and the roles which they occupied within it. Having become, in Gellner’s words, “anonymous” and “atomized,” and requiring a common language with their fellow laborers, the concept of a nation become of vital importance. (Gellner 1983: 57, 63).

In Gellner’s theory, the new nation which emerged from this process of education due to the exigencies of industrialization also had a profound effect on the formation of new subjectivities. This new, nationalistic subject and the structures of governance and “higher culture” which disseminate discourse that engenders such subjectivities, constitute a dialectical process in which the subject shapes and is shaped by the educational system that forms as a response to the industrial mode of production. In other words, the new mode of production that came into being as a result of industrialization simultaneously engendered new nationalistic subjectivities directly and also necessitated an educational system which produced a nationalistic subject. The dawning of this new type of subjectivity was thus a direct consequence of the new mode of production that rendered the old, agrarian subject obsolete, and was an indirect consequence of the educational system that coalesced in order to satiate the demands of training a workforce fit to carry out the work and management required in the industrial age.

And what are the characteristics of this new type of nationalist subjectivity? According to Durkheim, in its most elementary forms, religious sentiment stems from the fact that society is covertly worshipping itself in the symbolic and material form of sacred relics or totems. These emblems or objects are imbued with a sacred nature and both symbolize and serve as a source of group cohesion and solidarity. Damaging or defacing these objects is therefore tantamount to

threatening the survival of the group and consequently, of the individuals who comprise it. Thus, Durkheim argues that the religious sentiment that takes hold of individuals as they interact with the sacred objects or totems is a manifestation of the bonds of solidarity that hold that particular group together (Durkheim 1912). According to Gellner, nationalist sentiment functions in much the same way, except that it discards the Durkheimian totem, sacred object or God that obfuscates the fact that the subject is in fact worshipping his/her own group (Gellner 1983: 56). Thus, in the case of nationalism, society worships itself and does so directly; the sacred object is not the totem, but rather the abstract concept of the collective society itself.

We can utilize general information about ideas of the nation and nationalism generated in the West and expounded by theorists like Smith, Gellner, and Anderson to lay a foundation for understanding types of nationalisms and nationalist subjectivities found in other parts of the world because the historical and material conditions that lay the foundations for the development of industrial capitalism and thus harkened the inception of nationalist sentiment and subjectivities occurred first in Western Europe in the Americas, before spreading to the rest of the world through the intersection of capitalistic and colonial logics. According to Gellner, prior to this historical development, the need for a uniform nationality that encompassed all cultures within a nation-state's political borders was nonexistent and cultural pluralism within political boundaries of a state was more a rule than an exception (Gellner 1983: 54-55). However, as capitalism and mass industrial production continued to advance, engendering advances in communication, transportation, and trade, the demand for a uniform culture and language that coincided with the political borders of a nation-state became stronger and stronger. In this process, there was a greater establishment of what Gellner deems, "high cultures" which are standardized, literary and education-based systems of communications implemented by

governments to create a workforce and consumer base capable of industrial production, management and consumption (Gellner 1983: 54). As capitalism and the industrial economy progresses and encompasses the world, Gellner notes, “a situation arises in which well-defined, educationally-sanctioned and unified cultures constitute very nearly the only kind of unit with which men willingly and ardently identify” (Gellner 1983: 55).

Similarly to Gellner, Benedict Anderson identifies the ubiquity of nationalism in modern life, stating, “nation-ness is the most universally legitimate value in the political life of our time” (Anderson 2006: 3). Reacting against the Cold-War era dogma of late 1970s mainstream political thought which emphasized the primary salience of democratic or communist ideology in the consciousness of people worldwide, Anderson argued that these ideologies were of secondary importance in global subjective consciousness compared with that of national identification, which he deemed primary. With regards to historical origins, Anderson locates the roots of modern nationalism in the late 1700s which occurred due to a confluence of historical factors. Among these factors, the most significant were the dawning of the Enlightenment era and the advent of print-capitalism (Anderson 2006: 11, 45). Rather than Gellner, who emphasizes the origins of modern nationalism in the social and economic conditions created by industrialization, Anderson pinpoints its origins in the fact that print technology enabled new imaginings of communities of “horizontal-secular-transverse-time” possible (Anderson 2006: 37). According to Anderson, the social and scientific discoveries of the Enlightenment brought an end to the idea where a particular script language (Latin, Arabic) offered privileged access to ontological truth because it was an inseparable part of that truth, the end to the idea that monarchs ruled by divine right, and an end to the conception that history and cosmology were indistinguishable (Anderson 2006: 36). As a result, in Western Europe, the traditional way men

and women related to God, to authorities and to each other gradually eroded. Alongside the decline in traditional modes of ontological thought, Anderson notes that in the late 1500s, the synergy of capitalism and printing technology allowed for mass-market paperback books and newspapers to be created (Anderson 2006: 40). Originating in the Protestant Reformation, the newly created printing press was effectively mobilized by Protestants to reach and create new vernacular reading publics in order to wage an ideological war against the Catholic Church. The religious and political decline of the Catholic Church then enabled the ascension of absolutist monarchs in Western Europe who used these new vernaculars created by print-capitalism for the purpose of political administration. Anderson also notes that there is inevitable linguistic diversity in human language and some found themselves closer or farther away from these administrative vernaculars utilized by the absolute monarchs in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries (Anderson 2006: 45). This, when amalgamated with the historical events of the late 1700s and early 1800s in the Americas in which Enlightenment critiques were brought to bear on European monarchs, laid the foundations, Anderson says, of modern nationalist consciousness (Anderson 2006: 65).

Once brought into being by the confluence of the abovementioned historical factors, Anderson notes that nationalism could be transplanted onto a wide variety of social terrains and was capable of merging itself with a variety of political and ideological beliefs (Anderson 2006: 4). After the nineteenth century, he claims that nationalism and nationalist subjectivities became increasingly ubiquitous in the modern world. As a result, nationalism in the present day does not necessarily have to be an object of study in a political science field like liberalism or fascism. Rather, Anderson argues, its ubiquity in the modern world renders it more appropriate to be placed alongside traditional anthropological concepts such as kinship and religion (Anderson

2006: 5). One distinguishing element of Anderson's thought which renders nationalism able to be studied anthropologically, is his emphasis on the fact that nations are communities of people that are imagined and created (Anderson 2006: 7). In contrast, Gellner seems to conceive of nations as fabrications which are false versions of more genuine, authentic communities (Gellner 1964: 169). When conceptualizing nations according to Anderson's terms, the debate becomes not whether nations are genuine entities or not, but how they are imagined and created by groups of people seeking to identify themselves and relate to one another. Once seen in this light, it is possible to approach this issue phenomenologically, including questions of how one imagines a nation, and how one experiences what it means to be a member of a nation. It also allows nationalism to be subjected to a sociological analysis wherein one examines which elements of the social structure imbue subjects with nationalist ideology and sentiment, as well as the divergent types of nationalist subjectivity cultivated by distinct social structures (i.e. the family, different levels of educational institutions, media, internet, bureaucratic and governmental institutions). Then, at the level of power analysis, one discovers who has a say in what constitutes what it means to be a member of a particular nationalist group, and how the identification of a person as a member or non-member of such a group can be used by dominant stakeholders in society to maintain and advance their positions of power. In sum, Anderson's conception of nations as "imagined communities" renders anthropological analysis and study of nationalism possible from a number of different angles.

Although Smith, Gellner, and Anderson render important contributions for the study of nationalism on an anthropological basis by examining its purported historical origins and putting forth ideas on what precisely constitutes a nation, nationalist sentiment and national subjectivities, the strength and scope of their ideas and arguments is greatest when confined to Western Europe

and the Americas in the eighteenth and nineteenth century. As they begin to mention other nations and national subjectivities in different eras and geographical locations, the explanatory power of their arguments declines as the amount of historical data and familiarity with the locales in question becomes increasingly sparse.

Thus, in the case of attempting to understand present-day nationalist discourse, sentiments and subject formation in Chinese students abroad, it is not enough to rely on the work of thinkers such as Smith, Gellner and Anderson. While their work may be used as a basic foundation of how nationalism can be articulated and studied anthropologically, it is imperative to also delineate the unique, contextualized historical formation of the discourse surrounding nationalism and the modern Chinese nation. In other words, how did the people living within the political boundaries of the present-day People's Republic of China become Chinese? What were their origins and how did they come to understand themselves as a distinct people? Most importantly, what does it mean to be "Chinese" today? What are the contours of this imagined community at present and how does it at once signify a continuation from and divergence with Chinese nationalisms of the past?

My goal for this paper is two-fold. Theoretically speaking, I wish to distill the insufficiency of the concept of nationalism as used in anthropological discourse in non-Western contexts using the ethnographic case study of China. In order to accomplish this, I will revisit the anthropological discourse surrounding nationalism as iterated by Smith, Gellner, and Anderson. Following this, I will discuss the historical roots of nationalism in China and explain how the unique development of nationalist identity and sentiment in China casts doubt on the universal applicability of the assertions made by these three authors. At the same time as I trace the historical development of nationalist sentiment through the present-day, I seek to understand how present-day Chinese nationalism as experienced by Chinese students abroad is at once a continuity of

Chinese nationalisms past historical eras, and a distinct manifestation of its own. Specifically, I will examine how the experiences of these students studying abroad in the United States in the present-day actually serve to engender new nationalist subjectivities. In order to do so, I bring Anderson's concept of "imagined communities" and my own ethnographic research on Chinese students abroad, to bear on articulating the boundedness of what it means to be "Chinese," the emotional contours of Chinese nationalist sentiment and the phenomenology of nationalist subjectivities in Chinese students abroad today.

### **Historical Roots of Present-Day Chinese Nationalism in Dynastic and pre-Dynastic China**

According to archaeological evidence, the earliest humans that migrated into the area of present-day China were hunters, gatherers and fishermen between 11,000 and 8,000 B.C (Chang 1963: 114). They organized themselves and lived in what Kwang-Chih Chang calls "unilinear clans," a distinctive social arrangement that continued to serve as a defining feature throughout Chinese history (Chang 1963: 116). From this core region near the Yellow River where the early clans were located (*zhongyuan*), human settlements expanded into neighboring regions from present-day Henan province to Gansu and Qinghai (Chang 2001: 41). From this initial population expansion, several groups began to coalesce and develop independently from each other. Though they descended from a common group of people, they have distinctive features in the archaeological record, suggesting that there wasn't much communication or trade between groups during the first few thousand years (*ibid*).

As populations increased over time and greater areas of arable farmland were settled, these formerly independent groups began to encounter, interact and trade with one another. Then, at approximately 2000 B.C., the first complex, urban city-states (*guo*) began to emerge and compete against one another for the limited resources in the region, resulting in intermediate periods of

warfare, hegemony and subordination of one clan or city-state to another (Eberhard 1977: 10-11). Eventually, one state succeeded in domination over the other surrounding states, culminating in China's first dynasty. The Xia dynasty would encompass present-day Shanxi, Shaanxi and Henan provinces and ruled for roughly four hundred years (Chang 2001: 42). The subsequent Shang and Zhou dynasties were the successors to the Xia and existed at times in temporal overlap with each other, but eventually each was superseded by the latter in the sequence.

Nevertheless, all three dynasties shared common attributes that are relevant for the historical formation of the Chinese national consciousness. First is ancestral worship. During these dynasties, society was organized along hierarchical lines of clan and lineage, with each clan keeping a meticulous record of its lineage and its forefathers who were worshipped as ghosts (*gui*) and deities (*shen*) (Chang 2001: 44). In each of the abovementioned dynasties, kings referred to themselves as the son of heaven (*Tianzi*), who ruled through its mandate and which was passed on to successors until the final eclipse of the dynasty. The king was also the principal shaman who reserved the sole right to proffer ritual sacrifices to the supreme deity that presided over the entire cosmos (Chang 1963: 363).

During these first three dynasties which lasted from 1750 B.C. to 771 B.C., a well-defined collective identity of the Chinese people began to manifest itself for the first time in history. Partially based on the presence of cities that arose in the plains of Henan, Qinghai and Gansu at the time, as well as the writing system developed in those cities, distinctive articles of bronze and jade produced and traded by those cities, and the architectural feats of those cities, an ethnocentric, us-them worldview began to develop (Huang 1997: 18-19). The inhabitants of those cities and the surrounding plains (*Zhongyuan*) called themselves the *Huaxia* people and positioned themselves

as heirs to a cohesive, superior, well-educated and civilized group, vis-à-vis the “four peoples of the four corners” that surrounded them and whom they considered “barbarians” (Chang 2001: 44).

By the end of the first millennium, B.C., there was a tangible and pervasive sense of collective identity among the *Huaxia* people. In addition to being the heirs to a unilinear bloodline which constructed the first major city-centers in the area, developed a codified literary system, possessed a distinctive cosmology, produced characteristic architecture and trade goods, this bloodline also birthed influential thinkers such as Lao Tzu, Zhuangzi, and Confucius who lived during this period and became synonymous with *Huaxia* and later, Han identity itself (Fairbank 1978: 46). Although the *Huaxia* people had a well-developed sense of their own identity and heritage, over the centuries, they proved willing to adopt certain elements of those cultures that they labelled as “barbarians.” Nevertheless, the characteristic above that Maria Hsia calls the “stable nucleus of the Chinese cultural hearth,” remained unchanged (Chang 2001: 45). In addition, Joseph Spencer notes that historically, any threat to this fundamental self-concept was met with a “strong reaction” (Spencer 1970: 37).

As the culture of the *Huaxia* radiated outward from the central node of the Henan plains, Maria Chang notes that, “assimilation into that culture, more than race or ethnicity became the defining criterion of Chineseness...through the process of acculturation, ethnically foreign conquest peoples could aspire to be, and many in fact became, Chinese” (2001: 45). Historically, peoples of Southern China who seemed outwardly more related to ethnic groups in southeast Asia gradually assimilated this notion of Chinese-ness, identifying themselves as sharing in the cultural and historical roots of the *Huaxia* people.

The end of the Zhou dynasty in 771 B.C. and the tumultuous warring states period (771 – 221 B.C.) brought to an end any chance of a centralized administration which spanned the entire

*Huaxia* cultural area. Following a chaotic five hundred and fifty years of incessant warfare amongst emergent city-states of the area, China's first emperor, Qin Shihuang finally succeeded in defeating the surrounding kingdoms and incorporating the *Huaxia* cultural area into the first unified political unit (Huang 1997: 32). For this reason, many historians consider the Qin dynasty to be the first instance of Chinese unification and the start of its two-thousand-year imperial history (Unger 1996: 6). Although this event may seem on the surface to be inconsequential to the development of Chinese nationalism, it is in fact a very significant point of departure because both the Qin and subsequent Han dynasties were the first examples of a Chinese empire governed by the cultural dictates of the *Huaxia* people that were institutionalized in bureaucracy, law and civil administration which was extended over a vast, multiethnic territorial expanse (Chang 2001: 46). Under the rule of these empires, Confucianism became the official state ideology, systematically inculcated into the minds of the Chinese people through a class of state officials devoted to the maintenance of governmental stability (Chang 2001: 49). During both the Qin and Han dynasties, sources of information that were deemed inimical to the narratives of the emperor and the ruling classes were routinely eliminated; scholars with dissenting opinions or who objected to state censorship were executed, private libraries were burned and unauthorized texts destroyed (Chang 2001: 47). Numerous scholars note that micromanagement by state officials during this time was extensive, stretching from the upper levels of the imperial bureaucracy to the lives of villagers residing in small towns and hamlets (Chang 1963: 10). The imperial state left no stone unturned, managing and regulating the undertakings of inhabitants all across the empire with the aim of exerting the greatest amount of possible control over the lives of its subjects.

The imperial state's aim of micromanaging the lives of ordinary citizens to the greatest extent possible was driven by economic and political factors and buttressed by the official state

ideology of Confucianism which normalized the kinds of social relations that served the interests of the state. The geography of the *Huaxia* cultural area was marked by flat plains that required extensive levels of irrigation which would divert water from the large rivers in the region and increase the quantity of arable land available for crops. In order to accomplish and maintain these large-scale irrigation projects, there was a need for a certain level of centralized political control that could effectively mobilize and supervise large numbers of workers. In parallel to this economic aim, in order to maintain its power and sway over the population, the state sought to extend the scope of its power into the daily lives of its subjects. It was not enough for the state to be content with military conquest and taxation; ruling the *Huaxia* cultural area effectively required the ability to directly coerce or persuade people to join work teams in order to maintain and increase agricultural output. This required a large-scale bureaucracy and an official ideology that would bond people to one another and allow the projection of state power into the most intimate social relations of people who lived within the empire's borders.

Confucianism was the official state ideology of the multitude of Chinese dynasties from the Han dynasty onward and was an amalgamation of works of different philosophical schools including Lao Tsu (Daoist), Mozi (Mo-ist), Mencius and Han Feizi (Legalist), as well as Confucius himself (Fairbank 1978: 69). Under this blend of political and philosophical thought, human beings were conceived as primarily social creatures that were created and sustained within intricate social networks based on certain kinds of obligations (Ebenhard 1977: 77). These social obligations were primary and overrode individual desire and self-interest. They included the relationship of parents to children, elder brothers to younger brothers, husbands to wives, friends to friends and finally the state to subjects. With the exception of friend-friend relations which was conceived on a more equal level for both parties, each of the social relationships were hierarchical in nature, with the

superior party bearing responsibility for the welfare of the inferior and the inferior bearing the responsibility of being obedient and deferent to the superior. This was dubbed “filial piety” and notably includes the relationship of the state to its subjects. The leader of the state was expected to display virtue and fairness, whereas the subjects were expected to be obedient and loyal, seeking contentment with their position in society (Huang 1996: 43).

At its core, the web of Confucian social relations was cemented by kinship and was articulated in those terms. Rather than just being confined to the nuclear family, the concept of blood and clan and the intensity of the emotional bond implicit in that was extended outward to encompass personal connections in politics and business (*guanxi*), biologically unrelated people with the same surname (*tongzong*), people of the same province (*tongxiang*), people from neighboring provinces (*da tongxiang*), people who passed the imperial exam in the same year (*tongnian*), colleagues (*tongshi*), and finally all ethnically Han Chinese people, including overseas Chinese (*tongbao*) (Chang 2001: 48). Of course, the intensity of those bonds was presumably stronger in the case of close kin and nuclear family members, but it is notable that articulating these relationships in terms of family and kinship evoked a strong sense of mutual obligation and even a sense of biological closeness amongst those involved. The connection to biology and kinship is especially salient in the final case, *tongbao*, which means “siblings from the same womb.”

The case of *tongbao* is especially important for understanding Chinese nationalism because although this term dates back thousands of years to imperial China, Chinese people today still articulate their sense of identity and bond with their fellow countrymen in this way. Although unimaginable in the West where the idea of the “motherland” is considered to be comically robotic, reminiscent of emotionless aliens returning to their “mothership” after visiting planet Earth, the

depth and intensity of emotional connection between Chinese people who articulate their affinity for each other in this way, should not be dismissed. Although when a person from mainland China sees another Chinese person, this category of *tongbao* is not always immediately salient, the key is that it can be made salient and when it is made salient, a bond of a unique level of emotional depth and intensity manifests in the mind and body of the subject. It must be said that when walking down a street in China, this concept is far from the mind of the average person who simply goes about their day and routines in a mundane fashion, minding other passerby in a way that most Westerners can readily understand. However, when a person from mainland is in a foreign country, surrounded by people that are not considered by the subject to be Chinese, seeing a *tongbao* can bring to mind a sense of warmth and connection forged by their membership in a common imagined community, articulated in the sense of blood and kinship and phenomenologically experienced as such. This sense of biological connection can also be primed by media outlets that remind the subject of his/her membership in such a community, the in-group/outgroup divisions that mark the boundaries of that community, and the threats against that community posed by Others who threaten its integrity and strength. Thus, I argue that understanding the historical and linguistic roots of the term *tongbao*, specifically its connection to filial piety, the root of this imagined community in the *Huaxia* culture, China's imperial past and Confucian ideology is a fundamental component in understanding the phenomenology of Chinese nationalism in the present day.

The preceding paragraphs have elaborated on the historical roots of Chinese identity, which was intricately connected to the political unity of the *Huaxia* peoples in the Qin and Han dynasties, combined with the collective sense of cultural identity stemming from pronounced advancements in urbanization, trade, architecture, warfare and societal complexity, alongside characteristic forms

of ancestral worship and state ritual during antecedent historical eras of the Zhou, Shang and Xia dynasties. Confucius, Mengzi, Mozi and Han Feizi are the principal philosophers who are said to have first embodied and articulated this notion of Chinese identity, which was subsequently appropriated and repackaged into a more systematic and compact Confucian ideology by state administrative officials in the Qin and Han Dynasties. These state officials then wielded this Confucian ideology as a tool to actively shape moral subjectivities of subjects within the empire's borders. Through the creation of subjects who related to one another and to the state in the form of morally imperative reciprocal and obligatory relationships articulated in terms of kinship and tied to an imagined collective past, they were able to effectively stabilize society and govern the vast swath of territories inhabited by the *Huaxia* people and beyond.

While examining the construction of in-group Chinese identity during the first three millennia of Chinese history, it is imperative to examine the construction of the out-group which membership in this imagined community was defined against. From the Qin dynasty (221-207 B.C.) to the Qing (1644-1911), the empire's borders contracted and expanded cyclically. In addition to exercising sovereignty over the *Huaxia* peoples of China proper (later called the *Han* from the Han dynasty onward), the various empires also periodically exercised sovereignty and suzerainty over peoples who inhabited the lands to China's north, west, northeast and southeast. These peoples included parts of current-day Xinjiang, Inner/Outer Mongolia, Manchuria, Tibet, North Korea and Northern Vietnam (Chang 2001: 49). In addition to these peoples who were ruled directly, the imperial state also exacted tribute from other kingdoms and empires existing on the periphery of these areas. According to the worldview of imperial officials, the *Huaxia* areas of China proper were regarded as the Middle kingdom (*zhongguo*) and were presided over by the

emperor who served as an intermediary between all of mankind and the imperceptible forces of the universe (Chang 2001: 50).

Due to the presence of the emperor and the achievements of Chinese civilization during and preceding the imperial era, the practices and values of the *Huaxia* civilization were imagined as synonymous with high culture and civilizational attainment. This stood in stark contrast with official portrayal of recalcitrant peoples on the empire's periphery who did not readily conform to *Huaxia* beliefs and cultural practices (Chang 2001: 50). In accordance with this form of hegemonic logic, it became universal diplomatic practice that peoples from other empires and places who wished to trade or have dealings with the various Chinese empires should acknowledge themselves as subordinate to the emperor and send envoys to kowtow before him, as well as coordinate their foreign policy with the empire in order to serve the goals of the emperor and thus, heaven itself (Teng and Faribank 1973: 18-19).

In addition to situating dealings with foreign rulers squarely within a worldview that held the emperor as the center of the world who presided over the pinnacle of human civilization itself, the various Chinese empires also pursued a distinct colonization strategy intended to "civilize" barbarians within the borders of the empire who remained faithful to their own cultural traditions (Szonyi 2017: 291). According to the worldview of the Chinese people at the time (henceforth referred to as Han peoples), it was possible for previous peoples labeled as "barbarians" to effectively become Chinese by relinquishing their own cultural traditions and worldview and assimilating into that of the Han. This process of "civilization" was historically not simply a passive process; it involved state-led forced relocations, as well as intermarriage of Han Chinese with members of these minority groups. Over the course of centuries, this resulted in the complete

assimilation of some of the formerly “barbarian” groups including the Manchu and the Mongolians into the culture of the Han people (Spencer 1970: 34).

Despite the pressure to assimilate exerted by imperial China on the “barbarian” peoples who occupied the borderlands of the Chinese empire, the actual degrees of assimilation varied due to a complex array of geographical, political, and cultural factors. Throughout the approximately two thousand years of Chinese imperial history spanning from the Qin to the Qing dynasties, there were more than eight distinct dynasties that assumed control of the administrative state apparatus of imperial China in different historical eras. Although the rise and fall of each of these successive dynasties occurred in a dramatic, cyclical fashion, historians have argued that over the course of these two thousand years, the actual governance system did not change significantly (Chang 2001: 51). Most of the rebellions (often peasant-based) which overturned the previous dynasty articulated their grievances against the particular ruler that happened to rule at the time; they were not rebellions against the system of governance itself. As a result, historians Liu Zhiqing and Wu Tingjia argue that there existed a deep degree of “internal consistency and logic” that held Imperial China together (*ningju li*), despite the various rulers and dynasties that presided over the governance system itself (Chang 2001: 56). This is identified as the linkages of “culture, territory, language, political institutions,” the clan/lineage system as well as the elite class of high officials which depended on Confucian thought and ideology to justify their existence (Chang 2001: 51).

Although it has been established that there was a great deal of continuity between dynasties in terms of the structure of governance, as well as in terms of their governing ideologies and cosmology, the geographical expansion and contraction of each successive dynasty resulted in a political situation whereby many of the “barbarians” living beyond the borders of the traditional Chinese heartland did not assimilate or only partially assimilated into Han cultural traditions.

These include minorities residing in what is present-day Tibet, Xinjiang province, Yunan province and Northern Vietnam (Fairbank 2017: 292-293). The other areas of present-day China which are not included among those listed above, yet which are not traditional abodes of the *Huaxia* people, had long since become Han due to being more geographically proximal to the traditional *Huaxia* heartland and thus to the center(s) of imperial power of each of the successive dynasties, resulting in the early Han-ification of those peoples during the Qin and Han dynasties (Fairbank 1978: 82). As for those minority groups in the outlying regions, at times of imperial power expansion, they temporarily came under direct rule or more frequently, suzerainty of imperial China. When domestic political travails weakened the ability of the Chinese state to project power into those regions, and the state's administrative reach contracted, these minority groups would subsequently return to self-rule or be absorbed by adjacent empires to the west and south. In addition, the geographical conditions of the Tibetan plateau and the ties of the Uighurs to the Islamic world hampered Chinese efforts to colonize and absorb the peoples in those regions (Chang 2001: 50). Consequently, Tibetans and Uighurs never became fully acculturated as Han Chinese and remained in the schematic category of a non-Han outgroup. Characterized as "barbarians" according the Han Chinese worldview, these groups occupied an inferior position on the Han civilizational hierarchy (Friend and Thayer 2018: 40). Yet, according to the same worldview, such peoples could potentially abandon their wayward and barbaric cultural traditions and ascend in the civilizational hierarchy by adopting Han cultural habits and belief patterns. Thus, the ideological rationale for Chinese imperial expansion and colonial policy became the necessity to enlighten and "civilize" these minority groups through cultural assimilation and Han-ification.

In this section, I have attempted to broadly outline and trace the historical roots of Chinese nationalism from the cradle of Chinese civilization during the Xia dynasty to the Qing dynasty on

the eve of foreign conquest. Although not articulated in strictly nationalistic terms until Sun Yat Sen's revolution of 1911, it is clear that historically, the Chinese people had a strong sense of collective identity which defined an ever-expanding in-group of "civilized" and "cultured" people against an outgroup of "barbarians" who dwelled in and beyond the borderlands. With few exceptions, the individuals that defined themselves as part of this collective, began as a small group of people residing in the city-states of China's central plain (*zhongyuan*) during the Xia dynasty and expanded to encompass almost all peoples who lived in what is now recognized as the eastern half of the People's Republic of China from the Qin dynasty onwards. This collectivity, originally called the *HuaXia* people during earlier periods, became known as the Han and now account for 92% of the total population of the People's Republic of China (Zang 2015: 1).

### **Foreign Colonialism and the Shaping of Chinese National Consciousness (1557-1911)**

In her work, *The Cultural Politics of Modern Chinese Transnationalism*, Aihwa Ong highlights one of the distinctive features of contemporary and present-day Chinese nationalist subjectivities when she remarks, "There is a historical significance to the fact that China's opening to the world was forced and its entrance into the world of nations was not on equal terms. China's encounter with global forces was disastrous for cultural self-esteem and out of this was born nationalism" (Ong 1997: 291). The "encounter with global forces" that Ong refers to is Qing China's encounter with Great Britain and later, other foreign, colonial powers during the Opium War of the 1840s and the subsequent decades of the late nineteenth century. Understanding present-day Nationalist subjectivities in China is impossible without careful consideration of this era because following this coercive encounter with Western powers, Han Chinese identity became fundamentally different than it had been before extensive contact with Western Powers took place.

Prior to the era of gunboat diplomacy and foreign imperialism in China, it has been argued by many scholars that Chinese identity and self-image had been articulated on the basis of a common historical heritage and on the practices of the shared beliefs and practices that were discussed in the previous section. In James Harrison's work, *Modern Chinese Nationalism* (1969), he argues that although political and nationalistic loyalties were indeed present during the pre-Qing era, the primary form of loyalty was to a culture rather than a nation or state. This theory, he deemed as "culturalism" and suggested that it was based on two constitutive elements. One of these elements was that China was the only true civilization, culturally superior to all others that existed in the known world. Although other civilizations and ethnic groups had attempted to conquer China through use of military force, one point of pride was that even if they were occasionally victorious, these "barbarians" could never succeed in governing China except by becoming Chinese themselves. The second element of Harrison's theory is intimately linked to the first, whereby becoming "Chinese" meant being educated and ruling according to the principles of Confucianism, whose ideological tenets were said to be universally superior in the governance of all societies (Harrison 1969: 4). As noted in the previous section, to be Chinese was not exclusive to a particular race of people. Instead, foreigners who acquiesced to and embodied Confucian principles could also rule China. As Harrison poignantly notes, "the political elite's loyalty was to principles that defined a manner of rule, not to a particular regime or nation" (Harrison 1969: 4). Thus, although there may have been temporary manifestations of a territorial consciousness and loyalty to particular dynasties or dynastic rulers, this was a secondary component to Chinese identity throughout the three millennia of Chinese imperial history. Due to these aforementioned reasons, Harrison and other scholars have characterized pre-Qing Chinese subjectivities as "culturalist," possessing a loyalty to and fixation on shared culture that fundamentally differs from

the nationalistic subjectivities that arose during the late Qing period as a byproduct of China's contact with European, American and Japanese imperialist expansion (Unger 1996: 4-5).

It is important to preface this section by noting that cultural contact between the Qing government and Western powers did not take place on an equal, fair, or balanced playing field. The first major European power that Qing China came into contact with was Great Britain, which was at the apex of its imperial power during the 1800s. Although the Qing had previously made contact with the Portuguese (to whom they ceded Macao in 1557), and the Dutch (to whom they opened the port of Guangzhou to trade in 1685), never before had they been systematically threatened and coerced to the same degree that was imposed on them by Imperial Great Britain (Spence 1990: 19-20, 154).

The primary objective that the British explorers had for embarking on journeys to China during the 1800s was to force the Qing court to open its markets to British companies (Rowe 2009: 166). During the 1800s, the nexus of Christian ideology, a racialized sense of white superiority and the economic conditions created by capitalism fueled a major expansion of European powers across the globe. Initiated primarily by traders looking to sell their wares in untapped markets worldwide, exploration of new lands was incentivized by the prospect of amassing grand fortunes for themselves, enriching the shareholders of their respective companies and filling the coffers of their respective nation-states back home. At the same time, advances in military, industrial, and transportation technology during this period allowed these European nation-states and companies to regularly access markets increasingly distant from their native shores and coerce states across the world to grant these companies special access under the threat of military intervention. Accessing the Chinese market was particularly important for the British at the time because China had a large population with a highly complex economy and could therefore, afford to purchase the

products that were manufactured in Britain and whose raw materials were supplied by its many colonies (Spence 1990).

Nevertheless, despite the rapacious desire of Imperial Britain's businessmen to access an untapped market of sizeable wealth, the leaders of the Qing imposed strict regulations on all trade with foreigners. Although Guangzhou had been made accessible to foreign trade in 1685, the British found the limitations imposed by the Qing empire to be irksome and stifling. For example, foreigners were only allowed to reside for a half-year within a restricted compound in Guangzhou. During autumn, they were required to leave and take up residence in Macau until they were allowed back the following year. In addition, foreigners were not allowed to travel within China and even when conducting business transactions, they were restricted to dealing with a group of monopolistic Chinese traders in Guangzhou called "The Thirteen Hongs" who were specifically delegated by the emperor to conduct trade affairs with foreigners (Chang 2001: 68).

The philosophy which undergirded the emperor's choice to impose restriction on dealings with foreigners was rooted in the kind of ethnocentric insularity that characterized the Chinese worldview and underpinned dynastic rule. This worldview presupposed the ineffable superiority of the Emperor who presided over a civilization with a cohesive form of collective identity based on a millennia-old vision of a cultural and historic heritage which was defined by a perception of China as the pinnacle of world civilization and culture (Fay 1975: 31-32). In a letter written in response to the British delegation tasked with persuading the Emperor Qianlong to open the interior of the empire and other coastal cities, this sense of superiority clearly manifests as Qianlong states, "My capital is the hub and center about which all quarters of the globe revolve...our celestial empire possesses all things in prolific abundance...and has no need to import the manufactures of outside barbarians" (Walker 1967: 84).

The smug air of superiority displayed by the Qing emperors and their stubborn refusal to acquiesce to the trade demands of the British Empire irked the trade delegations, the British companies and the British government itself (Spence 1990). In addition, the British had been trying for decades to reverse their trade deficit with China and the early 1800s yielded a prime opportunity in the form of exportation of opium grown in India, Britain's colony to the south. The only issue with the British selling opium in China at the time is that it was expressly prohibited by the Qing emperor and carried strict punishments for violation (Chang 2001: 69). However, due to the high profit margins of the opium trade and the willingness of certain officials within the Qing government itself to import the substance, smoke it, and become wealthy themselves by addicting their countrymen, the imperial ban was largely ineffective (Faye 1975: 46). In response to the increasing number of his Chinese subjects languishing in the throes of opium addiction, the Emperor decided to implement greater measures to stop the importation of opium by dispatching commissioner Lin Tse-Hsu in 1839 to Guangzhou and empowering him with using all means necessary to terminate the opium trade (Faye 1975: 142). To the horror of the British merchants, upon assuming power, the new commissioner promptly imposed a blockade on the foreign compound in Guangzhou and confiscated more than twenty thousand chests of opium, unceremoniously dumping it into the sea (Chang 2001: 70). The response of the British government to this pivotal event was to send in warships and following two years of pitched battles, overpowered the tiny Chinese naval fleet and the obsolete imperial army. Facing imminent defeat, the Qing emperor, Daoguang, signed a number of conciliatory treaties to mollify the British empire. The most infamous of these was the Treaty of Nanjing (1842) which ceded Hong Kong to Britain permanently, abolished the Hong system and opened Xiamen, Fuzhou, Ningbo and Shanghai to foreign trade. In addition, the Treaty of Nanjing forced the Qing government to pay

reparations to the British for the opium confiscation, resulting in a heavy debt burden for the weakened Qing government. This led the emperor to sell political positions to the highest bidder in order to increase the revenue available and led to a dramatic increase in corruption across the imperial realm (Chang 2001: 70).

In the wake of the treaty of Nanjing, other foreign governments began to follow the British Empire's lead in extorting the Qing for concessions. The most devastating of these was the Treaty of Wangxia (1844) signed between the United States and the Qing government (Rowe 2009: 172). This treaty introduced the most-favored nation clause, as well as the right of extraterritoriality, both of which had reverberating consequences which compromised the sovereignty of the Qing government (Chang 2001: 70). The former required that any benefit ceded to one country under a treaty with China, must be extended to all other interested countries. In practice, this meant that trade rights granted to Britain under the Treaty of Nanjing must also be extended to the United States and other European imperial powers. The latter secured the right of any US citizen who committed a crime in China, to be repatriated back to the United States to stand trial, instead of facing the penalties and verdicts imposed by the local Qing courts. In effect, this absolved most foreign nationals of any consequence for criminal actions in China, yet did not extend reciprocal rights for Chinese nationals who committed crimes abroad (Chang 2001: 70). Following the signing of the Treaty of Wangxia in the summer of 1844, the French availed themselves of the most-favored nation clause and finalized their own treaty with the Qing government, the Treaty of Huangpu, in the autumn of the same year. This treaty conferred the same advantages that the United States extracted from China and applied them to France. In addition, the Qing government would revoke the ban on Christian missionaries and allow them to operate within the borders of the empire (Spencer 1990: 161).

Although the unequal treaties signed between the Qing and the Western powers during the 1840s nominally allowed trade in the aforementioned port cities, in practice, the Qing government consistently failed to enforce their provisions and made it exceedingly difficult for Western traders to operate and do business within China (Hanes and Senello: 2002: 163). Since access to the comparatively wealthy and populous Chinese market was the main objective of the treaties for Western governments, especially the British, resentment stemming from unsatiated avarice slowly amassed and eventually boiled over into what was known as the Second Opium War (1857 – 1860). In this particular case, a French priest by the name of Father Chapdelaine was arrested and decapitated by the Qing government, giving the British and French forces the pretext necessary for forcing the Qing government to comply with its treaty obligations and extracting new concessions in the process (Hanes and Sanello 2002: 176). The three-year war ended in another defeat for the Qing and the consequent Treaty of Tianjin opened up more ports to foreign trade, stipulated the payment of further reparations to the British and French, allowed French missionaries to freely roam the interior of the empire, established a British embassy in Peking, ceded Kowloon to Britain, allowed foreign warships to be docked in all treaty ports and transferred administration of China's maritime customs (*haiguan*) to the European powers (Chang 2001: 72). The repercussions of this new treaty were felt strongly throughout China at the time. Cotton and opium imports soared while domestic cotton and shipbuilding industries fell into decline (Hanes and Sanello 2002: 293). At the same time, taxes were increased on an already overburdened peasant population, leading to anger and resentment directed simultaneously at the ineptitude of the Qing government and the foreign occupation forces located in the port cities. The result was the Taiping rebellion – a large-scale revolt that reverberated across the nation, sacking six hundred cities and claiming twenty million lives in the process (Michael 1990: 10). Although the Qing

government managed to cling to power after the thirteen years of civil warfare, and subsequently committed to the process of reform and modernization, the devastation to the economy, the governance structure and the morale of the empire was near-total and the lack of funds and political will hampered efforts to reform the moribund dynasty (Chang 2001: 73).

The weakness of the Qing due to a half century of increasing Western encroachment and predation, as well as its failure to reform in part due to those same factors, left China vulnerable in face of an ascending Japan. Having been exposed to the coercion and humiliation in face of Western imperialism itself, the Japanese government was overthrown by domestic forces and replaced with a new order which immediately adopted a full-scale industrial modernization program during the era known as the Meiji restoration. After hundreds of years of parochial isolation, Japan transformed its feudal system into an authoritarian, centralized state, replete with a modernized army of conscripts (Tsuzuki 2000). In parallel, on an ideological scale, it transformed feudal loyalties and subjectivities into a patriotic nationalism with the emperor as the god-like figure which represented the collective bonds of brotherhood that now intimately connected each Japanese citizen to each other and to the nation (Chang 2001: 75). One of the manifold consequences of this rapid industrialization and nationalist programme was the incentive for imperial Japan to acquire raw materials from elsewhere to feed its industrial machine as well as the ideological impulse to expand its power and prove the superiority of its nationhood vis-à-vis its neighbors (Tsuzuki 2000).

Much like how the decapitation of the French priest, Father Chapdelaine, provided the necessary pretext for Britain and France to extract further concessions from the Qing, a small-scale rebellion in Korea provided a similar pretext for Japan to do the same. Traditionally, Korea had been a state that found often itself situated under the Chinese imperial sphere of influence. As was

the case in other unequal relationships with vassal states along its border, Korea's leader traditionally aligned himself with China's foreign policy interests and bent to the will of whichever Chinese sovereign happened to be in power at the time. In return, he enjoyed military protection from foreign invasions, as well as protection from challenges to power posed by domestic adversaries (Lone 1994: 15-16). As part of Japan's power projection resulting from its rapid industrialization and subsequent imperialist ambitions, this longstanding subservient relationship of Korea as China's vassal state came to an end in 1876 when Japan and China signed a treaty acknowledging Korea's status as an independent nation controlled by neither power. However, sixteen years later, facing a small-scale rebellion by the Tonghak, a clandestine society, King Gojon requested help from China which sent six thousand troops to quell the rebellion on his behalf (Lone 1994: 25-27). Perceiving this as interference in Korea's domestic affairs and a flagrant violation of its independent status as a sovereign nation, Japan declared war on China.

The Sino-Japanese War of 1894-95 was short-lived, but its effects on the Qing empire and on the psychology of its subjects had an arguably even larger effect than the effects of Western colonization thus far. As Maria Hsia Chang puts it, "It was one thing for China to be defeated in the Opium War by the greatest power in the world (Britain). It was quite another matter for China to be overcome by its small neighbor across the sea – the same Japan that once looked to China as its mentor, whose inhabitants the Chinese had traditionally dismissed as 'dwarfs to the east'" (2001: 75). The Treaty of Shimonoseki (1895) marked the end of the war, reaffirming Korea's independence, forcibly opened four more cities to foreign trade and relinquished Taiwan, the Penghu islands, and the Liaodong Peninsula permanently to Japan, on top of burdening the Qing government with an additional two hundred million silver dollars in indemnities owed to the Japanese (Spence 1990: 223).

Although the Qing had survived with minimal actual foreign colonization until this point, the debt to Japan was too great to repay and the government was subsequently forced to borrow more money from Western countries which took advantage of the Qing's precarious position. From the years 1895 to 1899, in exchange for providing the Qing with loans to finance its indemnity repayments, France, Russia, Britain and Germany all carved out "spheres of influence" in China. France's was located in Yunan Province, Britain's in the Yangtze delta region, Russia's in Manchuria and Germany's in Shandong province. In their respective spheres, each country had exclusive economic rights, including those of trade, mining and railroad construction (Fairbank 1978: 369). Were it not for the United States and its proposal for an "open-door" policy in 1900, it is highly likely that these "spheres of influence" in China would have led to China being carved up into several full-fledged European colonies much like its counterparts in Africa and Southeast Asia. China's revolutionary leader Sun Yat-Sen referred to these spheres of influence as "hypo-colonies," whereby in all cases, the affected areas suffered from all of the negative consequences of colonialism without the respective colonial powers providing infrastructural investments and structures of governance that they did in some places that were formally colonized (Sun 1953: 10). Alongside the weak, ineffective and corrupt Qing government, the result was a systematic and debilitating exploitation of the Chinese people at all levels of society.

In order to understand the manifestations of nationalism and present-day nationalist subjectivities in China, it is imperative to understand the development and formation of Chinese nationalism as a response to incursions by Western imperial powers in the latter half of the nineteenth century. Although most Westerners at the time were understandably irked by the Qing emperor's dismissiveness and the imperious attitude he displayed towards visiting trade delegations, from the Chinese perspective, the British showed a violent disdain for Chinese

sovereignty and territorial integrity (Zang 2015: 20). Although in some cases, the treaties signed with China, aimed at levelling the diplomatic relations between China and European powers through coercing the Qing government into allowing the establishment of foreign embassies in Peking, it is clear enough that the treaties signed did not confer equal benefits to both parties and were signed under conditions of extreme power imbalance between the Qing and Western powers. The power dynamic that existed at the time, as well as real military actions and threats of force issued by the Western powers created a situation where Qing officials were all but forced to sign agreements that compromised their own sovereignty and privileged Western ideas of diplomacy over those of China at the time. If the Qing emperors were to have been allowed the full exercise of sovereign rights over the territory that they governed, there would have been no foreigners allowed within the borders of China, including diplomatic delegations. Regarding trade negotiations and cultural exchange, the emperor should have had the final say over whether trade and exchange were allowed in the first place. Under an international system in which all rights of states follow from the principle of sovereignty, imposed “equality” between states is false equality because its’ very imposition is a violation of the right of sovereignty from which all other rights are derived. Thus, under conditions of extreme power imbalance between states, imposition of a Western worldview on the conditions under which diplomacy takes place, becomes a de facto imperialistic action. From this point, all “negotiations” are not in-fact equal in nature and become inherently coercive from the point of view of the subjects of the weaker state.

### **The Incipience and Emergence of Chinese Nationalism (1911-1949)**

The confluence of heavy taxation, foreign pseudo-colonization, the loss of jobs in traditional industries due to involuntary free trade agreements, and endemic corruption within the Qing government, produced a level of suffering, humiliation and resentment that festered amongst

the Chinese people for nearly sixty years. In 1900, this resentment erupted in what became known as the Boxer Rebellion. This short-lived rebellion aimed to expel all foreigners from China and involved the incitement of violence directed at foreigners and their Chinese collaborators (O'Connor 1990). Although not nearly as bloody as the Taiping Rebellion which preceded it, the systematic attacks upon foreigners prompted the Great Powers to send in troops to quell the rebellion and ensure the Qing government's commitment to the safety and protection of foreigners and foreign missionaries in China. In 1901, the rebellion was finally suppressed by an allied coalition and additional levies were imposed on the Qing government to compensate for lives lost, property damage to foreign establishments, and the cost of war. In response to this, the Qing government once again increased taxes drastically. In order to enrich themselves, local officials also imposed their own levies onto the already enormously high rates of taxes ordered by the central government (Lu and Wang 1991: 84-85). Ultimately, the burden on the lives of an impoverished, jobless, and humiliated peasantry was too much to bear.

In 1911-1912, there were a series of uprisings which overthrew the weakened Qing government, thus terminating the cycle of dynastic rule in China, and establishing a fledgling republic. At the head of this new Republic of China (1912) was Sun Yat Sen (1866-1925), who was the chief progenitor of the Three Principles (*san min zhuyi*), or modern China's first ideology of developmental nationalism (Wells 2001: 35). Having borne witness to China's devastation at the hands of foreign imperialist forces during the latter half of the nineteenth century, one of the main underpinnings of Sun Yat-Sen's worldview was that the community of nation-states was a Darwinian arena whereby strong nations would vanquish and dominate the weak, with the consequent reproduction and success of the cultures and individuals which comprised the victorious nations (Sun 1953: 10). In this world, therefore, Sun maintained that all communities of

people who aimed to be self-sustaining needed to undertake a commitment to collective defense and economic development. Much like the Japanese concluded during the Meiji Restoration, he emphasized that industrialization was a priority because it generated the material and economic conditions necessary for self-defense. According to Sun's revolutionary philosophy, industrialization depended first and foremost on the maintenance of group cohesion, unity and commitment, which could only be constructed and disseminated through structures and administrative apparatuses of the nation-state (Chang 2001: 109).

It is necessary to revisit Sun Yat-Sen's philosophy of governance because he is considered by both the Kuomintang and the Communist Party to be the father of the modern Chinese nation. Following his brief stint as the President of the fledgling Republic of China following the WuChang uprising, Sun Yat-Sen was deposed by the dictator-general, Yuan Shi-Kai who ruled China from 1912-1916. Upon Yuan Shi-Kai's untimely death in 1916, China descended into a state of fragmented chaos, with various warlords controlling different areas of what is now today Eastern China (Spence 1990: 289). In the South of China, the nationalist party (Kuomintang) government which was then based in Guangzhou was the original heir to Sun Yat-Sen's governance philosophy (Sun Yat-Sen was based in Guangzhou until his death in 1925) and his determination to unify and modernize China. During the early 1920s, the Communist Party was founded and collaborated with the Kuomintang in its project of national unification, but after Sun's death, General Chiang Kai-Shek assumed control of the Kuomintang in southern China and began an aggressive campaign to unite the nation by defeating and subsuming warlords in the surrounding regions (Taylor 2009: 58). After assuming power, Chiang not only purged and defeated local warlords, but also members of the Chinese Communist Party who disagreed with Chiang's monopolization of power and portrayed themselves as the true representatives of Sun

Yat-Sen's governing philosophy. Although Chiang nearly vanquished the Communist Party (Henceforth referred to as the CCP) by the mid-1930s, the weakened CCP with Mao Tse-Tung as its leader, managed to escape Chiang's forces in an infamous series of long marches from Jiangxi to their new rural base in Shaanxi Province (Taylor 2009: 111). After the ensuing Japanese imperialist takeover of large swaths of eastern China beginning in 1931, the two parties tepidly cooperated in order to combat the ever-more aggressive Japanese incursions. Nevertheless, the cooperation did not last long and following Japan's defeat and withdrawal from China in 1945, the two parties engaged in a four-year civil war in order to unite the country under their respective leadership – each claiming to be the party that truly represented the spirit of Sun Yat-Sen's governance philosophy.

Though the Kuomintang was defeated and forced to retreat to Taiwan in 1949 and the CCP assumed the mantle of power in mainland China, both parties considered Sun to be the father of the Chinese nation and used Sun's ideas as the basis of their legitimacy and philosophy of governance (Spence 1990: 489). Mao himself incorporated large parts of Sun's ideas in his corpus of works and ever since, they have been systematically transmitted through mainland China's education system, state media outlets, and propaganda networks, ultimately coalescing into inalienable components of the identity and national consciousness of citizens in the People's Republic of China (Wei et al. 1994: 23). Although nationalist subjectivities have certainly morphed and evolved under the direction of the various leaders since Mao, there is very little deviation from these foundational principles of what it means to be a member of the Chinese nation. What tends to vary more between administrations is the emphasis placed on particular elements of these foundational principles, the current events these foundational principles are connected to, and the extent to which one's status and identity as a citizen-subject of the People's Republic of China is

made salient in the minds of everyday people. For example, certain eras evoke greater magnitudes of nationalistic sentiment in the minds of subjects through exposing them to increasing frequencies of nationalistic television shows, greater emphasis on ideological education and greater numbers of nationalistic stories and articles manufactured and disseminated by party organs in traditional and online media. During a given period of time, nationalistic sentiment can thus become more or less salient and thereby occupies a greater or lesser part of everyday consciousness in the lives of the people. However, I argue that the qualities of what constitutes Chinese nationalist subjectivity has changed little since 1949. Therefore, when examining and attempting to understand manifestations of Chinese nationalism today, it is essential to revisit the key components of Sun Yat-Sen's philosophies, as they continue to underpin the logics and discourses shaping and constituting nationalist subjectivities of those raised in mainland China.

Sun Yat-Sen articulated his conception of group identity and unity necessary to overthrow China's feudal system and to resist foreign encroachment as *minzu zhuyi*, a term most accurately translated into English as "nationalism." In his work, "Principle of Nationalism" (1924), he quotes, "the pen is the tool of livelihood for a scholar, (just as) nationalism is the tool for survival of a race" (2001: 134). Such nationalism, according to Sun, must be typified by a vivacious collective energy (*jingshen*) which causes individuals to identify with each other, and sacrifice individual interests for the good of the collective (Wells 2001: 66-67). Once this collective spirit, coupled with the benefits of industrialization, materialized itself in the body of a strong and robust nation, that nation would no longer serve as the metaphorical punching bag for those great powers who had wreaked such misery and devastation on the race of people (*zhongzu*) which constituted it (Sun 1953). In such a Darwinian geopolitical environment, Sun contended that so-called "universalist" laws (*rendao*) and "humane principles" (*gongli*) espoused by the imperialist European nations

were simply pretexts to increase their own power and which justified them pursuing their own national interests (Chang 2001: 110). Only by achieving equality in power with Western countries, could there be true peace between nations. Until that day, Sun claimed, ideas of cosmopolitanism only served to maintain imperialist nations' superior status and ability to exploit those nations less powerful than they (Sun 1953: 16, 24).

Although Sun Yat-Sen's thought featured three key principles (nationalism, people's livelihood and democracy), only the first two survived the tumultuous period following Sun's fall from power during Yuan Shi Kai's dictatorial reign (1912-1916) and the subsequent warlord period that engulfed China after his death. While "people's livelihood" (*minsheng*) would provide the framework for the industrial modernization program initiated and implemented by Mao Zedong, the element of Sun's philosophy most pertinent to the development of nationalist subjectivities in the People's Republic of China was his concept of *minzu*, or the principle of nationalism.

In order to explore what *minzu* refers to, it is worth parsing out the etymology of the word itself and how Sun Yat-Sen himself understood and deployed it. The Chinese word *zu* roughly translates to "group" in English, but in fact refers to what scholars refer to as an "organic" collectivity (Chang 2001: 110). Organic collectivities can be juxtaposed against intentionally manufactured collectivities such as states and administrative bodies. Sun believed that these organic collectivities were a natural result of the human instinct to associate with one another and their constituent members were linked together by a complex array of commonalities, including blood, language, modes of production, religion, tradition, custom, and habits (Chang 2001: 110). According to his worldview, the most sizeable of these "organic" groups were five distinct races (*renzhong*), which were conceptualized in terms of red, brown, yellow, white and black skin color.

In East Asia, the “yellow” race could be further sorted into sub-races, including the Han, Manchu, Mongolian, Malay and Japanese (Sun 1953: 3).

The word *min* in the term *minzu* can be translated as “people,” thus leading to a direct translation of the whole term as the “people’s organic group.” In Sun Yat-Sen’s case, the particular *min* that he was referring to in the case of China was the Han. Much like the other races and sub-races that populated Sun’s worldview, the Han were most strongly connected by “common blood,” which was said to be passed down in a Darwinian fashion through heredity (Sun 1953: 3). In addition to belonging to this common “blood line” (*xuetong*), they were also connected through a common language, engaging in similar modes of production, worshipping the same deities, and practicing similar customs and habits (Sun 1953: 4). Thus, if one were to delineate Sun’s idea of the Han racial sub-group, it would be a partially malleable collectivity characterized by a combination of racialist and culturalist features.

When attempting to understand what emotions Sun’s idea of “belonging” to this racialized group evokes, it is important to keep in mind the Darwinian language that his descriptions of racial groups and sub-groups is couched in, as well as the survival-of-the-fittest mentality that governs the workings of the wider geopolitical context in which these races and sub-races exist. By analyzing these aspects, it is possible to discern the emotions evoked in subjects that fully internalize his idea of what constitutes “belonging” to the Han race. By invoking Darwinian terms and emphasizing the genetic propinquity of members of the Han racial sub-group, Sun Yat-Sen implies a deep obligation to the survival of other members of this racialized in-group. Thus, the emotional bond that should exist between two members of the Han group, according to the premises of Sun’s philosophy and worldview is a brotherly one marked by a deep and sincere willingness to sacrifice oneself and one’s personal interests for the good of one’s “brothers” who

comprise the Han race. In evolutionary theory, the fact that one shares one half of one's genetics with a brother or sister explains one's willingness to sacrifice for them because half of one's genes live on through them. The emotional bond one experiences towards one's brother or sister and the subsequent willingness to contribute to their chances of survival even when this contribution is costly to oneself, evolved precisely because it allowed maximal chance of survival and transmission of one's genes to the next generation. Thus, bonds and obligations between siblings and family members are more profound and emotionally laden than the bonds between an individual and a random stranger. As a result, when something threatens the survival of a sibling, this threat is experienced as an attack on oneself because of half of one's own genes reside in the body of that sibling. The magnitude of emotions such as anguish, anger and determination to protect that sibling arise are attributed to that ineffable genetic bond.

Following from this logic, an attack on one member of the Han race by outsiders is an attack against the family. It is experienced in precisely this way because of Sun's worldview which features various races and sub-races inhabiting nation-states that aim to increase the reproductive fitness of their genetic stock by exploiting and dominating other races. According to the basic assumptions implied in this worldview, power is the sole force that motivates nations and the races that constitute them. If power is the sole motivating force of nations and races in their interactions with others, then racial unity is the principal virtue of a nationalist subject. A strong and united race under the sovereign apparatus of a nation-state is a prerequisite for programs of modernization and this results in reproductive fitness benefits distributed across all members of that particular racial group. In order to achieve this unity, there must be an irrevocable sense of emotional loyalty to members of this in-group, especially when facing outsiders. If one does not act or feel in this way, one is actively compromising racial unity and abetting foreigners and members of other races

to exploit the division and threaten the survival of the entire Han race; after all, members of more powerful non-Han groups are expected to capitalize on all opportunities to divide and exploit. In a world where power and domination are the sole motivating forces, how could it be any other way?

Thus, what a moral, nationalist subject in Sun's eyes, possesses first and foremost, is an unwavering, irrevocable sense of loyalty to members of his/her racial in-group. This is the principal virtue from which all other virtues derive. To deviate from this is to commit a grievous sin of betrayal that threatens not only one's individual survival, but more importantly, the survival of one's family. Members of this in-group are expected to share deeper bonds with others within the in-group that are primary and override all secondary bonds formed with members of out-groups, especially in situations where one is forced to choose.

Although Sun Yat-Sen's philosophy is articulated largely in ethno-racial terms, it is important to note that it does potentially allow for the gradual assimilation of former outsiders into this racialized in-group. However, it is clear that in order to become members, outsiders must demonstrate conformity to the Han's language, ways of worship, and customs. As he puts it, "If foreign races learn our language, they are more easily assimilated by us and in time, become absorbed into our race" (Chang 2001: 111). Echoing this sentiment, he also asserts, "People who worship the same Gods or the same ancestors tend to form one race...(and)...people with markedly similar customs and habits...in time, cohere to form one race" (Chang 2001: 111).

Although Sun Yat-Sen wrote and spoke extensively about the concept of the race-based nation and nationalism (*minzu* and *minzu zhuyi* respectively), he also devoted considerable time in his works to explicating the difference between these organic racial groups (nation) and the (state). In Sun's philosophy, the nation and the state were not equivalent terms; the nation was organic,

whereas the state was an intentionally created structure which monopolized the use of force within a given area. In his work entitled, “The Issue of China’s Survival,” (1917) he explains that states formed in order to unite peoples to resist foreign invasion, or to invade and occupy other areas and to deliver benefits to the invaders (Chang 2001: 134). This is due to the fact that war cannot be conducted effectively by a single individual; efficient and effective war requires groups, and groups require coordination, management, and leadership. Through this process in history, Sun argues, groups gradually coalesce into states.

Similar to Max Weber’s categories of *Gemeinschaft* and *Gesellschaft*, Sun Yat-Sen recognized that there were in fact several nations that transcended the boundaries of singular states and that there were states which contained multiple nations within their borders (Chang 2001: 112). However, he maintained that under ideal conditions, each nation would have its own state that exercised sovereignty over it. Despite his acknowledgment of the separateness of nation and state at various points in history and even within the past history of the various Chinese empires, Sun insisted that the Han comprised the vast majority of Chinese people and the ethnic minorities were inextricably connected to each other and to the Han by blood (Sun 1953: 5). Using a Confucian framework, he insisted that under these circumstances, big ethnic groups like the Han should love and have a duty to smaller ones as elder brothers do to younger brothers (Zang 2015: 18). In return, these smaller ethnic groups were to dispose of their “uncivilized” behavior and thoughts and become Han by learning and adopting Han ways, eventually merging into the Han community (Zang 2015: 19). According this logic, Sun Yat-Sen thus envisioned the new Republic of China as a type of nation-state where all who were born within its borders would eventually become Han subjects, the in-group of the Chinese nation (Sun 1953: 5).

Having examined the worldview that underpins Sun Yat-Sen's works as well as his explicit philosophy regarding nationalism, it is apparent that he was responding to the imperialist predations of foreign powers that were carving up and exploiting China in the late 1800s in conjunction with what he perceived as the weakness and ineptitude of the ethnically Manchu Qing government in fomenting sufficient feelings of nationalism necessary to unite and mobilize China in resistance to that dominance and exploitation. Rather than premising the development of economic and national prosperity on the sacred dignity and independence of the individual as those from Western European origins are apt to do, Sun identifies stable governance and unified nationalistic sentiments as the prerequisites of economic and cultural development (Sun 1953: 27). Therefore, rather than individual agency and the ineffable holiness of the individual underpinning morality in the Chinese context, membership and loyalty to the collective nation-state is the Chinese equivalent, emotionally and morally speaking, of the primary sacredness of the individual in Western contexts.

### **From Culturalism to Nationalism**

Scholars argue that the 1911 Revolution and the wide-scale adoption of Sun Yat-Sen's philosophy by both the nationalist and communist parties, was the turning point from Chinese identity being articulated primarily as a "culturalist" notion to one defined by the nation (Fitzgerald 1996: 69). Prior to Sun Yat Sen, who was the chief architect of Chinese nationalist philosophy, and the nationalist and communist parties who disseminated this philosophy widely amongst Chinese people, to be Chinese was primarily defined along cultural lines and was not a notion that was internalized by most ordinary peasants who comprised the majority of the Chinese population (Townsend 1996: 15). James Townsend sums up the former "culturalist" notion by saying that it constituted "a belief that China was a cultural community whose boundaries were determined by

the knowledge and practice of principles expressed through China's elite cultural tradition; that this community was unique and unrivalled because it was the world's only true civilization...that the political authority of the emperor and his officials rested in principle on superior cultural attainments, especially learning and a capacity to govern by historical example" (Townsend 1996: 12). This particular way of articulating Chinese-ness was unique in the sense that it borders on the meritocratic; an outsider could potentially govern and rule China so long as they demonstrated sufficient proficiency with Confucian classics and philosophy. Members of other ethnic groups could also become Chinese if they simply accepted this cosmology and acquiesced to the rule of an authority figure who embodied his proper role in that cosmology. This culturalist articulation of Chinese identity proved to be robust, spanning the reign of various dynasties precisely because it was so flexible; it both justified imperialist rule and subjugation of non-Chinese subjects and provided them with a proverbial path-towards-citizenship and membership in the Chinese in-group. Since it was so flexible, it followed that the borders of China as a state were relatively fluid both within and between dynasties. Nevertheless, Townsend points out that due to the fact that this culturalist notion of Chinese identity was passed on through scholarly study and official practice; it was not widely disseminated amongst the non-scholarly classes which comprised the vast majority of the Chinese population. Rather, he asserts that although this identity was primary among those elite classes, ordinary people would feel that it was less salient and therefore secondary to their identification with their particular ethnic group or local associations (Townsend 1996: 13).

Articulation of Chinese identity during the imperial era was primarily culturalist in nature and constituted the greater part of official discourse, yet this did not preclude an ethno-racial component among the Han, whose ethnic consciousness, as mentioned earlier, coalesced sometime

between the Qin and Han dynasties. James Townsend points out that the culturalist notion tended to form the logic of empire and was a constant presence throughout China's history, but there was a clear ethnic component based on ethnic identity that occasionally manifested itself in official discourse. He proffers the example of the Qing dynasty scholar Wang Fu Zhi and his advocacy of Han chauvinism, as well the legal differences between Han and Non-Han ethnicities codified in law during the Mongol and Manchu rule (Townsend 1996: 14). In addition, in both the Yuan and Qing dynasties, there were sizable resistance movements which proliferated and articulated their grievances in ethnic terms, espousing anti-foreign sentiment. The salience of this ethnic component waxed and waned over the dynasties, but was said to be lower in salience due to the flexible notion of Chinese identity among the political elites, regional differentiation and attachment to local clans and organizations (Chang 2001: 25). The focus on local affairs and the emphasis on culturalism suppressed the elevation of the ethnic component as the chief determinant of Chinese identity, but it did not destroy or hamper its development and formation.

It is interesting to note that the presence of muted, but consistent sentiments of Han ethnic identity during the millennia of imperial China's history casts severe doubt upon both Gellner and Anderson's modernist theories of nationalism. If it were truly the printing press and the cheap availability of books and newspapers which allowed in-groups to form a collective sense of identity against outsiders, then what could explain the presence of a continuous identity among the Han prior to the arrival of print capitalism? If the development of the consciousness of one's ethnic identity tied to a political boundary were predicated on industrialization, how could this have existed amongst the Han intermittently, as Townsend points out, throughout the millennia of Chinese imperial history?

Therefore, Smith, Gellner and Anderson are fundamentally incorrect when it comes to their conception of nationalism as a revolutionary state of consciousness made possible only with modern technologies and/or capitalist modes of production. Perhaps they are correct when they ascribe this explanation to the origins of national consciousness in Europe, but China's history, as I have shown in this paper, proves their theory incorrect when applied more broadly. In fact, I believe that the only universally valid contributions made by these thinkers to the anthropological study of nationalist subjectivities would be Anderson's assertion that nations constitute "imagined political communities" (Anderson 2006: 6). As social creatures, human beings possess the universal capacity to form, claim membership in, and emotionally identify with in-groups. In-groups are partly formed by bonds with people with whom one has associated with in real time, as well as imagined membership in a larger collective. This process is often aided and abetted by encounters with people who associate with different individuals and who claim membership in a group unrelated to one's own in-group. However, it need be emphasized that this act of imagining oneself as part of a larger collective does not require print media or industrialization and state-directed education and literacy. Encounters with out-groups through trade, military ventures and travel have been integral elements of human history long pre-dating the industrial era. The stories which could potentially result from these encounters with outsiders who speak different languages, inhabit different terrains and abide by different customs aid in the natural process of in-group/out-group construction and imagination, even if one did not personally encounter any member of the outgroup. In addition to trade, military ventures, and travel facilitating in-group/out-group encounters, these same processes also facilitate transmission of stories of these encounters to members of a particular group who remain tethered to a particular locale.

Since the capacity to form and imagine in-groups and out-groups is innate and universal, it would follow that ethnic, cultural, or national identities simply constitute different forms of those in-groups and out-groups. It should also be noted that people have the capacity to construct multiple out-groups and identify with multiple in-groups themselves. From there, what constitutes the boundaries of a particular in-group is a dynamic, historical and discursive process based on a particular social, economic, political and cultural milieu within a given historical moment. In other words, the boundaries demarcating a particular in-group, as well as the concomitant moral obligations implicated in its membership evolve over the course of historical time. Concurrently, the magnitude of emotional identification of an individual subject with a particular construction of an in-group also evolves, as does the subjective, phenomenological experience of belonging to it. In the case of imperial China, it has been demonstrated that there were three broad categories of competing identities beyond the family: the politically culturalist Chinese identity, the ethnic (Han) identity, and the localized identity. Although the racialized Han identity was one mode of identity discourse, it was rarely the most salient due to the power of the culturalist Chinese identity among the elite classes and the primary identification with local associations and networks amongst ordinary people.

After the overthrow of the last emperor and Sun Yat-Sen's brief tenure in power as the president of the People's Republic of China, Sun's developmental principles of nationalism were adopted by both the Kuomintang and the Communist Party largely in response to both his status as the Republic's first president and the resonance of that philosophy in face of Chinese people's encounter with foreign predation and exploitation. Under these conditions and due to the particularities of Sun's idiosyncratic thought, the discourse regarding Chinese identity became nationalistic in nature and combined elements of both the racialized Han identity, as well as the

older cultural notions which predated it and had superseded it in terms of salience throughout most of China's imperial history.

Before advancing to the rise of Mao and his influence on the formation of Chinese nationalist subjectivities, it is worth elaborating briefly on the importance of the explicit inclusion of racialized forms of discourse in China's new national identity and how it altered the landscape of what constituted Chinese in-group membership. Under the culturalist order, to be considered Chinese was primarily defined by one's participation in Confucian orthodoxy and deferral to particular forms of Chinese ethical and cultural practices connected to one's location within the political boundaries of an imperial sovereign state (Duara 1996: 34). On one hand, this could be considered an earlier form of nationalist discourse, justifying the propagation of hegemonic, Han-centric Imperial discourses and their imposition on members of non-Han with different languages, religions and cultural practices. However, it should also be noted that provided the ideological justification for the rule of non-Han over the administrative apparatus of dynastic China, as well as allowing considerable space for wide regional differentiation and local autonomy. However, after the Kuomintang and CCP's adoption of Sun Yat-Sen's idiosyncratic fusion of culturalism and ethnocentrism into their respective national-building politics and discourses, the default, normative subject of the emergent Chinese nation became ethnically Han (Sun 1953: 5). Some historians have interpreted this shift as being primarily due to the fact that most non-Han peripheral areas had their own *de facto* independent status at the time (despite assertions otherwise by the Qing) and were effectively excluded from participation for Sun's nation-building project (1996: 36).

This critical shift from a more flexible (yet still admittedly Han-Centric) notion of Chinese identity to a more rigid conflation of Chinese national identity with the Han Chinese race was

subtle in nature but had enormous repercussions that remain salient in the present-day manifestations of Chinese nationalism both domestically and amongst Chinese university students abroad. Sun Yat-Sen's philosophy was predicated on the need for national unity in order to create the conditions necessary for economic prosperity and military strength. However, this impetus towards national unity was articulated primarily in racial terms due to the pseudo-colonization and exploitation by Western powers and the ineffective rule of the ethnically Manchu Qing dynasty. It is important to note that this idea was not born with Sun Yat-Sen; he appropriated it from the intellectuals in the late Qing dynasty who constructed and articulated a new form of Han ethnic identity as common descendants of the Yellow Emperor who was said to be the biological, cultural and political founder of the Han race (Friend and Thayer 2018: 28, 36). In this discourse, the Han constitute the core and heart of the Chinese nation and this racial identity was wielded effectively to mobilize the Han majority against the ethnically Manchu Qing government whose legitimacy was ideologically supported by the older culturalist narrative of Chinese identity and political legitimacy. Sun also rationalized the equation of Chinese nationalism with the Han race because the Han were the majority. As he states in the *San Min Zu* (1927), "The Chinese race totals four hundred million people...these alien races (Tibetan, Manchu, Uighur) do not number altogether more than ten million, so that, for the most part, the Chinese people are of the Han or Chinese race with common blood, common language, common religion and common customs – a single, pure race" (Sun 1953: 4-5). While the older culturalist narrative was to remain intact under Sun's thought and subsequent articulations of Chinese nationalism, culturalism was subsumed under the racialized idea that the Han were the true heirs to this culture, and thus the rightful sovereigns of the Chinese nation.

Although this Han-centric articulation of Chinese nationalism was not the only mode of nationalist discourse available during early 20<sup>th</sup> century China, there is a scholarly consensus that it was in fact, the most pervasive and dominant (Friend and Thayer 2018: 34). Alternative forms of nationalist discourse that circulated at the time consisted of a multiethnic “state nationalism” which conceived of China as an empire with a wide variety of nationalities, all of which could conceivably exercise sovereign power if they respected Confucian norms and traditions when doing so (Friend and Thayer 2018: 35). However, after the Qing’s overthrow and the dawning of the Republic of China and later, the People’s Republic of China, Han-centrism far outweighed multiethnic state nationalism in the degree of influence over nationalist discourse and formation of nationalist subjectivities within mainland China.

### **National Unification and Mao Era Nationalist Subjectivities (1949-1978)**

During the second world war and the four-year civil war that followed, the Communist Party of China with Mao as its leader, continued to assert its legitimacy based on the dictates of Sun Yat Sen’s three principles of nationalism, people’s livelihood and democracy (Wei et al. 1994: 23). Using these principles in combination with a fiercely anti-imperialist, anti-Japanese sentiment, Mao succeeded in mobilizing large numbers of peasants and workers to resist the Japanese invaders. At the end of the war, several of his speeches referenced Sun Yat-Sen by name and credited him with the policies undertaken by the Communist Party during this period (Chang 2001: 142). Even during the interwar years, Mao continued to frame the struggle in the terms employed by Sun, emphasizing the need for a politically unified China capable of fending off the encroachment of foreign imperialists, a strongly developed economic base and the military and industrial capacity necessary to assert its sovereignty in geopolitical terms (Chang 2001: 142).

From the Communist takeover in the fall of 1950 to the early 1960s, Mao and the CCP continued Sun's advocacy and implementation of the *ronghe* policy that all nationalities constituted the Chinese nation (Zang 2015: 22). According to this worldview, the Han Chinese had coalesced into a nationality during the Qin and Han empires, whereas minority nationalities remained at "feudal" stages of national development and were considered "weak...and small nationalities" (*ruoxiao minzu*) as well as "backwards nationalities" (*luohou minzu*) (Zang 2015: 22). However, due to the importance that he placed on Marxist and Leninist ideologies, Chinese nationalism following Mao's consolidation of absolute power once again underwent a major change of form. According to Mao's worldview, imperialism was China's chief enemy and all Chinese subjects, including ethnic minorities were required to unite equally in shirking the residue of foreign oppression and humiliation (Friend and Thayer 2018: 38). However, anti-imperialism wasn't the only ideology Mao espoused, advocated and implemented. What differentiated his rule from the Kuomintang's was his fusion of anti-imperialism with Leninist, Stalinist and Marxist forms of thought which called for a socialist revolution that purified society from defiling "feudalist" and "capitalist" elements that pervaded both Han and non-Han groups alike (Pye 1996: 104). In the process, Mao would not only decrease the salience of the racialized model of Chinese nationhood, but also some components of the older culturalist model as well.

Mao identified China's vulnerability to foreign exploitation as not only being due to the actions of the capitalist, imperialist nations themselves, but also the fundamental incompatibility of Chinese Confucian values with a modern, strong and revitalized Chinese nation. Instead, Mao viewed these vestiges of Chinese imperialist thought and culture as incompatible with the new China whose fundamental developmental telos was to realize prosperity and equality for all citizens under the guidance of Maoist interpretations of Marxist and Leninist ideology (Pye 1996:

104-105). Under this doctrinal interpretation, forms of traditional culture which were once considered the essence of Chinese identity became defined as “feudal legacies” and associated with a type of mode of production and ideology that exploited the proletariat within China and set the stage for its initial vulnerability to foreign exploitation in the first place (Pye 1996: 104). In the place of Chinese national identity being principally defined by racial lineage and the practice of past historical traditions, Mao defined the nation by class, pitting the urban proletariat and the peasantry against the former landlords and capitalist class (Fitzgerald 1996: 83). While minority nationalities were ostensibly included in this vision of the Chinese nation as represented by the masses of rural peasantry and the urban proletariat, this “inclusion” was based on the members of these minority nationalities’ willingness to relinquish previous forms of “feudal” cultural practices, recognize the superiority of socialism and to accept the leadership of the Han in developing proper class consciousness (Friend and Thayer 2018: 40). Since at the time, most of the minority nationalities operated within their own political domains and did not readily identify with the Chinese state nor with Maoist ideas of socialist revolution and class consciousness, such ideas were imposed on them violently. In 1949 and 1950, the Chinese army took control over Tibet and Xinjiang and began to foist Maoist re-education programs on the minorities in those provinces in the name of “liberation.” However, in this case, “liberation” entailed the forced imposition of Maoist class consciousness as the primary form of nationalist subjectivity on the local population. Those who did not comply were persecuted, arrested and killed for “actively preventing socialist development in China” and “supporting the bourgeoisie in its exclusive domination of the state” (Friend and Thayer 2018: 40). Thus, in a way reminiscent of the imperial Chinese era, minorities could be considered to be “Chinese,” so long as they accepted the ideology and practices of the Communist elites who controlled the political and administrative apparatus of the state.

Another development in the construction of nationalist subjectivities during the Mao era was the brute force used in order to inculcate this form of nationalist class consciousness and create the conditions for Maoist class-based revolution. As mentioned prior, during the dynasties of imperial China, the form of culturalist Confucian ideology and practice that dominated nationalist subjectivities was largely confined to the political elite; commoners were generally left to their own affairs and formed identities primarily based on forms of local, regional or ethnic identification (Fairbank 1978: 61). However, Mao's contribution to the formation of nationalist subjectivities was to forcibly eliminate all other forms of identification except for with one's revolutionary class through relentless top-down imposition. Although he rhetorically called for minorities to join with the Han equally in the fight against imperialism and feudalism, in practice, this meant eliminating their rights to self-determination and following Mao and the Han people's "sound leadership" in the revolutionary struggle (because the Han were the first to adopt this mode of revolutionary class consciousness) (Friend and Thayer 2018: 40). Of course, this follows the same imperialistic and hegemonic logic as the Confucian culturalists of imperial China and Sun Yat-Sen's *ronghe* policy of minorities' adoption of Han culture as prerequisites of their membership in the Chinese nation, but what was distinct about Mao was his sheer determination to use the power of the state to impose this form of subjectivity on all peoples residing within China's political borders (Zang 2015: 21). People of all ethnic groups who did not readily accept this form of Maoist revolutionary class consciousness or who were labeled as "counter-revolutionaries" for their class status prior to the Communist takeover were sent to "labor reform" camps, tortured and abused by Red Guard factions or "sent down" to the countryside. It is estimated that between twenty and forty million people died between 1951 and 1961 from the Great Leap Forward and Mao's land-reform policies, while between one and three million people

perished during the ideological war waged by Mao and his Red Guards during the Cultural revolution from 1966 to 1976 (Chang 2001: 149). In addition, approximately twenty million people labeled as “counterrevolutionaries” lost their lives in prisons and camps, while between ten and twenty percent of Tibet’s population was slaughtered by the People’s Liberation Army in the 1959 uprising (Chang 2001: 149).

Following the course of Mao’s totalitarian rule, nationalism and the experience of nationalist subjectivities in China experienced a profound shift. After the nearly thirty-year process of systematic attacks on Chinese cultural heritage and identity, the forcible assimilation of Han and ethnic minorities under Mao’s ideas of a new nationalist subjectivity based on what Lucian Pye describes as a “rigid orthodoxy of Marxism-Leninism-Mao Zedong Thought”, the core of Chinese nationalist subjectivity had shifted from an explicit fusion of racial and culturalist elements to a hollow “core” of partisan political slogans (Pye 1996: 105).

### **Nationalist Subjectivities during the Reform Era (1978 – 1989)**

While nationalistic subjectivities during the Mao era were primarily class-oriented and had eschewed a sense of in-group belonging based on a common Confucian and Han cultural heritage, the reform era re-established Confucian culture and values as well as Han ethnic identity as the basis for nationalist identification and belonging.

Upon assuming control of the Chinese Communist Party in 1978, Deng Xiaoping (1978-1992) implemented a series of reforms called the “four modernizations” in agriculture, economy, science and defense which reversed many longstanding Maoist policies, ended the centralized state-planned economy and opened the market to foreign capital and investment. First, agriculture became decollectivized and farmers began to grow their own crops for themselves and not for the

benefit of the state-run collectives. Second, China began to open itself up diplomatically, normalizing relations with the United States and other non-Soviet bloc nations and sought out opportunities for cooperation and exchange, sending large delegations to learn from the more modern and scientific aspects of their economic, technological, and governance systems. Thirdly, Deng focused on the creation of SEZs or Special Economic Zones to attract foreign investment and technology in order to modernize China's economy (Crane 1996: 149). He also presided over the state's retreat from economic planning, letting private and collective enterprises operate without the interference of the Chinese state. Local and regional governments were allowed greater autonomy in decision-making and a wider array of thought and discourse was permitted, so long as it did not criticize socialism or CCP legitimacy (Chang 2001: 175). Students were allowed to study abroad and many took advantage of the opportunity to do so.

Deng's modernization feat was a slow process, but it gained momentum throughout the 1980s as pieces of the old bureaucratic system were dismantled one by one or rendered obsolete. In the two decades spanning 1976 to 1996, China's per-capita GNP ballooned over twenty times from \$139 to \$2,935 (Chang 2001: 176). Farmers' incomes increased by nearly the same amount and foreign trade tripled between 1978 and 1986. Reductions in infant mortality, greater life expectancy, and better quality of life for hundreds of millions of Chinese citizens soon followed suit. In economic terms, Deng's fourteen-year reign was a rousing success.

The consequences of the eleven-year period from 1978 to 1989 in terms of the development of nationalism and nationalist subjectivities in China was complex. After Mao's death in 1976 and during the first decade of economic reform, China faced what many scholars call three "crises of belief." These three crises refer to the "crisis of faith in socialism," "crisis of belief in Marxism," and "crisis of faith in the party" (Wu 2007: 124). This era of apathy towards the government,

socialist values and Marxist ideology was driven by the nexus between the disastrous results of the cultural revolution, the misalignment between party propaganda and the reality of most people's daily lives and the sheer volume of political propaganda created by a totalitarian regime fixated on micromanaging even the minute details of the daily life of its citizens. In terms of political credibility at the time, the Communist Party was widely perceived as ideologically bankrupt (Wu 2007: 128).

As a result of the increasing apathy and weariness with which ordinary Chinese citizens regarded the Communist Party and its ideological propaganda, the previous fusion of Chinese nationalism with Mao's idiosyncratic interpretation of Marxist-Leninist thought slowly began to unravel. Having nothing at hand to replace this all-encompassing nationalist ideology and given a wider latitude of freedom to conceive of possible alternatives, a grassroots nationalist movement arose in the 1980s which attempted to re-assert and re-imagine Chinese identity in the context of a fledgling economy's encounter with the wider, developed West.

Having been isolated for a quarter century under Mao's rule and then suddenly exposed to the levels of the development enjoyed by Japan, the United States and other Western countries through media reports, trade delegations, government exchanges and student sojourns abroad, Chinese citizens were faced with the relative economic backwardness of their home country for the first time. Having emerged from the Cultural Revolution a weak country with its economy and social fabric in tatters, Chinese people felt distinctly inferior in comparison. In an environment where one was still not allowed to criticize the Party or Socialism, this sense of humiliation and inferiority was channeled in such a way as to immediately revive the collective memory of psychological traumas and unhealed wounds of past imperialist occupations (Wu 2007: 128).

Amidst the soul-searching decade of the 1980s, the CCP began to slowly re-embrace elements of China's traditional cultural past that had once been discarded and deemed as "feudal" during the Mao era. As the state retreated step-by-step from most areas of public life, the linkage between Maoist dictates of class consciousness and the national subject also began to disappear. Soon, culture became regarded as a value unto itself, separate from its class background (Fisac and Stembridge 2003: 209). In addition to this important step, which would allow the CCP to eventually tie their legitimacy to nationalism during the post-Tiananmen era, Deng and the Reformists distanced themselves from the Maoist-era economic policies and the class-centered subjectivities engendered by those policies. Although not technically breaking with China's "socialist" past from which the party derived political legitimacy, in order to develop China economically, justify the Special Economic Zones and encourage foreign investment and local entrepreneurship, Deng and the Reformists effectively modified the symbolic interpretation of "socialism" (Crane 1996: 161). Under this creative sleight of hand, what would otherwise be considered capitalistic economic practices, became included under the modified definition of "socialism." In this way, capitalistic practices could be sanctioned in the Special Economic Zones and slowly applied to the rest of the country without generating a political crisis. The Party's discursive interpretation of this turn towards capitalism is that while such practices may drive inequality in the present, this stage of development is necessary to generate true socialism one day in the future; thus it may be considered technically "socialist" (Crane 1996: 161).

Once capitalistic practices became justified in the name of socialism after a period of debate between the economically liberal reformers and the conservatives who held to the traditional definition of socialism, the Party began to tie economic performance to national identity and subjectivity. As George Crane puts it, through the demeaning of socialism and Deng's promotion

of the Special Economic Zones, “A significant part of China becomes symbolically as well as empirically, a newly industrializing economy highly integrated into world markets through a dynamic export-oriented manufacturing sector brimming with growth and success, where entrepreneurial social forces are liberated by the recalibration of state power, where ideology is subsumed by pragmatism and where modern vestiges of Confucian culture – thrift, hard work, and education – are economic advantages” (Crane 1996: 164). In other words, Deng’s extensive promotion of China’s special economic zones and their resounding success unleashed a major shift in national consciousness and subjectivity. Once these SEZs were hailed as a success both nationally and internationally, it became portrayed by the government and perceived by the people as morally desirable to pursue the kinds of capitalistic and entrepreneurial activities that led to their success. After all, the SEZs were a point of national pride and contributing one’s part by participating at one level or another in China’s modernization was seen as contributing to the construction of a modern Chinese nation.

### **Section III: Formation of Post-Tiananmen Nationalist Subjectivities (1990-Present)**

#### **A. Introduction**

After the Tiananmen Square Incident of 1989, the Communist Party of China vowed never again to entertain a challenge to their power on such a wide scale. In order to prevent such a challenge from resurfacing, it was imperative to play an active role in shaping nationalist subjectivities in such a way that they could control the master narrative of what it meant to be a member of the Chinese nation and thus secure their place as its purest and most ardent defenders. In speeches given following the Tiananmen square incident, Deng repeatedly emphasized that the lack of effective ideological and political education in the 1980s resulted in the Tiananmen Square Incident itself and needed to be rectified if the party was to hold onto power in the future (Wang

2012: 96). As Zheng Wang succinctly puts it, “The party’s turn to nationalism can be seen as an indication of its failure to re-create a Chinese community. The CCP feared that it could be excluded from a community the people might create themselves, and as a result, incited nationalistic fervor” (Wang 2012; 227)

## **B. The Patriotic Education Campaign (1991 – Present)**

One of the cornerstones of the Communist Party’s attempt to shore up its legitimacy was the Patriotic Education Campaign first implemented by Deng Xiaoping in 1991. This campaign explicitly sought to utilize historical education as a tool to bolster the Party’s image and legitimacy by selectively presenting the party’s accomplishments while burying negative aspects of its history in order to shape national consciousness in such a way that justified the one-party nature of its rule in the aftermath of the decline of the USSR and the Tiananmen Square movement (Wang 2012: 9). Co-opting earlier events in Chinese history and adopting earlier models of pre-1949 nationalist identity, the Patriotic Education Campaign harkened a major shift in national consciousness and nationalist subjectivities that has accelerated in recent years as the students first educated under its influence enter university and the workplace. I argue that present-day Chinese national identity and the phenomenological experience of what it means to be “Chinese” and a Chinese student abroad largely derive from this campaign.

One often overlooked aspect of the Patriotic Education Campaign is the sheer enormity of its scale which thoroughly permeates all sectors of society. As the CCP Central Committee stated in 1994, “If we want to make the patriotic thoughts the core theme of our society, a very strong patriotic atmosphere must be created so that the people can be influenced and nurtured by the patriotic thoughts and spirit at all times and everywhere in their daily life” (Wang 2012: 115). This “atmosphere” was created not just by a revamped curriculum implemented in primary, secondary

and tertiary schools throughout the nation, but also its proliferation in government offices, state-run companies and the military (Wang 2012: 112). In addition, the Campaign coordinated (and still coordinates with) with state-run newspapers, magazines, radio and television stations in order to disseminate patriotic education at all levels of passive media consumption. With regards to the new digital frontier, the Communist Party has also allocated an enormous sum of resources to censor posts, articles and videos deemed “un-patriotic,” and employs hundreds of thousands of patriotic internet commentators to drown out voices of dissent and infuse all corners of the Chinese internet with strong patriotic sentiment and content which conform to the Party’s dictates (Wu 2017). Even national historic sites have fallen under its influence. Since 1995, the Ministry of Civil Affairs dedicated more than one hundred sites as “demonstration bases” for patriotic education (Wang 2012: 105). These sites, which support the Party’s version of Chinese history, receive large sums of funds in order to expand in scale and allow for cost-free admission to school groups, delegations from government agencies and military institutions. In addition to this, Provincial governments, as well as certain municipal-level governments followed with their own “demonstration bases” for patriotic education constructed along the same guidelines. The Patriotic Education Campaign is also linked to “Red Tourism,” which is a highly successful state-promoted campaign to encourage tourist visits to revolutionary sites and landmarks. Many of these sites are the same “demonstration bases” where the Party seeks to instill its new form of nationalist subjectivity into Chinese citizens. As Zheng Wang notes, the Communist Party cleverly replaced the word “education” with “tourism” in order to maximize the scope and reach of the Patriotic Education Campaign (Wang 2012: 109).

After the failure of the tepid ideological campaigns during the reform period of the 1980s to generate enthusiasm and engender loyalty to the Communist Party amongst the general

population, the CCP decided to change course and adopt new means for inculcating its new version of nationalist sentiment into the population (Zhao 2004). During the 1980s, the state had relied on tried-and-true methods of patriotic slogan campaigns and public speeches that were effective during the Mao era, but which following his death, became obsolete as modes of transmission and indoctrination. In order to modernize and render their approach more effective, the CCP began to adopt some of the savvier transmission tactics of Western governments and independent media companies in order to instill their patriotic messages into the minds of the population and make them palatable to the members of the younger generation (Wang 2012: 108). One of the chief ways in which the CCP changed their tactics was to produce films, music and literary works on the theme of patriotism by providing large sums of money to directors, celebrities and artists to create works which simultaneously entertain the viewer and highlight their sense of subjective identification with a humiliated national imagined community. These works feature triumphalist narratives where the Party (or some national hero affiliated with it by symbolic association) heroically rescues the Chinese people from one indignity or another imposed by one evil imperialist power or another (Wang 2012: 109). Following a Hollywood-like formula adapted for nationalistic subject construction, such works first evoke a sentiment of sadness, anger and resentment in the viewer, as the imperialist predations are drawn-out in long scenes of gory detail. This serves to engender a stronger in-group identity among Chinese people based the emotion evoked by the Century of Humiliation. Then, as the plot develops, the hero, who models an imaginary of the ideal patriot (usually tall, handsome and unmistakably Han) and who is usually associated with the Communist Party or claimed by the Party as part of its historical legacy, eventually defeats the evil Other and restores the dignity and avenges the humiliation of the

Chinese people. By using such forms of nationalist message transmission, the CCP was able to effectively engender a new type of nationalist subjectivity in the younger generation.

### **C. Chinese vs. Foreigners: Emotional Contours of In-Group/Out-Group Construction**

While the CCP has demonstrated its adaptability in co-opting new forms of media to conform to the goals of the Patriotic Education Campaign, what is most important for the purposes of exploring the shift in nationalist subjectivities from the early 1990s onward is the ideological content that pervades all forms of dissemination ranging from historic sites to online media to educational curricula. It is worth noting that the Patriotic Campaign did not only increase the amount of nationalist propaganda entering the consciousness of Chinese citizens at all levels of daily life, but also fundamentally altered the content of that propaganda. Since the Party tightly controlled China's historical narrative during the Mao years and utilized that control to propagate the Marxist-Leninist narrative of Chinese history and the Party's legitimacy, most historical events were invariably linked to class struggle waged by the Chinese people against imperialist aggressors (Unger 1996). The Patriotic Education campaign largely dispensed with this narrative and sought to unify Chinese people under the ideology of patriotism.

In order to assemble an unassailable patriotic narrative, the Communist Party used the Patriotic Education Campaign to systematically construct a new sense of Chinese national identity and inculcate a new nationalist subjectivity. The purpose of this was to emotionally bind Chinese citizens to an in-group which was unmistakably led and represented by the Communist Party such that an attack on the Party was emotionally experienced as an attack on any given individual. By doing so, the party could effectively harness and control the nationalist sentiment of the Chinese people. In order to foment a strong sense of loyalty and emotional belonging to this newly-constructed in-group, the Party led chiefly by Jiang Zemin at the time, publicly announced a

renewed focus on China's century of humiliation and on the national trauma experienced at the hands of Western nations and the Japanese (Wu 2012: 126). This focus is both historical and rhetorical, with attention given to the cruel and devastating events inflicted by foreigners on the Chinese nation, as well as to racist and humiliating depictions of Chinese people by foreigners during that era. Although China did indeed experience most of the events presented in its newly revamped curriculum, as Zheng Wang wisely acknowledges, "A group does not really choose to be victimized and subsequently lose self-esteem, but it does choose to psychologize and mythologize – to dwell on and exaggerate – the event" (Wu 2012: 48). The orchestrated, ubiquitous focus on the "national shame" (*guochi*) and the admonition to "never forget" it (*wuwang guochi*) were thus placed at the center of the Patriotic Education Campaign to foster a robust, salient sense of in-group identity ("us").

By focusing explicitly and extensively on the wounds inflicted on China during the Century of Humiliation by the West in order to foster a strong in-group identity ("us") based on historical victimization, it necessitated the construction of an Other ("them") to be constructed in opposition to this imagined in-group. This out-group would be portrayed as a somewhat continuous, amorphous alliance of foreigners who exploited China during the infamous Century of Humiliation and who actively conspire to subjugate and divide China in the present. By constructing the imaginary outgroup as such, criticisms of the Communist Party or of members of this Chinese in-group from others, especially foreigners from former imperialist countries, are thus immediately dismissed as evil at worst and examples of Western brainwashing at best. In fact, unaware to most foreigners, these utterances immediately identify them as members of this "enemy" out-group who desire China's downfall and subjugation at the feet of the West (or Japan). This identification immediately conjures up the salience of Chinese in-group identity and an emotional association

with the Century of Humiliation, thereby engendering feelings of resentment, hatred and defiance because the comments made in the present activate memories of past historical wrongs committed by foreigners against the Chinese people. As such, this “activation of historical memory” is the chief objective of the Patriotic Education Campaign and is primarily due to the Party’s manipulation of the victimization narrative in service of a highly polarized in-group/out-group construction (Wu 2012: 198). Through the CCP’s emotional engineering and deliberate failure to distinguish foreigners of past centuries from present-day foreigners in the Patriotic Education campaign, foreigners who criticize the Chinese government are unwittingly identifying themselves as part of the same “enemy” out-group. Once faced with discourse (whether or innocuous or not) that subconsciously triggers the emotions associated with enemy labeling, the in-group identity of Chinese subjects grows emotionally stronger in magnitude.

We have just established the central role of victimization and humiliation in China’s new nationalist subjectivities as engendered by the Patriotic Education Campaign beginning in the mid-1990s and continuing up to the present-day. However, in conjunction with the humiliation and victimization narrative, the Patriotic Education Campaign has successfully imparted a complicated “victor” narrative that exists in parallel to the “victimization” one previous outlined, yet differs from the past “victor” narrative embedded in Mao-era nationalist subjectivities (Gries 2005: 136). During the Mao era, Party historians and educators portrayed most peasant rebellions in Chinese history, including the Taiping Rebellion as valiant class struggles against oppression. The war against Japan was portrayed through the lens of international class-struggle, as were the CCP’s campaigns against the corrupt capitalist Kuomintang in the Chinese Civil War (Wu 2012: 101). The new history textbooks written in 1992 and distributed to primary and secondary schools across the country (the latter of which had not required students to study Chinese history prior to 1992)

adjusted the class narrative in some cases and completely dispensed with it in others, resulting in a massive re-interpretation of Chinese history according to “patriotic” guidelines (Zhao 2004: 227).

Some of the more pronounced re-adjustments in Chinese historical consciousness that occurred as a result of the new Patriotic Education Campaign were reinterpretations of the Japanese invasion during World War II and the qualities of the Kuomintang who fought against them. After 1992, the new history textbooks emphasized the nationalistic cooperation between the Kuomintang and Communist Party against the Japanese invaders, rather than the “capitalist” and corrupt nature of Chiang Kai Shek and his forces as portrayed during the Mao era (Wu 2012: 102). The nature of the Japanese invasion itself was altered to be explained in terms of ethnic conflict, with all Japanese depicted as part of a homogenous group of “sadistic conformists,” rather than as a class-stratified society as they had prior to 1992 (Gries 2004: 85). In general, the civil conflict between the CCP and the Kuomintang was largely downplayed compared to the textbook editions published before 1992. Although it is widely acknowledged that victory against the Japanese occupying forces was central to the legitimacy narrative of the Communist Party which argues that without the CCP, there would have been no successful resistance against the Japanese forces, it is often overlooked that during post-1992 editions of these history textbooks, there is a much greater emphasis on the plight and suffering of the Chinese people under the Japanese occupation and much less focus given to the victory against them or to the victory over the Kuomintang (Greis 2004: 73). This is an example of what many scholars have described as a major shift from a “victor to victim” narrative that took place in Chinese nationalist subjectivities in the 1990s and 2000s (Gries 2004: 70).

Despite the narrative shift from victor-to-victim which was underway in some aspects of the CCP's Patriotic Education Campaign, there were a protracted effort to erase assertions of difference between the CCP and Kuomintang during World War II, and to claim that on some level, the "Chinese people" had successfully resisted the advance of Japan and were the true, unacknowledged victors in the front against Japan (Gries 2004: 74-75). From this, it can be seen that the CCP strikes a complex balance in the Patriotic Education Campaign, oscillating between portraying Chinese people as victim at some junctures and as heroes at others. Although both efforts promote increasing levels of identification with the in-group, they both serve different purposes in the context of the CCPs efforts to claim ownership of the overarching narrative of what it means to be a Chinese nationalist subject today. The CCP claims that the West does not acknowledge Chinese victories during the war, because it actually conforms with one victimization narrative where the West looks down on the Chinese people. By framing unacknowledged victories as another form of victimization, and claiming the mantle of leadership in this struggle against Western callousness and arrogance, the CCP fortifies in-group cohesion and their leadership position as the valiant defender of the Chinese people. However, in the overall context of the Patriotic Education Campaign, the CCP generally seeks to imbue Chinese subjects with a consciousness of the cruelties inflicted on the Chinese People during the Century of Humiliation because it drives in-group solidarity based on common resentment and allows claims that the Communist Party delivered the Chinese people from the throes of Western and Japanese Occupation and Imperialism (Wu 2012: 103). In other words, the shift from "victor" to "victim" in Chinese nationalist subjectivities throughout the course of the Patriotic Education Campaign was complex; Chinese people can be victors in this narrative *vis a vis* the imagined Occidental "Other" who conspiratorially seeks to rob them of the dignity of their victories, divide China and

return it to its former state of subservience to the Western world. Meanwhile, they can also be the maligned victims of the predations of these foreign powers, who through the CCP, thankfully managed to liberate themselves from the humiliation and disunity inflicted upon them. However, never again did the CCP claim full narrative victory over the foreign forces that seek to undermine China; if they did, there would be no need for its leadership and continued existence.

#### **D. A New Imagined Past and Modification of In-Group Nationalist Subjectivities**

While the previous section outlined the emotional contours of the dualistic victor/victim narrative implicit in new nationalist subjectivities constructed under the Patriotic Education Campaign from the mid-1990s until the present-day, it is also imperative to highlight the shifts in in-group boundaries which demarcate who belongs to this Andersonian notion of an “imagined community” and who does not. While the previous section highlights one aspect of in-group/out-group construction with regards to “Chinese” members of the in-group juxtaposed against “Foreign” members of the out-group, it is not enough to leave it at that; instead, one must delve deeper into who is considered “Chinese” and the determinate moral prerogatives that comprise the boundedness of this imagined community. Anthony Smith famously claimed, “ethnic, national and religious identities are all built on historical myths that define who a group member is, what it means to be a group member and who the group’s enemies are. These myths are usually based on truth, but are selective and exaggerated in their presentation of history” (Wang 2012: 20). This certainly rings true in the in the CCP’s project of re-constructing Chinese nationalist subjectivities during the Patriotic Education Campaign. In the process of overhauling Chinese nationalist subjectivities based on revolution and class struggle and replacing them with one based on nationalism and patriotism, the CCP had to construct a historical myth of an imagined past that bonds all members of their newly constructed in-group.

The task of re-constructing an imagined Chinese past through the Patriotic Education Campaign was difficult due to the extent that it required a major divergence from the Mao-era historical narrative that preceded it. During the Mao era, the paramount feature of Chinese in-group consciousness was their shared peasant and working-class background against that of the enemy out-group defined as domestic “capitalists” and foreign “imperialist” forces within their own country. In order to depict the Party as the vanguard of the working-class, deriving its legitimacy from its leadership of socialist class-struggle against foreign and domestic enemies of the Chinese working class, the CCP emphasized the “feudal” nature of the Chinese empires which pre-dated it (Wu 2012: 124). As the entire history of China was interpreted through this lens of class struggle, the emperors, the educated class and the Confucian ideology/culture that underpinned the legitimacy for their rule were denigrated as “feudal,” and its advocates labelled as members of the enemy “out-group” due to the appalling conditions of the peasantry that existed at the time. Through this type of in-group/out-group construction, the CCP and Mao were able to claim their status as the true heroes of the peasantry that liberated them from the centuries-long oppression wrought by both domestic and foreign capitalist forces that dominated Chinese history prior to the rise of the CCP. However, once the Party shifted the marker of in-group subjective identification from socialism to nationalism in order to bolster its legitimacy following the political instability of the late 1980s, the Maoist interpretation of China’s historical past and the in-group boundaries which marked the role of that in-group within that historical narrative required a modification.

Luckily for the CCP at the time, the construction of a new historical imagined past did not require inventing a new historical narrative from scratch and dealing with the problem of inculcating an entirely new sense of Chinese identity within the population. Since Sun Yat-Sen

had previously advocated for the unity of the country based on nationalism and economic development, the Party simply looked to his works and adopted large aspects of his thought that pre-dated the Communist ideology promulgated during the Mao years. Picking up where Sun left off in the 1920s, the Patriotic Education Campaign began to revive nationalism as a unifying force in the country and began to use historical memory to portray China prior to the Century of Humiliation as a bastion of civilization and culture that surpassed all other civilizations at the world at the time (Zhao 2004). Moving beyond the 1980s slogan vesting the party with the imperative of invigorating (*zhenxing*) the Chinese nation, the Patriotic Education Campaign replaced this with the objective of rejuvenating (*fixing*) the Chinese nation (Wu 2012: 129). Although this may seem on the surface to be a slight adjustment in priorities, the difference is telling. The latter implies that it is the Party's duty to remind ordinary Chinese people of the great achievements and glory of China prior to the Century of Humiliation, to emphasize the sheer destruction during the latter period under the hands of foreign "devils," and then finally to remind the Chinese people that it was the Party who made the "biggest sacrifice" to reclaim their lost glory and dignity by reuniting and rejuvenating the nation (Wu 2012: 127, 129, 131). By constructing the narrative in this way, the Party centers nationalism within its discourse and re-imagines itself as China's "most thoroughgoing patriot" in contrast to its previous identity as a representative for the working class (Wu 2012: 136-37).

The character *fu* implies that China was a united, prosperous, and glorious civilization prior to the meddling of the evil foreign powers who humiliated it from 1837 to 1945. As the self-proclaimed stewards of Chinese patriotism (*aiguo zhuyizhe*) and thus the in-group's most ardent and pure representatives, the CCP has gone to great lengths to construct an imaginary past that serves its interests by promoting the in-group unity of the Chinese people whom it claims to

represent. In order to construct a common past to unite all members of this “Chinese” in-group through a sense of common descent and brotherhood, the Party has salvaged Confucianism and ancient Chinese culture from the ruins of the Mao era. Presented as markers of a common heritage and bloodline, these elements have thus become increasingly salient in defining nationalist subjectivities in post-Tiananmen China. In the CCP’s updated and well-marketed version of Sun Yat-Sen’s historical narrative, Chinese people are all descendants of the dragon and are proud heirs of the Celestial Empire – an ancient beacon of culture and civilization in a dark age of barbarism (Wu 2012: 46). In this narrative, China is depicted as a sophisticated and spiritual, peace-loving culture. It is portrayed as having given birth to profound philosophers such as Confucius, Mencius, Lao Tse, and Mozi, generated key scientific discoveries such as movable-type printing, gunpowder, and the compass, as well as excelled in producing arts, textiles and ceramics (Wu 2012: 44). In addition, the Chinese people are said to be endowed with the moral qualities of their ancestors who are presented self-evidently as part of this same contiguous in-group. These imagined ancestors are depicted as peaceful (never having invaded other countries), filial, magnanimous and highly erudite, credited with developing the first national examination system, conducting peaceful voyages to other parts of the world and developing highly advanced literary works, political theories, and religious doctrines. This is what Zheng Wang calls China’s “chosen glory,” selected re-imaginings of its ancient past assembled, re-constructed and packaged to form the imagined past of a particular in-group (Wu 2012: 39).

During the Patriotic Education Campaign, the aforementioned characteristics which signal the moral and cultural virtues of a peace-loving collective, were instated as constituent parts of the Chinese in-group in order to imbue present-day members with a sense of cultural pride and moral superiority. When juxtaposed with this narrative, the humiliation and chaos inflicted by foreigners

on the innocent and peace-loving Chinese people during the Qing dynasty, seems all the more hideous and unjust. As a result, the narrative evokes intense feelings of anger, resentment and in-group solidarity based on the collective trauma that robbed the in-group of its innocence and former glory. Placed starkly in the role of ultimate patriot, the Party then portrays itself as the savior of the Chinese people, uniting and mobilizing them to banish the evil foreigners who are depicted as resentful and jealous of the success of the Chinese people, and who still actively seek to undermine their unity and prosperity.

Now that we have expressly delineated the imagined past of post-Tiananmen Chinese nationalist subjectivities, it is worth briefly mentioning the relationship between in-group Chinese identity and individuals within China proper who are not “foreigners,” but who do not neatly conform to the in-group as constructed by the Party. From the Mao era until the 1980s, Xiaowei Zang argues that minority groups were characterized and treated largely according to the Maoist framework that portrayed them as un-educated allies in the class struggle against the capitalist overlords (Zang 2015: 22). Requiring the Han people’s tutelage under the CCP to engage in class struggle, they were eventually expected to conform (*ronghe*) with their Han counterparts and unite under the common cause of socialist revolution. This revolution was said to precipitate socioeconomic development and allow these minority groups to shed their feudal status and become a part of a modern nation that was united across racial boundaries primarily based on shared class interests (Zang 2015: 23). Although some efforts were made to force the minority groups to learn Mandarin and to promote integration with their Han counterparts, these efforts were largely limited in scope and were characterized as mild and minimally coercive in nature (ibid). Once the dawn of the Cultural Revolution occurred, however, there was a marked shift in the treatment of minorities by the Communist Party. Under Mao’s direct orders, it was declared

that by giving minorities separate treatment than the Han majority, this would promote separatism and division at the expense of patriotism and unity (Zang 2015: 23). What followed was a frenzied attack on minority religions and cultures and a sustained effort to forcibly assimilate these minorities into the Han culture (Zang 2015: 24).

After 1978, the Communist Party reverted to Sun Yat-Sen's assimilationist (*ronghe*) ideology of nationalism which operated under the premise that the Han comprised the vast majority of Chinese people and that ethnic minorities were inextricably connected to each other and to the Han by blood (Sun 1953: 5). Building on a Confucianist framework, under these circumstances, large ethnic groups like the Han adopt a patronizing "big brother/sister" role where they have a duty to smaller ones as elder brothers do to younger brothers. In return, these smaller ethnic groups are to dispose of their "uncivilized" behavior and thoughts and become Han by learning and adopting Han ways, eventually merging seamlessly into the Han community (Zang 2015: 19). This was a continuation of an older Confucian philosophy which traced back to the Qin and Han dynasties whereby "barbarians" were despised, but not exterminated. In place of extermination, they were incorporated into the Chinese empire and forcibly assimilated through the imposition of mainstream Han values (Zang 2015: 19).

Under the Patriotic Education Campaign, in conjunction with specific policies implemented by the Jiang, Hu and Xi administrations, this *ronghe* ideology has been revived, and there has been an increasing pressure on minorities to accept and assimilate to the CCP definition of what constitutes a proper nationalist subject. Since this subject is Han in all but external appearance, these minorities are coerced into learning Mandarin Chinese at a young age and encouraged to abandon their mother tongues as a primary form of communication. Larger minority groups with different religions than the Han Chinese, namely Tibetans and Uighurs, have also been

systematically forced to abandon essential elements of these religions and customs due to the fact that these elements are perceived by the CCP as promoting a type of subjectivity that diverges from the normative ethno-culturalist Han Chinese subjectivity that now defines the Chinese nation. When they resist doing so, they face state violence in the form of arrests or and forced participation in “re-education” programs whose chief aim is to forcibly impose the hegemonic form of CCP-promoted Han ethno-culturalist subjectivity onto them. According to China’s Ethnic Unity Textbook Compiling team “*minzu* extinction is an inevitable result of *minzu* self-development and self-improvement...it is the final result of *minzu* development at the highest stage” (Zang 2015: 24). Given this conception of minority-Han relations and the telos of national unification (and minority extinction) under a culture that is unmistakably Han in nature, minority subjectivities are considered inherently “divisive,” threatening the unity of the nation and China’s sacred territorial integrity (Zhao 2004: 234-35). As a result, the only state-sanctioned distinctiveness that minorities are encouraged to showcase or embody are superficial elements of dress and dance, which allows the CCP to maintain the façade of a multicultural nation while erasing forms of subjectivity and cultural identity that differ significantly from the hegemonic, Han-culturalist one. As Vicky Xu poignantly sums up in a recently authored Foreign Policy article, “To be a modern-day Chinese nationalist is to unknowingly agree to all of that and to become a de facto Han supremacist” (Xu 2019).

#### **E. National Rejuvenation and Imagined Futures: Territorial Integrity and Economic Performance**

As Jiang Zemin said, the ultimate goal of the Patriotic Education Campaign was to emphasize the “right” qualifications of being a Chinese citizen: to hate the foreign invaders, despise traitors and respect patriots” (Wu 2012: 125). The means of realizing this goal were discussed in the

previous three sections. A massive Patriotic Education Campaign was orchestrated to permeate all levels of society, remind Chinese people of the humiliation inflicted on them by foreigners in order to promote in-group cohesion and knee-jerk rejections of foreign ideas labeled by the Party as inimical to its interests (which are portrayed as being equivalent to the Chinese people's interests since they have "sacrificed the most" for Chinese unity and development), and promote an overhaul of in-group identity markers to orient around ethno-culturally Han criteria at the expense of multiculturalism and class-based criteria. While the previous discussion elaborates the emotional contours of hate and how this hate is justified based on in-group/out-group construction, it is still slightly opaque as to what criteria determines who is deemed a traitor and who is deemed a patriot.

The short answer to the question of who is a patriot and who is a traitor is: whomever the party labels as such; however, the question is much more nuanced and the key to understanding it is to examine the idea of "rejuvenation" (*fixing*) that dominates party discourse. The previous discussion emphasized the construction of the collective "imagined past" in this rejuvenation narrative, but in order to determine the Party's continued claims to legitimacy in the name of patriotism, it is imperative to focus on the imagined collective future alluded to in the term. Since the Party's new narrative is that they are the chosen ones to restore China's former greatness and glory, it is worth parsing out exactly what "greatness" and "glory" mean.

In Party discourse, the most important duty of the Party is "national re-unification" both territorially and culturally (Chang 2001: 109). While the cultural dimension of unity within China was discussed in the previous section and articulated in terms of Han culturalist logic, it is important to note that desires to preserve territorial integrity and actively restore "lost" territories form an integral part of nationalist subjectivities under the Patriotic Education Campaign. This is

in line with the aforementioned nationalist logic emphasizing the loss of unity and territory at the hands of foreigners beginning with the Opium War. Therefore, it is the job of the CCP as representatives of the Chinese people to restore China to what the Party claims were its original national boundaries. In the popular sequel to the nationalist book, *China Can Say No* (1996), it is claimed that China has the right to reclaim all territories lost since the Qing dynasty in 1662 (Qiang et al. 1996: 356). According to the textbooks re-written in the 1990s for the Patriotic Education Campaign, these include the borders of current China, the Russian Far East, the western half of the Sea of Japan, the Korean peninsula, the Yellow Sea, the Diaoyu Islands, Taiwan, Hong Kong, the South China Sea, Vietnam, parts of Laos, Thailand, Myanmar, Nepal, Bhutan, Kyrgyzstan, Kazakhstan and Mongolia (Chang 2001: 208-209). In the Patriotic Education Campaign, students are taught that losing one's national territory is the ultimate shame and that the people must be mobilized in service of "national defense" (*guofang*) of the motherland (ibid). Although most of the abovementioned territories lie dormant in the consciousness of Chinese people and are largely ignored by the Party, there is still a connection to "national identity, specifically defining the in-group and Chinese superiority (big brother status) (Friend and Thayer 2018: 46).

However, what the Party repeatedly emphasizes is the importance of its sovereignty over Hong Kong, its nine-dash-line claim to the South China Sea (*Bu Hui Tui Rang Yi Cun*) and especially re-unification with Taiwan which has been separated from the mainland since the Sino-Japanese War of 1894-95. These are the issues that are repeatedly invoked by the Party in order to drum up irredentist nationalist sentiment. Depicted as territories stolen from the Qing by evil foreigners, throughout the Chinese media, Taiwan and Hong Kong are portrayed as children forcibly separated from their "motherland" (*muguo*) (which is a familial allusion to the nation of China ruled by the CCP) and who desperately want to return to their mother's warm embrace. By

using language evoking forced mother-child separation, this predictably generates erratic and extreme sentiments of raw righteous anger at such a basic evolutionary injustice from the Chinese in-group who has been conditioned to identify as the “mother”. This anger stems as much from the emotional overtones of the language itself, as it does from its explicit connection to the shame and humiliation suffered by the Chinese people during the Century of Humiliation. As Friend and Thayer aptly summarize, when Xi Jinping and others allude to the fact that any territory has belonged to China’s since ancient times, they are “effectively tapping into a deeply rooted memory of humiliation and exploitation that makes up Han identity” (2018: 46).

While the aforementioned paragraph examines the place of territories once colonized by foreigners yet which have not been fully repatriated within Chinese nationalist subjectivities, it is also imperative to examine attitudes towards territories forcibly reunited with the Chinese motherland, yet whose residents do not conform to the dominant, normative Chinese nationalist subjectivity defined by the Communist Party. These include the nominally autonomous provinces of Xinjiang and Tibet, as well as the actually semi-autonomous regions like Hong Kong. During the course of the Patriotic Education Campaign, it was consistently broadcast that there was a Western conspiracy (*yinmou*) to threaten China’s territorial integrity through the explicit and tacit support of ethnic minorities in Tibet and Xinjiang who wished to separate from the motherland (Chang 2001: 10). In present-day Hong Kong, the situation is similar; Chinese media consistently accuse the CIA or other Western “black hands” (*heishou*) of inciting the Hong Kong residents to protest in order to destabilize the motherland and threaten China’s territorial integrity. In Chinese nationalist subjectivities, this issue of “territorial integrity” is extremely sensitive due to the Patriotic Education Campaign’s systematic moralization of Chinese citizens’ duty to be courageous patriots in service of “national defense” (*guofang*). In popular discourse today, these

issues are articulated as being the Chinese people's "bottom line," (*dixian*) effectively shutting down discourse and tacitly encouraging violent reactions against those who advocate on behalf of minority rights or autonomy in these three regions. If the person advocating this position is a foreigner, they are immediately associated as a member of the out-group conspiring to destroy the Chinese nation; if they hold a Chinese passport, they are labelled as a traitor to the Han race or the Chinese people.

During the 1990s, having posted more than a decade of double-digit GDP growth and having received public and international approbation for the transformation of the economy and raising the quality of life of its citizens, the CCP largely distanced itself from the economically socialist policies of the Mao years and instead began to derive its legitimacy based on economic growth which was said to be reflected in the quality of life of its citizens who reaped the benefits. In conjunction with this shift in economic policy, there was another, more profound shift underway in nationalist subjectivities which shifted to incorporate aspects of China's increased prosperity and economic performance.

In contrast to the class-based subjectivities that arose during the Mao era where the normative in-group was defined by membership within the urban proletariat and the rural peasantry, the salience of membership in these classes slowly declined and was replaced instead by the consciousness of and membership within the Chinese national community. Prior to 1978, people were discouraged from entrepreneurial or materialistic practices which alluded to bourgeois class affiliation and membership. Such practices or advocacy of such practices constituted a betrayal of the Chinese nation which was defined as an in-group comprised of peasant and worker revolutionaries; accordingly, capitalistic practices were labelled as morally undesirable and resulted in revocation of membership from the normative in-group and violators were sentenced

to reform through hard labor (*laogai*) in conditions that often resulted in starvation and death. Even urbanites were systematically sent to the countryside during campaigns in order to “learn from” the practices of the peasantry. By doing so, it was thought that both groups would be morally reconstituted as peasant-workers and subsequently, embody the proper class-based subjectivity required of them during the Mao era.

In the 1990s and early 2000s, there was an explicit reversion to “tradition” and a systematic attempt by the CCP to revive elements of traditional Han subjectivities in order to promote economic development and social stability (Chang 2001: 184). The selective revival of Han traditionalist elements was combined with nationalism and capitalistic practices in order to form the contours of the modern Chinese nationalist subject. While the connection between Han traditionalist elements and contemporary nationalist subjectivities has been explored previously, the linkage of nationalist discourses to capitalistic practices in the present-day has been less emphasized. Due to the threat it poses to the official Marxist ideology that underpins the CCP’s founding and rule, the word “capitalism” (*ziben zhuyi*) still has derogatory connotations and is considered something that only the Western “Other” embodies and pursues. However, the discourse of rejuvenation (*fixing*) functionally provides an alternative to capitalistic practices by tying what would otherwise be considered capitalistic practices to the moral prerogatives of a proper nationalist subject. In 1992, Deng Xiaoping said, “China has been poor for thousands of years. It is time to prosper....to get rich is glorious” (Friend and Thayer 2014: 237-38). Starting from this point in the early 1990s, no longer were Chinese subjects required to conform to socialistic, class-based subjectivities and to the collective economic practices permitted by the CCP; now they were not only allowed to pursue their own individual self-interest, but were explicitly encourage to do so. Harkening back to Sun Yat-Sen’s vision of a rejuvenated China as

prosperous and strong (*fuqiang*), allowing each individual to determine and pursuit his or her economic self-interest would create the capital foundation for more advanced technology and the conditions for a strong, modernized army that would ensure that China's Century of Humiliation would never again be repeated (Friend and Thayer 2014: 240). Thus, by engaging in capitalistic practices, the Chinese people were also fulfilling their duty as proper nationalist subjects by doing their part in restoring China to its former glory in the name of national prosperity and rejuvenation.

There is a subtle, but important distinction between the formation of capitalistic subjectivities whereby the engagement in capitalistic practices defines the boundaries of a morally righteous nationalist subject and one where the nationalist subject explicitly regards capitalistic indexes as indicative of progress and power for his nation. With regards to the former, there has been much research in the field of anthropology regarding the massive shift in subjectivities after Mao's death and throughout Reform and Opening period. Since the 1980s, studies have shown the systematic emergence of the desiring subject. Although the specific desires of the subjects vary, they include sexual desire (especially in males), desires for career success, fame, independence from the family unit, and the desire of individuality in areas regarding gender expression, taste, and self-presentation (Zhang 2004; Osburg 2013; Yan 2004). The emergence of this desiring self is connected with capitalism and the opening of China's economy because the conditions of capitalism create subjects who have desires and yearn to express and embody them. As people slowly begin to desire more things beyond subsistence, capitalism begins to thrive and create opportunities for further desire fulfillment through the trade and consumption of commodities. These desires become opportunities for businesses to buy and sell to consumers, reproducing the capitalist system, and expanding its scope. In order to fulfill these myriad desires of the self, subjects have intrinsic motivation to work long hours in order to purchase the goods that promise

their satisfaction. Whether this be by procuring the latest style of dress, buying a home (which was previously provided by the state), purchasing a shiny new phone or laptop computer, or by travelling, the desiring, self-fashioning subject constitutes the means and ends of capitalism. Desiring subjects guarantee the economy a reliable source of labor and consumption which aids China's development, fills government coffers and increases its national power and prestige. Capitalist subject formation has been occurring in China since the 1980s and has been encouraged under the guise of promoting China's national rejuvenation through strength and prosperity (*fuqiang*). So long as the desire of Chinese subjects is limited to commodities that can be purchased on the market, the CCP has not only permitted, but explicitly encouraged its development. The formation of a capitalistic ethos in the heart of every citizen ties directly to China's prosperity and has been instrumental in the CCP's post-Tiananmen mandate to deliver China both economic progress, and a rejuvenation of national strength and glory.

The subtle encouragement of the formation of the desiring subject by the CCP, private corporations, and media companies is notably different, however from what Peter Crane calls "economic nationalism." The term, coined by Crane himself, describes the fact that a significant component of Chinese national identity became connected with economic performance in the 1990s and 2000s. With special attention paid to the model status conferred upon China's Special Economic Zones (SEZs) by CCP leadership from the 1990s onward, Crane argues that higher level officials in the Communist Party constructed a particular discourse regarding China's economic growth to inspire people to produce, consume and invest in a manner bolstering the economy, while leaving the Party and its hegemonic status intact (Crane 1996: 149). Tied ostensibly not only to the material quality of life enjoyed by the citizens within the PRC itself, but also as a concrete measure of China's prowess compared to that of rival nations, economic growth was deified in the

operational concept of GDP, the primary indicator, as well as secondary indicators such as the construction of high-rise buildings, the renovation of older structures, and the adoption of the flashiest “modern” technology. In the 1990s and 2000s, as China was reliably progressing in all of these aspects with each passing year, the party would tout these accomplishments as evidence of its legitimacy and thus shaped the formation of nationalist subjects who applied these metrics to evaluate Party performance. Since the Party and the nation have been intertwined in the Chinese imagination since the early 1990s, China’s economic performance also served as a metric for the rejuvenation of the Chinese in-group and the reclaiming of its former glory *vis a vis* its neighbors and especially, its former colonial oppressors (Cabestan 2005: 11). As China’s GDP grew, this was experienced by Chinese people as a reflection of the greatness of Chinese civilization thus formed an indelible component of post-reform Chinese nationalist subjectivity.

Thus, economic nationalism is in some way, the post ‘80s proxy for modernity, which has been a consistent object of desire in the Chinese collective imagination since the humiliation faced by China at the hand of the colonial power during the twilight years of the Qing Dynasty. As opposed to earlier in the Mao era, when the economic nationalist component of modernity was tied to metrics in certain areas such as food surplus and quantity of steel production, the post ‘80s form of economic nationalism took the concrete form of GDP growth, the proliferation of luxury products and flashy technology, the presence of high-rise buildings and high-speed rail systems (Meinhof 2018). Not only was the desiring subject encouraged, but the contours of nationalist subjectivity itself changed as Chinese people began to evaluate China’s status against other countries using the indicators mentioned above. To the extent that China surpassed other developed economies in these aspects, especially former colonizers such as England and the United States, it was perceived by Chinese nationalist subjects as evidence that the Chinese nation

had finally regained its place in the world and had triumphed over the foreign imperialists that so long tried to repress its greatness.

#### **IV: Encounters with the Outside World: Chinese Students Abroad and Nationalist**

##### **Subjectivities**

###### **A. Introduction**

Despite the fact that in any given year, more than six hundred thousand Chinese students study abroad and almost three hundred thousand study in America alone, administrators and the popular press still propound the theory that student exchange is a net-positive for America-China relations in that it will come to deepen the understanding that each has for the other's culture and political system (Zhou 2018). More specifically, it is thought that by spending years of their life living abroad at one of America's universities, that Chinese students will learn and eventually come to treasure core liberal aspects of the American culture and political system such as democratic norms and ideals. According to this discursive logic, Chinese students will learn practical skills to benefit them on the job market and simultaneously be inculcated with democratic values, and once they return home, slowly effect liberal change in China's present-day authoritarian political system.

Whether out of self-interest or sheer ignorance, this line of thought was continuously propagated by universities and political pundits until the late 2000s when people began to take notice that Chinese students were not being impacted by their time spent abroad in the way that was predicted by the liberal, democratic model of educational and cultural exchange. If anything, data from surveys demonstrated that their years spent abroad were in fact leaving Chinese students with negative impressions of their host countries and more negative attitudes towards their host

countries' core values including notions of free speech, democratic institutions and democratic values. In a 2018 report published by the Center on Religion and Chinese Society, over forty percent of Chinese students that came to the United States reported that they left the country with a more negative attitude towards it than they had when they arrived (Purdue 2018). At the same time, most respondents reported that their attitudes towards China had become more positive, with ninety percent reporting either a positive or neutral effect. In the same survey, it was found that attitudes towards democracy, democratic institutions and democratic values showed a slight negative change based on the time spent in the United States (Purdue 2018).

Yet, though most educational institutions and even the US government itself have realized the fact that this liberal model of educational exchange doesn't seem to be successful at increasing sympathetic attitudes towards democratic values or the United States as a whole, most analyses of the situation leave it at that (Jahn 2018). It is implicitly assumed that for some reason, the students' experiences in the United States are failing to change their attitudes towards their host country. This conclusion is laden with the *a priori* assumption that the students' attitudes towards the United States had already coalesced before arrival and that their experience at American educational institutions simply failed to alter the deeply entrenched negative bias towards the country which they already possessed.

What these and other analyses fail to account for is that time spent in the United States and at American educational institutions may actually have the opposite effect of what the liberal model of educational and cultural exchange predicts. In other words, rather than simply failing to win over hearts and minds, the time spent in the United States actually increases most students' negative perceptions of the United States and amplifies their nationalistic feelings and attitudes.

It is worth noting that not every mainland Chinese student abroad experiences both an increasing magnitude of nationalistic feelings and sentiments and an increasing disdain for the United States and other Western countries. The approximately forty percent of people who report “no change” in their perceptions and attitudes towards their host countries’ and China attest to this fact (Purdue 2018). Nevertheless, it is impossible to ignore the fact that a shockingly small percentage (less than fifteen percent) of the three thousand respondents who studied in the United States for time periods ranging from one to four years reported that their time in the United States actually increased their feelings of appreciation and respect for the United States and its democratic values (Purdue 2018). Why was this the case? Why, as a whole, do Chinese students experience an increase in nationalistic sentiments as a result of their time spent abroad? In other words, how does studying abroad increase the magnitude of, or fundamentally alter nationalist subjectivities?

#### **B. The Lens of Patriotic Education – Conscious Aspects and Personal Experience**

“Yes, I remember that, but no one takes it seriously,” remarked one of my informants dismissively, when I inquired into his experiences receiving Patriotic Education from primary to high school. This response or some variation of it, was fairly ubiquitous amongst all of those mainland students that I spoke with at one stage or another. It seemed that while most sung the patriotic songs, chanted slogans and followed the lesson plans enthusiastically during their primary school years, from middle school onwards, most of the students considered the patriotic education classes a waste of time, detracting from the time that could’ve been spent studying other subjects more pertinent to their university entrance exams. Among the smaller number who also attended tertiary education in China before coming to the United States for exchange or post-graduate education, all of them recounted to me that these required “political education” classes were

considered a joke; most students would simply sit in the classroom, playing on their phones while the lecturer droned on about what they considered to be “useless” and obsolete political theories.

When asked about their individual experience with Patriotic Education and its impact on them personally, most of my interviewees displayed signs of immediate defensiveness. Possibly as a reaction to my positionality in our mutual encounter, many would ask questions along the lines of, “Do you think I’m brainwashed?” or “Do you think all Chinese are brainwashed?” These responses were not reflexive ones; rather, they were tinged with a hint of defiance and an assumption that I or others considered them as subjects acted-upon by the Chinese government, but without the sense of subjective agency presumptively granted to members of other nations or ethnic groups. Following these responses, I would calmly reply in the negative and ask what led them to ask such a question. A somewhat exasperated response from one of them captures the sentiment: “Most Westerners think we Chinese cannot think for ourselves. They think that we are brainwashed by our government. I can talk with you. Do you think I am brainwashed? Am I not thinking?” Another remarked, “Do you (all) think that I just believe everything our government tells me? They (the government) is always spreading those fake news on the internet. I don’t trust anything. I think for myself!”

Although I attempted to pose these questions as neutrally as possible, the responses garnered ranged from mild annoyance to outright defiance. Nevertheless, it should be acknowledged that those informants with whom I had a better rapport reacted more thoughtfully, taking their time to mull over the question before responding. Although their responses did not differ much in content from their peers, I felt comfortable that they sincerely reflected on the question posed and did not react out of instinctive defensiveness. Nevertheless, their conclusions were the same: according to all of my informants, although they admitted to having undergone

patriotic education, they uniformly considered it to be of no real importance and adamantly maintained that they still retained their ability to think independently in response to the perceived attitudes of Americans or other Westerners whom they perceived as regarding them as brainwashed and unable to think for themselves.

It was important to all of my informants to appear both to others and themselves as possessing their own independent thoughts and opinions, and not operating as foot soldiers for the Communist Party in Beijing. From their dialogues with me, I understood that without exception, they believed themselves to be capable of independently and rationally assessing information emitted from both Communist Party sources, as well as “Western” ones and subsequently forming their own opinion about the accuracy of such information. When I asked them how they understood certain Western Others regarding them as brainwashed, many replied by defending their ability to assess the veracity of propaganda and news disseminated by Party outlets. “I don’t always trust the Party!” one of my informants exclaimed. “I know sometimes they put fake stories in the news,” another responded. While many acknowledged the increasing amount of propaganda present on signs, billboards, TV shows and the internet under the Xi Jinping administration, most dismissed it as having no effect on them personally, emphasizing their ability to automatically identify and ignore such information without much thought.

Despite my informants’ objections, I believe that it is false to say that undergoing Patriotic Education had no effect on the way that they look at and perceive the world around them. That is not to say that they were “brainwashed” by it in the sense that it was successful in engendering subjects that were completely uncritical of the government’s dictates. Although undoubtedly Patriotic Education was more effective in exerting influence upon certain people’s consciousness than others, it is also important to note that Chinese culture has a long and rich tradition of

skepticism towards governmental authorities. Most Chinese regard the government as something cumbersome that needs to be placated and dealt with as quickly as possible, so as to continue about their lives in an unobstructed fashion. Oftentimes, this requires performing a certain level of submissiveness and ideological conformity before the authorities, while retaining a private skepticism regarding the veracity of its dictates (Walder 1983: 52). This skepticism component is important because without it, citizens would be unable to manipulate officials in favor of their own private interests. Officials often say one thing and do another and by performing outward displays of ideological conformity, citizens are able to appear as ideal citizen-subjects, evading the powerful punitive hand of the party-state (Walder 1983). At the same time, such citizens understand that personal relations with individual officials are the key to securing their own interests, despite what these same officials might say publicly. In other words, in order to be successful in China, one must be able to determine which pieces of information issued by the government are relevant and require conformity, which can effectively be ignored and which can be worked around through appropriate back channels. The collective understanding is that public statements are being issued for some opaque purpose or another and not to transmit objective truth. Therefore, for Westerners to consider mainland Chinese people to be unwitting fools and unquestioning parrots of their own government's talking points came across as insulting to most of my informants. In the face of this perceived misperception which dehumanized them and robbed them of their status as intelligent, discerning individuals, most of my respondents reacted quite negatively, asserting that they were able to indeed discern truth from falsities just like Westerners can.

### **C. The Lens of Patriotic Education – Subconscious Aspects**

I am in total agreement with my mainland Chinese informants' insistence that they are intelligent, thinking individuals who are possessed by as much agency as any Western individual. It is important for readers to understand that the Patriotic Education Campaign did not imbue those individuals educated within it, with an unending adoration and unfettered acceptance of the Communist Party's truth and benevolence. However, people of all cultures are deeply socialized into ways of perceiving the world in ways intimately connected with their own personal identity and membership within their in-group. What the Patriotic Education Campaign did succeed in was creating a frame, or lens from which people educated according to this frame, interpret information as it relates to their personal and group identity. As elaborated on in the previous section, it did so through inculcating new constitutive norms, which delineate who is a group member and what it means to be a group member (Wang 2012: 224). To this end, it utilized a particular Post-Tiananmen CCP construct of historical memory to construct an imagined past for China, which serves the purpose of justifying the Communist Party's continual rule and its essential role in China's push for an imagined future. This selective historical memory, which directly influences who is perceived to be a group member and what non-negotiable duties and responsibilities each member has towards their fellow in-group members and towards the collective as a whole, comprises the frame from which the vast majority of Chinese people view China itself as well as the external world.

Group membership and identity are the core components of nationalistic subjectivity and exist in large part below the surface of everyday consciousness and awareness for most individuals. One of my informants, told me, as we stood observing a Uighur human rights protest, that while he understood why the Muslim Students Association would hold such a protest, he still felt viscerally angry at their use of the East Turkestan flag. He said, this was the Chinese people's

“bottom line” (*dixian*) and he couldn’t respect them after witnessing the presence of this symbol. I pressed him further and he said, although he knew they weren’t calling for independence from China, he still could not bear to further engage or listen to them after laying his eyes on the flag. Although he wasn’t explicitly aware why he felt such anger, I argue that this in large part because the foundations of such anger were intentionally fomented in the classroom throughout his primary, middle and high school years. In the Patriotic Education Campaign which was implemented systematically at all levels of China’s education system following the Tiananmen Square Massacre in 1989, China’s suffering and exploitation at the hands of evil foreign powers during the Century of Humiliation are repeatedly drilled into the minds of the students (Wang 2012). Great pains are also taken to instill in the students that they are Chinese people, belonging to the same in-group as their ancestors who suffered from the worst of foreign exploitation and oppression. This is not abstract knowledge; in-group solidarity and deep anger towards the former colonial powers are actively fomented by historical re-enactments, stories, movies, activities and field trips. When they are slightly older, they are taught that who the CCP labels as “separatists” are explicitly acting at the behest of Western countries who actively seek to divide China and exploit it, thereby returning China and the Chinese people to their weak, subservient state during the Century of Humiliation (Sonam 2018). When this association is triggered, it engenders deep feelings of anger and rage towards those that use one of the separatist flags, as it did for my mainland informant.

Thus, I argue that what the Patriotic Education Campaign accomplished successfully was the creation and implementation of a ubiquitous framework through which to anchor the personal and group identity of the post-Tiananmen generation of Chinese youth. This framework operates at a both a subconscious and discursive level, combining emotions of anger, resentment and

revenge with a narrative denoting the in-group boundaries of people educated according to it, the inherent moral qualities of members of this imagined community, their imagined collective historical past, and their relationship particularly with the Western world, and minority groups within their own country. I argue that subsequent information encountered by subjects regarding these particular topics are then primarily interpreted through the lens and narrative of this framework.

As iterated extensively in the previous section, this framework engenders a nationalist subject who exists in solidarity with an in-group of traumatized, yet ancient and proud people. The narrative iterates that during a one-hundred-year period in the recent past, the Western powers and Japan used their superior technology and military strength to divide and conquer (your) China, inflicting humiliation, torture, abuse and exploitation on a virtuous and peace-loving people. But, no more. Under the guidance and leadership of the Communist Party, the Chinese people (your in-group) has united once again and through this strength of unity, is finally at the precipice of catching up to, and surpassing the countries that once inflicted such humiliation and which once looked down on (your) in-group as so weak and backwards. China is now strong and prosperous and (you) should no longer be ashamed to be Chinese. In fact, (you) should be proud once again and hold (your) head up high, defying the Western world which still seeks to humiliate and denigrate (you). Those rapacious and Western powers that inflicted so much suffering on (your) people feel threatened by the rise of China and they continue to work stealthily and underhandedly to undermine China's return to its former glory. These imperialists seek the subjugation of China and the rest of the developing world through their pernicious and hypocritical ideologies of democracy and human rights, working to support separatists in China in order to fracture the unity of (our) people and implementing policies that hinder (our) technological and economic

development, just like during the Century of Humiliation. They continue to belittle (us) in their media, while seeking to impose their dangerous ideologies on (our) people in order to undermine (our) solidarity and return (us) to subordination. Yet, China is a peace-loving country and (we) as a people hold (our) heads high, endeavoring never to stoop so low as to use violence outside of (our) borders. (We) seek full repatriation of territories forcibly separated from (our) motherland. Those who dwell in those territories strongly desire to return to their mother's warm and loving embrace, but are still prevented from doing so by the evil Western powers who seek China's downfall and fear (our) unity.

The preceding paragraph is a condensed summary from section III and serves to illustrate an example of what I call the dominant form of national subjectivity that the Party systematically instilled in the post-'89 generation through the Patriotic Education Campaign and which continues to form the lens through which most mainland Chinese people born after 1989, interpret their encounters with the rest of the world. An amalgamation of ancient Chinese social and political thought, Sun Yat Sen's nationalist ideology, and minor updates from Deng Xiaoping through Xi Jinping's administration, this nationalist subjectivity can be characterized as containing strong in-group/out-group boundaries, a belief in the inherent goodness and virtuosity of the Chinese people as an imagined collective, a paranoid distrust of foreigners (namely Westerners and Japanese) pertaining to issues revolving around Chinese politics and national identity, as well as a knee-jerk defensiveness and rage over subjects that are labelled an affront to national sovereignty. Although there is some variation in the effectiveness of this education project and its hold over the consciousness of a particular individual, this narrative is the default, dominant one in Chinese nationalist subjectivities today due to its systematic inculcation by the Party at all levels of China's educational system. As Vicky Xu puts it, "Many have tried to argue that young students from

China hold diverse views but that the moderate voices are not as loud. Those moderate voices are there, but it's not just an issue of volume but one of quantity...after a lifetime of patriotic education and state media incitement, their minds short-circuit on contentious issues" (Xu 2019).

Vicky Xu's statement, while bold, conforms with my experience with the twelve individuals that I interviewed, in addition to the several dozen students that I encountered in the participant observation component of my fieldwork. While there was deviation in many aspects of their experiences abroad, out of the thirty or so individuals that I spent time with, only one admitted to holding viewpoints that differed from the Communist Party's official stance on what are labelled "bottom line" issues including the Hong Kong protests, Taiwanese independence, the South China Sea, and the mass detention of Uighurs in Xinjiang Province. Regarding the latter, it is worth noting that three more admitted that they did not have enough information to judge the situation, but emphasized that they did not trust reporting from "Western" media outlets to accurately assess the situation. Not coincidentally, these are the issues (with the exception of Xinjiang) that are systematically embedded in the curriculum of the Patriotic Education Campaign.

The final aspect of the Patriotic Education Campaign and its connection with nationalist subjectivity in Chinese students abroad is that the narrative of China's former glory, exploitation by Western powers and Japan, unity under the CCP and final triumph over her former colonizers today, is not simply a narrative. Unlike other aspects of Patriotic or political education that were deemed boring and useless by my informants and thus easily forgotten, discarded, and subject to questioning, this core narrative was embedded with vivid emotional content, effectively cementing the identity and loyalty of Chinese young people to the nation and the Party through fusion of in-group emotions of solidarity with its victim-to-victor narrative. One could say that this core narrative comprises several Durkheimian "social facts" that are taken for granted by all members

of this imagined community and thus left largely unexamined. As opposed to other components of China's political education which simply require memorizing dry facts and theories from Marx, Mao, Deng, and (now) Xi, the identitarian component to the Patriotic Education Campaign ensures the internalization of this core narrative of patriotism and the subject's membership and loyalty to the ethno-national in-group, as defined by the CCP. The inculcation of a sense of in-group belonging and moral education from a young age on how to be a "proper Chinese" (or proper member of this in-group) results in the engendering of subjects with strong in-group identification and patriotic loyalty and an instantaneous emotional reaction (lauded as "patriotic") to any negative information about China encountered from people labelled as separatists or traitors (in the case of Chinese subjects) or identified as non-Chinese foreigners.

This is especially so when relating to issues like Xinjiang, Tibet, Taiwan, Hong Kong, and the South China Sea, as these issues are deliberately and rhetorically constructed as inseparable from China's sovereignty, which is experienced as a sacred core value on par with freedom of speech in the minds of most Americans. The sacredness surrounding Chinese people's right to self-determination is systematically instilled in subjects during Patriotic Education, but the key to understanding Chinese nationalist subjectivities today is understanding what this "self" in self-determination really means. Who constitutes and represents the "we?" The answer is: the Party, for the Party positions itself as the true representative of the Chinese people's will and thus as the rightful sovereign over China proper. The aforementioned issues are rhetorically positioned by the Party as pertaining to China's sovereignty and thus, any discussion or contention surrounding them (they have already been imbued with the sacredness evoked by the concept of sovereignty) results in emotional responses characteristic of the violation of a sacred concept, especially by people labelled as enemy out-group members plotting China's downfall. Yet, it is worth mentioning that

when such a violation occurs by an outsider, such as when a foreigner raises one of the former issues in conversation, nationalist subjects do not usually perceive this as a violation against an abstract political party; instead, due to the Patriotic Education Campaign and its careful engendering of particular kinds of nationalist subjects, they usually experience it as a violation against the Chinese people as a whole and thus as an attack upon them personally.

Since all the aforementioned issues contain some element of challenge to the CCP's total monopoly on legitimacy to govern China, the Chinese government's stance on these issues is instilled during the Patriotic Education Campaign as a social fact, while the other claimants are portrayed as being in bed with the imagined Western enemy who desires to return China to its humiliated state during the 19<sup>th</sup> century. This labelling process of members of these groups as "terrorists," "rioters," "separatists" and "thugs" which is also carried out by the Communist Party through the Patriotic Education Campaign and in the media, deliberately robs the Chinese members of the groups listed above of their in-group status. Though they are Chinese nationals according to their passport, they are no longer considered to be a "proper Chinese" and are instead imbued with the same odious qualities embodied by members of the imagined Western enemy who desires to humiliate China and exploit its people. This not only justifies state violence and repression directed at the people in question, but triggers knee-jerk emotional reactions imbued with the sense of righteous anger directed at Westerners or other foreigners who support them or advocate on their behalf.

#### **D. Constituting and Re-Constituting the Patriotic Lens**

Although the patriotic lens has been carefully implemented at all levels of the Patriotic Education Campaign since the early 1990s and is thus the default prism through which most students who entered primary and middle school in China after this time interact with the world,

for who travel abroad for their education, it is important to emphasize that this lens is by no means unassailable. Although its subconscious nature and emotional connection with the sacred concept of sovereignty and in-group membership renders it extremely robust, it does need to be consistently reinforced through all stages of identity formation so that it can withstand challenges to its veracity.

For Chinese students who study abroad, there is a unique challenge to this nationalist lens through the inevitable encounters they have with information that contradicts its premises. Since this lens does not transmit an absolute truth, and instead fundamentally depends on the positioning and labelling of certain people as untouchable members of evil outgroups conspiring to destroy the Chinese nation, faithfully represented by the Communist Party, encounters with information or persons that humanize the other parties and challenge the CCP's legitimacy as the true and only possibility for the representation of the Chinese people's interests, pose a particular threat to the coherence of this lens and thus to the core narrative which underpins CCP legitimacy. However, despite the potential vulnerabilities of the social facts in question, there are several mitigating factors in the lives of mainland Chinese students abroad which maintain and re-constitute the lens forged during the Patriotic Education Campaign.

The first mitigating factor is the social isolation that many Chinese students encounter while studying abroad. One informant recounted to me that although he had studied in the United States for two years at two different high schools and for three years in university, he was not able to make any American friends during his five years of residency in the United States. An outgoing, extraverted young man who had a strong command of the language and was never at a loss for words, he exclaimed, "If I can't make American friends, how about the other Chinese students?!" It was true: this particular student whom I call Steven, watched dozens of American TV series,

had a plethora of interesting life experience in several states, displayed an interest in understanding American culture and politics, displayed fondness for different types of American cuisine, had dreams and aspirations for his future, and was by all standards, well-informed and interesting to talk with. If he couldn't forge sustainable friendships with young Americans his age, it was not difficult to imagine how barren and unwelcoming the social landscape might appear to Chinese students who have a lesser command of the language, are more introverted by nature or simply don't have the courage to venture out of their comfort zone. Out of all my informants, Steven was the most social and had the most contact with American culture – he reached out to me often and we talked several times a week on a variety of messaging apps. One thing that I noticed about Steven that he routinely brought up his frustration at his inability to make American friends and his reluctant resignation to exclusively stay within in all-Chinese social circles. He recounted a time with his university classmates that he befriended through their mutual cooperation on a group project. “They invited me to smoke weed at a party with them,” he said. “But then when I sent them a message about the party, they didn't really reply.” From his facial expression and body language, I immediately sensed this frustrating situation happened more than once. At a later time when we discussed friendships at university over sandwiches, he told me that Americans simply weren't very inclusive of international students in their social gatherings and didn't display an active interest in getting to know them. “It's hard to know Americans,” he remarked resignedly.

Steven's experiences are far from the exception. According to data from several reports, forty-five percent of Chinese students suffer from symptoms of depression in the United States, the UK and Australia (Fish 2018; Hail 2015). This is more than triple the rate of local students and is explained by researchers as largely a response to the stress and social isolation of Chinese students studying abroad. In addition, studies have shown that most Chinese students abroad have

friendship and roommate networks consisting almost exclusively of other Chinese international students or other East Asian students (Purdue 2018). According to several of my informants, this social isolation and general lack of cross-cultural friendships can be explained by a wide variety of factors, including general disinterest in American food, a lack of shared cultural knowledge, lack of interest in American-style ways of socializing (parties, smoking/drinking), lack of confidence in English, passive attitudes towards making local friends, failure of American educational institutions to cultivate inclusive environments and the lack of warmth from the American students themselves.

During my conversations with my informants, the recurring theme of pervasive loneliness was something that was brought up again and again. However, I also noticed that this phenomenon was not simply attributable to a lack of warmth and curiosity displayed by American students; many of my informants also displayed a strong tendency to self-isolate for several of the aforementioned reasons. Behind these reasons, many expressed a strong personal identity “as a Chinese” that seemed to them to be fundamentally incompatible with American beliefs and practices. While our truncated interactions did not provide an ample enough opportunity to explore this topic in more depth, several expressed a fear of what I could only describe as “becoming American.” Apart from the visceral unfamiliarity of American food, American ways of socializing and feeling of alienation and isolation when faced with these unfamiliar ways of socializing and interacting, there was also a lack of desire to learn from and assimilate to their host country (Larmer 2017). One of my informants who asked to remain completely anonymous, related to me that among the Chinese overseas student community, integrating oneself with Americans and assimilating into American culture was considered to be a bad thing. “If you do that, it’s like you are not Chinese anymore,” he said. Thus, while most of my informants expressed a desire to

experience more of “American culture” (seen as synonymous with White American culture in most cases), this “experience” ideally did not involve assimilation, as cultural identity was strongly experienced as a zero-sum trait. The more “American” in tastes, habits, and practices one embodied, the less “Chinese” one became. In an era of amplified nationalism and patriotic feelings, this was needless to say, not something that was perceived in a positive light.

However, in the context of the barren social landscape that many Chinese students find in America, there are still certain groups of people that consistently provide outlets of social support. According to my informants, these groups are usually elderly people and Christian groups run by local churches (also see Larmer 2017). Steven himself recounted to me that while he failed to make any real friends of his age at the high school he attended in suburban Wisconsin, his host family, most notably the parents and grandparents, provided a vital source of social support by including him at family gatherings, allowing him full participation at holiday events, and serving as his emotional bedrock throughout his stay. This was true of my other informants as well: while most reported that there were no American people of their age with whom they shared a close relationship, about one-third of my informants reported that they had a close relationship with either church members or elderly continuing-education students that had reached out and befriended them in class. Nevertheless, all of my informants who had contact with local Christian groups reported that they felt ambivalent about such relationships. While they expressed appreciation for the social contact and hospitality that such groups provided, including the practical services such as assistance with airport pick-ups, understanding the tax bureaucracy, and providing places to hang out, they also knew that the underlying goal was to convert them to whichever particular sect of Christianity such groups represented. As Zhou, another one of my informants said, “I feel a little strange when they give me a haircut (for free), because they ask me about my

belief in the bible.” Clearly, there is an indirect pressure for students who receive assistance from these groups, to eventually acquire membership in them. As of the time this paper was written, none of my informants ultimately elected to join such groups and all who expressly committed to that decision reported that their social contact with the members of these groups subsequently declined. With regards to the surprising number of friendships with elderly Americans, my informants reported high levels of satisfaction, yet I couldn’t help but wonder they would have preferred contact with locals of a similar age when. A response of an informant, Jason, sums up the sentiment well: “At least they (the elderly couple he befriended) invite me to their house and call me every week.”

From the preceding paragraph, it is clear that while there are some opportunities for social contact with local Americans, most students abroad don’t find them to be either fulfilling or ample enough to satisfy their social needs. Both this lack of inclusivity on the part of their same-age American peers and the reluctance of the Chinese students to internalize habits and practices that are different from those self-identified as “Chinese,” are corroborated by research studies demonstrating this phenomenon on a wider scale (Hail 2015; Larmer 2017). Into the social void created by these conditions, the Communist Party subtly reinserts itself into the lives of these students.

### **E. Patriotic, Yet Practical: The Role of the CSSA in Shaping Nationalist Subjectivities**

The Chinese Students and Scholars Association (CSSA for short) is an organization administered by the Communist Party with branches in all overseas universities with Chinese students present. All of my informants described being a member of the CSSA or having some direct, consistent contact with it, most often in the form of membership in WeChat groups. According to one of my informants, the CSSA chapter president at an unnamed university in

England, the CSSA has several functions. One of its primary tasks is to provide practical assistance to the Chinese students who attend the university. The CSSA often provides free pick-up from the nearest airport and arranges transportation to the university campus with its members. These members are the first social contact most Chinese students have with anyone in the host country and are encouraged to serve as point persons for the duration of the person's stay. They can be called on (or more often messaged) to provide information and assistance on reporting taxes, accessing the school's computerized registration system, dealing with the school administration, accompaniment to the doctor, and other hurdles students in foreign countries may encounter in their initial stages of arrival.

In an unfamiliar environment with a dearth of alternative social options (or a high barrier to entry to those which do exist), the CSSA also serves an important nexus of social and community functions for incoming students. The point persons described above can immediately connect the newly arrived student to other members of the Chinese community on campus, often arranging dinner gatherings in members' houses. At these gatherings, one of which I attended, home-cooked Chinese food is often served, participants speak in Chinese and chat about the commonalities they share, including their hometowns, class recommendations, professors, complain about the local food and reminisce about China. As a result of the connections forged during these gatherings, the students then often band together to take classes and acquire more contacts with whom to spend their spare time. Like other students, they develop a social network through meeting friends of friends, subsequently attending classes together, doing homework in groups at the library, cafes and boba shops, going shopping, playing sports and sharing hurried meals between their obligations and activities. The CSSA also holds several cultural events throughout the year, most

often on Chinese holidays. These events provide networking opportunities and serve as another venue for Chinese overseas students to expand their social network.

In addition to providing practical assistance, a ready-made social network, and hosting cultural events, the CSSA also serves the important function of reinforcing the national identity and nationalistic sentiments of Chinese students abroad. This is accomplished both directly and indirectly. Although the aforementioned cultural events indeed serve the purpose of community bonding and networking, they simultaneously function to reinforce the nationalist lens and narrative imparted during Patriotic Education. A major purpose of the CSSA organizing such public celebrations is to remind attendees of their common cultural and national heritage (which are depicted as being one and the same) and due to the culture = nation/Party framework imparted during the Patriotic Education Campaign, heighten the salience of in-group consciousness of all Chinese overseas students. Secondly, the CSSA also administers and oversees WeChat groups which reach the students that choose not to attend formal and informal social events. In addition to providing up-to-date information on practical matters and social events, the administrators for these groups also post information and directives at the behest of the Communist Party, including nationalistic articles lauding China and the Party's accomplishments, reminding students about how to be a proper Chinese, while warning students about the dangers, both real and imagined, that lurk beyond the boundaries of the Chinese community in their host country. The Communist Party also uses the CSSA to organize and mobilize the Chinese students abroad to demonstrate in support of "bottom-line" issues in its nationalist narrative and against other groups whose voices threaten the coherence of that narrative including Tibetans, Uighurs, Hong Kong pro-democracy activists, Taiwanese independence activists and the Falun Gong (Bernstein 2019; Tatlow 2019).

Finally, the CSSA serves the much-overlooked function of monitoring overseas Chinese students for correct political thought and behavior. Often working in tandem with the local Chinese consulate or embassy, the CSSA keeps a close watch on students and scholars who attend events, lectures or classes that reveal aspects of Chinese history that contradict the nationalistic narrative put forth by the Patriotic Education System (Tatlow 2019). At the direction of the consulate or embassy, arrangements are made so that some students are assigned to attend such events, lectures, or classes and record which other Chinese students choose to attend. The process is murky and was not described in detail by my informant, but she confirmed that students who consistently attend such classes will be reported to the consulate, and especially so if they express opinions at those venues that are sympathetic to those the Party deems to be its enemies. When able to, these students also film or record the event in question, and the faces of those in attendance are then sent to the consulate. Those faces are then matched with their national identification using the national database and facial-recognition software. The people are subsequently thought to be placed on government lists of potential dissidents and monitored more closely.

Therefore, the Chinese Students and Scholars Association plays a major role in shaping the nationalist subjectivities of Chinese students studying abroad all over the world. By providing vital advice and services needed for survival in a foreign country, ameliorating the social void that many Chinese students abroad find themselves in, and performing those benevolent functions while also directly and indirectly reminding students of their Chinese national identity, the CSSA effectively ensures that the nationalistic lens imparted during these students' elementary through high school education is maintained and reinforced. In addition, through its administration over the WeChat groups that provide such crucial survival information while simultaneously spreading nationalist propaganda articles, in addition to the ever-present threat of being monitored, students are

reminded that they are being watched, no matter how loosely. Furthermore, through its social networking function and its monopoly of all Chinese cultural events, the CSSA ensures that these students' social networks are comprised mainly of other Chinese nationals who will corroborate and maintain the common social facts and core narrative(s) which lie at the heart of the dominant nationalist subjectivity crafted by the Party-state.

#### **F. The Chinese Internet Bubble, Censorship, and Nationalist Subjectivities**

Though the CSSA performs certain functions for Chinese students abroad, particularly in the realms of providing practical assistance and creating a community which would otherwise be absent, while simultaneously exuding Party influence and supervision over that community, it does not have the manpower or the resources to fill the social void of those individuals for whatever reason, rarely appear at social gatherings and prefer to stay shuttered in their rooms. For these students existing on the fringes of the CSSA-administered community, who largely ignore notifications from the WeChat group, there is still a lot of free time to potentially encounter information that counters the existing narrative, lens and social facts inculcated in the Patriotic Education Campaign. However, the preceding section already makes clear that whether by their own lack of initiative or due to the lack of warmth exuded by local American counterparts, most of these students do not make American friends and do not participate in university clubs or social events attended by non-Chinese students (Purdue 2018). So, given their non-participation in social events, whether American or Chinese-sponsored, how do they spend their spare time in ways that could potentially affect their experience as nationalist subjects?

When asked how they spend their spare time in university or graduate school outside of face-to-face social events, classes and other obligations necessary for daily living, all of my informants told me that spending time on the internet, whether on the computer or on their mobile

phone, was their go-to mode of relaxation or information-gathering. While it was clear that there was a wide range of estimates for internet use, ranging from two to seven hours per day, it is incontrovertible that time spent on the internet accounted for a large part of these students' experiential reality abroad. In lieu of this fact, it is crucial to examine the specificities of these students' internet use and how it shapes nationalist subjectivities.

The first noteworthy fact about internet use in Chinese students abroad is captured by a conversation that I had with Zhou one afternoon strolling around the campus of UCLA. Despite his proficiency with the language, he told me that he almost never uses Western social media apps nor frequents many websites written in English. "English is too hard," he complained. "I have to sit in class every day and write homeworks, so when I leave, I just want to use Chinese." Zhou's case is typical of most of my informants who explicitly communicated to me that they did not frequent websites in English for non-class-related matters. While about half them mentioned that they occasionally would browse non-Chinese websites and use non-Chinese apps, by and large, this did not account for a large percentage of their internet use. By and large, they continued the internet habits that they had developed prior to arriving in the United States. From the informal conversations I had during my participant observation, most told me that they spent the bulk of their internet time on social media apps like WeChat and Weibo, while the rest was accounted for by video sites like Douyin and Kuaishou, forums like Zhihu, and various Chinese news sites. Many male informants also spent a good deal of time playing various computer games that they had played in China (League of Legends being a popular one), and members of both sexes also reported shopping on Amazon and Ali Express. Though most told me that they had created Facebook, Instagram or Snapchat accounts, they told me that their utility was limited because they did not have many non-Chinese friends and would thus rarely check them and did not post often. Since

most of their social network existed on Chinese apps like WeChat and Weibo, there was no need to pay much attention to Western social media apps. In addition, while some reported occasionally scanning the headlines of Western newspapers and websites, most preferred to receive their news from WeChat or Weibo, most often through trending articles or those posted by their friends. Although my sample size is small, my findings are consistent with other reports which corroborate the fact that most Chinese students spend the vast majority of their time within the Chinese internet sphere (as opposed to the Western internet sphere) during their time abroad (Purdue 2018: 14).

The reason that understanding the social media and internet environment of these Chinese students is critical to understanding how their time abroad shapes nationalist subjectivities, is that the Chinese media landscape is highly censored and only allows certain kinds of information to be circulated within it. Research on the Great Firewall and the Chinese domestic internet which most of these students remain in the comfortable bubble of, demonstrates that it is heavily policed by millions of internet censors employed by the government who efficiently systematically remove any material that casts the Party in a negative light (Roberts 2018). In addition, large social media companies and hosts of popular forums have Party branches within their companies and cooperate fully with the authorities by employing their own censors to monitor their platforms for any politically sensitive material. Thus, as far as nationalism is concerned, absolutely nothing that challenges the social facts that lie at the heart of the core narrative that constitutes nationalist subjectivities is allowed to exist or circulate on the Chinese internet. As soon as it is discovered, it is immediately erased and repeated offenses can render the user in trouble with the authorities. One of my informants recounted to me that when he was in China in his late teens, he went through a phase of posting anti-Party comments on Weibo. After several posts were taken down by the company, he was visited by a plainclothes police officer who warned him to cease posting such

material. If he continued to do this, the officer warned, he would be “invited” to the police station and his parents would be called. In a similar vein, another one of my informants ordered certain banned books from Hong Kong and was visited several days later by a plainclothes police officer holding the delivery package in his hands. He was thoroughly questioned about his motives behind ordering such material, the books were confiscated, and he was subsequently issued a warning that the next time he committed such an offense, he would be asked to have “tea” down at the police station.

My other informants also told me that they would always refrain from posting anything politically controversial on WeChat or Weibo, even going so far as to self-censor conversations in their private group chats. The government not only scours the internet for any public information that contradicts the Party’s core narrative and which casts it in a negative light, but it also has been shown to monitor private conversations on social media platforms. Certain keywords and phrases that allude to politically controversial events are censored on WeChat and other social media apps so that if one inputs the sensitive words, the other user simply doesn’t receive it (Roberts 2018). People who continually espouse anti-Party viewpoints in their private chats are even subject to questioning, interrogation and jail time at the behest of local authorities (Li 2019). At any rate, the conversations between individuals are highly monitored and though the extent of the monitoring is uncertain, the fact that such monitoring is known to exist, engenders a highly effective form of self-censorship. Between the self-censorship of individuals, the internet companies’ systematic removal of accounts that feature controversial or anti-party viewpoints, and the government’s employment of millions of censors to remove discussions and posts that violate its core political narrative, the Chinese internet is a highly censored place where the basic social facts that constitute the core of Chinese nationalist subjectivities remain taken for granted and unchallenged.

It is crucial to note that Chinese government censorship does not only limit itself to the Chinese internet within the great firewall. Chinese students abroad that post content on non-Chinese language websites and social media platforms are also held accountable for the content of their posts once they return home. In a recent, highly publicized case, a University of Minnesota student posted satirical cartoons of Xi Jinping and the Chinese Communist Party on Twitter and was jailed upon his return to China on the charge of “spreading rumors” (Ebrahimian 2020). In fact, in recent years, the capability of Chinese authorities to monitor dissent outside of the Great Firewall, including on English-language websites has greatly increased. Chinese nationals that post videos, articles, and comments which contradict the Party’s core narrative on Western social media platforms and websites, especially its core narrative, are at high risk for detention upon re-entering the borders of mainland China, where they are subject to interrogation and detention. Even for Chinese nationals safely ensconced in foreign countries with freedom of speech protection and who do not desire to return to China, the CCP has been known to threaten their close family members who still reside in China with punishment and detention if they do not successfully convince the person in question to remove their comments and refrain from posting such material in the future (Porter 2019).

In addition to the threat of punishment, as well as the systematic and highly efficient censorship and removal of articles and videos that could contradict the Party’s core narrative, the Chinese internet is a highly regulated space which not only restricts access to certain viewpoints that contradict the Party’s core narrative, but which engineers those that bolster that narrative to flourish. Since there are too many internet users and some dissent is inevitable, particularly in a media ecosystem with nearly one billion users, the Party implements highly effective strategies to focus on managing that dissent rather than removing it entirely (King et al. 2017). While the most

egregious content is quickly and efficiently removed, individual users' posts in comment sections and forums are usually left alone. Instead, the army of government-paid internet censors flood such spaces with nationalistic comments, concentrating their resources on the most-viewed websites and social media platforms. Most don't directly argue with users who post anti-Party comments; rather, they simply post nationalist material, up-vote each other and drown out the voices of dissent by ignoring them, down-voting their posts and thus, relegating them to invisibility in the public realm (King et al 2017). Not only does this render such voices invisible; it gives other users the impression that their fellow countrymen are strongly supportive of the Party and embody the model of proud Chinese patriots that are disseminated in other forms of Chinese media (Roberts 2018). This re-inscribes the nationalistic narratives originally imparted during the Patriotic Education campaign, maintains the social facts that underpin these narratives and normalizes the dominant nationalist subjectivity while rendering alternatives abnormal, unpopular, and treasonous.

In addition to the social media environment and the news/information available to those who dwell primarily in the Chinese internet bubble, the popular movies and Chinese TV shows that exist on the Chinese internet and which are popularized and discussed within Chinese circles both on and offline also conform this dominant nationalist subjectivity and reinforce it in subjects already primed to valorize such depictions. Chinese films, TV shows and other media material are often funded directly by the government, which invests large sums of money in productions that espouse patriotic narratives and reinforce the messages of the Party. Though these films do not evoke the same level of admiration and enjoyment in people outside of China who were not morally engineered according to the dictates of the Patriotic Education Campaign, most of my informants professed to immensely enjoying such films, often independently recommending that I watch them as part as an enjoyable and gratifying cinematic experience. The films that my

informants mentioned most often during the past year included “Wolf Warrior” (I and II), “The Climbers,” “The Captain” and “My People, My Country.” These films all impart nationalistic narratives that reinforce and dramatize the Party’s version of Chinese history imparted during the Patriotic Education Campaign while simultaneously prominently featuring main characters that embody ideal features of prototypical male and female nationalist subjects (Zhao 2019). By imbuing these characters with moral and physical qualities that evoke admiration in the audience, this further accentuate their status as role models worthy of emulation, thereby reinforcing the moral desirability of advocating the nationalistic and patriotic messages embodied in those characters.

For Chinese students abroad whose reality is still comprised largely of this Party-controlled Chinese internet bubble, it is easy to see how the core social facts that underlie the narratives imparted during the Patriotic Education Campaign are consistently reinforced. In addition to the internet itself, Chinese TV shows, films and other media material which were created, financed and popularized in this highly censored environment also reinforce these nationalistic narratives both implicitly by not challenging these social facts on one hand, and by actively reinforcing the nationalistic lens on the other. Through a combination of the vague but ever-present threat of punishment by appearing to be anti-Party, whether by attending events which contradict its narrative in in real-life, or by posting comments or other material on the internet, the presence of a welcoming and helpful Party-shaped Chinese community on campus, and the fact that most Chinese students abroad spend their free time largely within the confines of the Chinese internet bubble, nationalist subjectivities are constantly re-inscribed and maintained.

**G. The Strengthening of Nationalist Subjectivities Through Encounters With Foreign Media and Students**

Despite the fact that Chinese students are physically located in a foreign country while abroad, it is apparent that most of their time is spent in ways that mirror the environment that they would otherwise inhabit within China itself. This is facilitated by the presence of the safe zone afforded by the CSSA, the natural reluctance that many have to step outside of their comfort zone, and the lack of initiative displayed by students in the host country in welcoming them into their social circles. The only difference for many of my informants to being in China itself, was that their classes and assignments were in English. When I asked the difference between his university environment in America and those of his same-age peers who attend university in China, one of my informants, a 20 year-old undergraduate, joked, “It’s like being in China, but (it) has better air quality.” After I inquired further into why this was the case, he said, “I eat Chinese food...(though he took great pains to mentioned that it was not as tasty as in China) I have Chinese friends, I go on WeChat all the time....sometimes I don’t speak English all day.” This same student then followed up, saying that even though he had to use English in his assignments and in class, many of his Chinese peers don’t even do that. “How?” I asked, incredulously. “Well,” he said, “On WeChat, there are always advertisements for writing essays and doing homework.” He said that he even knew students who ran these essay-writing businesses and asked if I wanted to work for them. “I think you would be very attractive (to them),” he said. “You are a PhD student and they can give you a lot of money.”

While there are no statistics about the number of students who utilize such services, the fact that these services are so proliferate is a testament to the fact that if they desire to, Chinese students abroad are able to exist entirely within a Chinese language and media bubble, barely interacting with the physical outside world in their host country. When I asked this student for a generic estimation of how many of his peers ever used such services, he told me between one-third

and one-half. After gently inquiring into whether he himself ever used such services, he said that he only used it once in a high stress situation during his sophomore year. While he said that most people he knows complete their work by themselves, there is a minority who use testing services regularly. “I don’t understand them,” he remarked dismissively. “If they come (all the way) to America, why don’t they learn something?”

In the context of the extent to which the Chinese language and media bubble blankets students abroad, it is imperative to assert that many Chinese students do occasionally traverse the bubble to access English-language websites and news sources and to discuss issues with their American peers. However, the relatively infrequent nature of this curiosity-seeking behavior should be emphasized. None of my informants regularly reported reading entire English-language news articles on foreign websites. For those who did do so occasionally, most would simply glance at the headlines on the New York Times, CNN, Fox News, BBC and the Washington Post. The most common pattern was that after having done so, most concluded that the “Western media” was biased against China and reverted back to consuming Chinese news sources from within the Great Firewall. Although my informants rarely could specifically define what they meant by the bias shown in the “Western media” (which was always conflated into one category), their answers seemed to indicate that articles which cast any aspect of China or the Party in a negative light constituted a “bias,” as well as those that directly or indirectly casted aspersion on the basic social facts put forth during Patriotic Education. In a café on the UCLA campus, one informant and I discussed a New York Times article about the Hong Kong Protests which told the story of the pro-democracy demonstrations. “They talk about the protestors, and their story but they don’t talk about all the violence that they did to the Hong Kong people,” this particular informant expressed emphatically. “Yes,” I replied. “However, the overwhelming majority of violent incidents in the

protests have been initiated by the police force against the protestors. The incidents of counter-violence are comparatively small in number.” “That’s your bias,” the informant told me exasperatedly. “You are brainwashed by the Western media.” After a short, but spirited discussion, he said tiredly, “Okay, you have your side and we have ours. Every coin has two sides,” and changed the subject.

The Chinese media’s method of reporting on Hong Kong emphasizes the small number of violent incidents against the police and pro-China supporters by protestors who are usually described in disparaging terms such as “garbage youth,” “rioters,” and “thugs” motivated by the deteriorating economic conditions of the city (DW 2019). Therefore, any news outlet which reported the viewpoints and stories of the pro-democracy protestors, as well as the number of police or triad-initiated incidents of violence was considered to be “biased,” even when the latter far outnumbered the incidents of protestor-initiated violence on police or civilians. To expand this perspective further, Western news outlets that reported events from the viewpoint of the overwhelming majority of people in the city, were considered to be “biased” and “anti-China.” Although one could argue on a Chinese nationalist’s terms, that this whole preceding paragraph is “biased,” it is worth pointing out that the pro-democracy party won 90% of district council seats across Hong Kong with a 71.2% voter turnout in an election widely seen as a referendum on said protests (Tan 2019). In addition, the same article I discussed with my informant did in fact report on the feelings of pro-China residents in the city, including the inconvenience caused by the protests. Nevertheless, no matter how closely a Western news article conformed with reality on the ground in Hong Kong for the vast majority of people, if it contradicted the basic tenets of the nationalist narrative whereby the Party is granted an exclusive monopoly on the right to exercise political power (which is defined as the will of the Chinese people) on any territory it defines as

“Chinese,” it was deemed to be an example of the “biased Western media.” It is worth noting that while sensationalist and eye-catching titles are common in story lines in most articles published by media outlets (not just those involving China), most articles written by reputable news agencies in the “West” do in fact report the different sides of a given issue and do not use fabricated statistics. In addition, when reporting on social movements, these articles aim to capture the general voice of such movements on their own terms using general reporting to describe the scene and interviews with specific interviewees. Excessive cherry-picking and confabulating basic facts about any given movement would quickly compromise the reputation of well-established news sources and lead to a decline in readership. I am not aiming to defend all news outlets in Europe and the United States. Many do have their political biases and slant in either one direction or another. However, there is a major difference between the biases that are generated from within a media ecosystem characterized by freedom of speech, freedom of information and where journalists’ rights are legally protected, and who maintain a professional ethos of dirt-digging and truth-telling, as opposed to one characterized by heavy censorship, political education classes for journalists, and threats of detention for stories that cast the Party in a negative light.

Thus, to most of my informants, “bias” in what they called the “Western Media” consisted mainly of articles which drew the readership’s attention to the shortcomings of China or the Communist Party, particularly on bottom-line issues that were mentioned in the previous section. Whether the facts reasonably conformed with the reality on the ground as experienced by the majority of the group of people, in conjunction with facts that could be verified statistically, was inconsequential to my informants when describing “Western Media” sources as “biased.” To put this in other words, any article published by Western Media outlets which violated the core

narrative about China that they were told during the Patriotic Education Campaign was designated as “biased” and unworthy of thorough discussion and unpacking.

After encountering this kind of information, several of my informants told me that they felt angry and defensive, and their initial reaction was to retreat into the Chinese media bubble to resume their usual patterns of news consumption or to read reports that would reinforce their previously-established worldview. In fact, I found that the encounters with this kind of information, rather than leading most of my informants to question the Party’s narrative, led instead to them becoming more dismissive of self-designated “Western” ideas and increasingly nationalistic. “I never really thought about these kind of things before I came to the United States,” one informant told me after I spoke with him following a Hong Kong pro-democracy movement protest on the UCLA campus. “Now,” he said, “I really know that I am a Chinese no matter what.” When I asked what he meant by this statement, he simply said, “I need to support my country in these things,” implying his disapproval of the pro-Hong Kong gathering. This informant’s story is also supported by evidence that encounters with local students revolving around controversial issues like Tibet, Hong Kong, Taiwan, or the Uighur internment camps in Xinjiang Province, usually result in Chinese students reacting defensively, defending the practices of the Chinese government and labelling local students as “having no knowledge about China” and “anti-China” (Hail 2015). Thus, it seems that encountering any negative information about China, whether from the mouths of the local students or the occasional forays into the English-speaking online world, seem to trigger in Chinese students, the knee-jerk reaction of immediately labelling foreigners as part of the anti-China outgroup. Emotionally fused during the Patriotic Education Campaign, with the humiliation of China by foreigners during the 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, and the continual

perceived attempts by foreign countries to bring China to its knees, even today, such encounters trigger anger and the accompanying narratives imparted during their Patriotic Education.

Even when they attribute such viewpoints to ignorance rather than malice, over half of my informants described feeling viscerally angry, especially with regards to the aforementioned issues which are usually argued in terms of “human rights.” After hearing a Uighur lady recount her pain of her family being jailed in China as a result of her speaking out in the United States, my informant initially told me that he felt sad for her like her “big brother” (even though he was thirty years her junior) and felt responsible to make her see the issue “correctly.” This is typical of the patronizing character of the dominant Han nationalist subjectivity as it pertains to the position of ethnic minorities within Chinese society. However, when she insisted that she wanted full access granted to foreign journalists and human rights organizations, he became angry saying, “This is China’s internal issue. This is not for foreigners to resolve.” Later, my informant told me that although he could understand why she was upset, he felt an ardent anger at her standing in the middle of UCLA telling “foreigners” about China’s problems. This visceral anger too, represents the emotional engineering resulting from Patriotic Education whereby Chinese subjects are told that China’s issues are China’s alone (read: Communist Party) and any appeal to foreigners is akin to a treasonous tempt to divide China and return it to its 19<sup>th</sup> century state of subservience to Western imperialist powers.

Occasional encounters with criticism of China in the media and from the mouths of local people are fairly uncommon, but when they do occur, trigger immediate emotional reactions of anger and defensiveness in the bodies of Chinese nationalist subjects. When this happens, they immediately draw on the ready-to-access narratives imparted throughout their decades of Patriotic education, labelling those proffering such criticism as members of the “anti-China” outgroup that

is conspiring against them and their nation. As iterated previously, even when they don't consciously perceive such discussions as hostile in nature, the subconscious emotionality is triggered anyway and reinforces their sense of identity and belonging within the Chinese in-group whose boundaries have been already demarcated and engineered by the CCP during their education. Additionally, the Chinese Internet and even the Patriotic Education Campaign itself offers easy-to-remember broad refutations that can apply to any specific criticism levied by Westerners (or other Chinese) of the human rights situation in China. Oftentimes, this is framed in terms of "safety," "societal/economic development" and "fake news," while emphasizing the social problems of Western societies. In the end, even if the nationalist subject is persuaded of the veracity of human rights violations in China, the narratives from the Patriotic Education Campaign and reinforced by the Chinese media ecosystem of censorship lead most to conclude that such violations are probably exaggerated by the Western media and in any case, are a small price to pay for China's development, and that all societies have their problems. This effectively shuts down dialogue and triggers a state of nihilistic passivity that is a secondary characteristic of the dominant Chinese nationalist subjectivity.

#### **H. Encounters with America and the Strengthening of Chinese Nationalist Subjectivities**

While the preceding section focused on the paradoxical strengthening of most Chinese overseas students' nationalistic feelings and attitudes as a result of encounters with criticism of China from foreigners and foreign media outlets, physical encounters with the United States (and to a lesser extent) European countries also contribute to this phenomenon in ways that have not been previously explored in Western literature on the subject.

In Chinese society, America and Europe are often depicted by popular media as the countries embodying the pinnacle of modernity (Hua 2013). However, expectations of modernity and what

constitutes a “modern” society are quite different in both places. Ever since the Revolution of 1911 and the May 4<sup>th</sup> movement, the idea of modernization has been long heralded as the key to transforming Chinese society by allowing the Chinese people to re-assert sovereignty over their lost territory, catch up to the former colonial powers and re-assert their former place in the world as the descendants of the world’s most advanced and enlightened civilization (Bislev and Li 2014). In other words, the Chinese narrative that emphasizes its victimhood at the hands of Western colonial powers impacts the salience and desirability of “modernity,” as well as what the term itself evokes in the imagination of Chinese national subjects. While the idea of China as the world’s most advanced and enlightened civilization uses a re-constructed imagined past to define and delineate the modern “Chinese” nation, the impetus to realize “modernity” has been a central feature of Chinese thought and subjectivity and is strongly connected to the formation of the modern, nationalist subject.

While the telos of modernity is something that has been the chief driving force behind Chinese social and economic developments systematically pursued by Chinese people individually and as a society since the Communist Party unified present-day China in 1949, what exactly constitutes this idea of modernity has changed over the years and decades of CCP rule. Since China’s experiments with market reform in the 1980s through the years of its booming economy in the 1990s and 2000s, the idea of Chinese modernity in the civilizational sense can be summed up by the phrase “Out with the old, in with the new.” Words like “new,” “glitzy” and “efficient” were approximations of this ideal modernity in the recent past decades, as people rushed to update their homes with the latest architectural styles and materials, acquire the latest personalized technological gadgets, inhabit the cities with the glitziest and most visually impressive skyscrapers, and implement the most advanced technology at every possible level of society

(Meinhof 2018). In recent years, cleanliness, orderliness and safety (stability) have been tacked onto the flurried pursuit of technological and economic modernization as prized ideals worth pursuing in tandem with the older ideals. Amalgamated together, the integration of these concepts forms the imagined idea of what modernity constitutes in the eyes of most Chinese people today.

In the Chinese collective imagination, America and Europe dominate the very essence of what it means to be “modern” (Meinhof 2018). Whether generated by scenes and narratives in foreign or domestically-produced TV shows, films or other forms of media content, public discourse in China largely locates the “modern” ideal as existing primarily in Western countries. Even considering the heightened nationalistic environment in China today, replete with warnings issued by the state about the lack of safety in foreign countries and even the undesirability of studying abroad, this idea about the “modern” West still thoroughly permeates Chinese society and public consciousness (Fong 2011: 52-53). Therefore, when imagining the West, most Chinese people think about prestigious institutions, shiny new skyscrapers, clean streets, efficient and spotless public transit, and the most advanced technology implemented at a wide scale across society (Meinhof 2018: 472).

However, it must be noted that this idea of the modern, is very historically situated and particular to the Chinese imagination. One might even say that places like Singapore, Japan, and South Korea more closely approximate the Chinese imagination of modernity than do Western countries. Indeed, this is what surprised my informants the most about studying abroad, particularly in the United States. One informant, who I call Lindsay, told me that she was initially shocked when she arrived in the United States. “It was like coming to a third-world country” she reported. “Its so dirty and unsafe...there are no trains or buses, and there are homeless people all on the streets.” Another remarked haughtily (referring to the library), “Why don’t they have

cameras everywhere to stop people from stealing? In China, we have cameras everywhere.” Still yet another complained about Western social media apps, “Before I came here, I used to think that American technology was so advanced and I was looking forward to using Facebook and Twitter. But now I see that our social media in China is more advanced... In China, you can just use WeChat for everything.” “Here, it is so inconvenient!” he exclaimed. “You still use credit cards!”

These comments were just the tip of the iceberg in terms of how the United States fell well short of the expectations of modernity that many of my informants had before arriving. When they came to trust me enough that they knew they would not offend me personally by expressing their true feelings, it was clear that most of my informants felt the same sense of shock and disdain at the mismatch between their expectations of Western modernity and the reality that they found upon arrival. After some reflection, it was clear the shock and disdain were accounted for by their ideas about modernity and what the telos of a modern civilization should be, which they assumed to be universal. However, it is worth pointing out that even after years of living in the United States, they did not understand that in other countries, local conceptions of modernity differ from Chinese ideas and compete with other values such as personal privacy, distrust of the government, ideals of personal independence and self-reliance, societal disdain for conspicuous displays of wealth, to name a few. In other words, the majority of my informants judged the situation that they encountered in the United States based on Chinese ideas of the modern and its all-encompassing desirability as a telos for civilization.

Following the shock and disdain resulting from the United States falling short of their expectations of the modern, a sense of superiority quickly followed. As one of my informants aptly put it, “After seeing the environment here (in LA), I just want to go back home after graduation. I don’t understand why any Chinese would want to stay here.” Another told me that after

encountering the lack of safety, and the relative backwardness of American technology and public transit, that he felt even more proud to be a Chinese person. “Shanghai is just better” he said. “There are lots of restaurants and shopping malls, and there are even stores where you don’t need to pay. You just scan your face. Here you still use cash,” he remarked smugly. “I think our government does a great job” another told me. “They put a lot of security cameras and make us feel safe.”

This sense of superiority and a sense of being proud to belong to the Chinese nation when faced with what they perceived as the backwardness of the United States was an experience recounted to me time and time again by my informants. Rather than, as most Americans assume, they would be impressed with and come to appreciate American core values such as free speech and democracy as a result of their stay in the United States, their experience actually led most of my informants to the opposite conclusion. The logic expressed by many of them is that since America falls so short of the expectations of modernity that they had come to expect, and since China surpasses it in many ways, this proves that the Chinese government’s narrative was correct all along. Democracy is a messy process entirely unsuitable for China and may not even be suitable for the United States. Perhaps, one even told me, referring to the Chinese mode of governance, “Americans can learn from China.”

Unsurprisingly, the myriad of ways in which America fell short of their expectations of what a modern society should look like, also contributed to the strengthening and maintenance of nationalist subjectivities in the vast majority of students whom I discussed the issue with. Everyday experiences such as travelling, walking the dirty and unsafe streets, paying with credit cards, and struggling with mediocre food options, served as constant small reminders to them of the American Other and of their membership in a nation that offered much more to them in terms of comfort,

convenience and other “modern” values than America ever could. These constant small reminders of their identity as part of something greater than the world in which they found themselves, simply reinforced their feelings of pride in China, the Party and its achievements, despite the inconsequential cost of what they perceived to be minor human rights issues. After all, many concluded, what are human rights if not the right to economic development and the promise of becoming modern? In this context, their time in the United States discredited notions of democracy and free speech as relics of a bygone era of American supremacy which had become in their minds, synonymous with chaos, technological backwardness, a lack of safety and a lack of convenience for the general public.

### **Part V: Conclusion**

Nationalist subjectivities among Chinese mainland students studying abroad during the Xi Jinping era are indeed diverse, yet their common foundations can be traced back to the social facts and narrative lens imparted during the Patriotic Education Campaign in primary, secondary and tertiary educational institutions from the early 1990s until the present day. The narrative lens imparted during the Patriotic Education Campaign itself is a continuation of a particular strand of Chinese social thought that can be traced back in varying degrees through Deng Xiaoping, Mao Zedong and ultimately Sun Yat-Sen which was its main progenitor in the final years of the Qing Dynasty. Yet, even Sun Yat-Sen himself was not the originator of this particular line of thought; Sun’s thought itself emerged in the historical context of the suffering within Chinese society that occurred as a direct result of European imperialist and colonial projects in China during the 1800s and was predicated on conceptions of what constituted Chinese-ness, the roots of which can be traced back to the earliest political dynasties that arose in the Central Plains over four thousand years ago.

This paper has emphasized the common foundations of Chinese nationalist subjectivities because of the sheer number of students that conform to what I call the dominant form of nationalist subjectivity. This dominant form of nationalist subjectivity is almost ubiquitous among Chinese people born after 1990 and is largely due to the thoroughness of the Patriotic Campaign and its permeation throughout all levels of society including primary, secondary, and tertiary educational institutions, the army, the mass media, and the Chinese internet ecosystem. This dominant form of nationalist subjectivity can be best conceptualized as a dual cognitive-emotional lens through which subsequent information is filtered and interpreted, including the encounters that most Chinese students abroad have with their Western counterparts and media. This is not to say that every young Chinese student abroad is imbued this lens, but the reality is that the emotional and identitarian aspects of the lens and its accompanying narrative exert enormous influence over the subjectivities of Chinese students abroad.

Contrary to the expectations of most Western academics, pundits, and government officials, and including perhaps, even Chinese people themselves, the experience of Chinese students abroad in the Xi Jinping era actually results in the retrenchment and magnification of these students' nationalistic attitudes, beliefs, and in-group identification. This paradoxical reinforcement occurs through the confluence of social isolation that they find on the campuses of Western universities, the presence of the CSSA, the failed expectations of Western modernity, the occasional, but still relatively sparse encounters that these students have with criticism of China, and finally, the Chinese internet bubble which provides ready-made retorts to common criticisms and an ideological safe haven for retreat. All of the abovementioned factors, to varying degrees in each individual, serve to maintain and reinforce the nationalistic lens that was emotionally and ideologically engineered at every level of education from childhood to

adolescence and which pervades the vast majority of the Chinese internet and mass media today. In addition, the aforementioned experiences common to Chinese students abroad in Western countries elevate the salience of their identity as a member of the Chinese nation and state to a level far beyond that of their counterparts in mainland China. Since the Chinese nation and state are inseparable in the minds of most students abroad due to the ideological indoctrination of the Patriotic Education campaign and since the boundedness of this imagined community is determined and shaped by the media ecosystem largely monopolized by the CCP's discourse, there is no distinction between the feeling of in-group ethnic identification and national identification. National identification, its emotional contours and its accompanying narrative that exist both consciously and sub-consciously is what I refer to in this paper as "nationalist subjectivities" or more specifically, the "dominant nationalist subjectivity."

The chief determinant of what constitutes this dominant nationalist subjectivity is the Party itself. Through its tight control over education, the content of Chinese-language news media, films, literature, and the internet, the Party constructs the moral boundedness of the imagined community of the "Chinese" nation. This includes the parameters of who is and who is not deemed to be "Chinese," what attributes members of this community should embody and the moral logic of the system. The Party also determines which "Chinese" voices have the right to define what ideologies and practices true "Chinese" people must conform to. While there is some flexibility and freedom regarding certain ideologies and practices deemed to be relatively inconsequential to the Party-state, the ideologies and practices that underpin the dominant nationalist subjectivity are maintained at all costs. Those Chinese individuals who find themselves in violation of the practices and ideologies that lie at the heart of the dominant nationalist subjectivity find themselves ostracized by their peers, reprimanded by their parents

and if displayed publicly, labelled as “traitors” and effectively robbed of their in-group status. Once banished to the realm of the imagined Other, they must be remade and rehabilitated in order to re-assimilate (or assimilate) the core narrative and lens that lie at the heart of the dominant nationalist subjectivity. Having violated the moral boundaries of this imagined community, use of violence is justified, as their very existence is deemed a threat to the cohesiveness of this Chinese community as articulated and shaped by the Party-state. They must learn the “correct” version of Chinese history, understand that certain ideologies, whether religious or political are not “Chinese” and will result in the loss of their membership in the in-group of “Chinese” nationals. In some sense, the Chinese government’s response to the Hong Kong pro-democracy demonstrators, its violent treatment of dissidents within the territory of the mainland itself, and its repressive attempts to “re-educate” religious minorities whose cultural identity does not conform to the dictates of the dominant nationalist subjectivity can all be understood in this light.

With regards to the vast majority Chinese students abroad, the internalization of certain social facts about the practices and ideologies of a moral Chinese national, who is allowed to define these practices and ideologies for the rest of Chinese people, and the anger generated by the encounter with people (Chinese or otherwise) who call this core narrative into question, remain largely uncontested and subconscious. Since students in the mainland do not encounter resistance to this dominant nationalist subjectivity, they operate largely unaware of it and it rarely finds its way into the contours of their daily lives. However, Chinese students abroad do encounter occasional resistance to it through encounters with foreign media and foreign classmates. When compounded with the effects of social isolation, a foreign culture, and language difficulties, Chinese students abroad are constantly attuned to their own national identity and the emotions and narrative that

form an inextricable part of it. As a result of this particular environment, many find that their feelings of national pride and patriotism increase during their time abroad, as the dominant nationalist subjectivity is reinforced and made increasingly salient in their lives. As Lucian Pye aptly sums up, “The more they have been exposed to the outside world, the more self-consciously Chinese they have become” (Pye 1996: 16). In this sense, rather than being the proponents and agents of outside change that Westerners imagine them to be, Chinese students studying abroad during the Xi Jinping era can be considered the vanguards of Chinese patriotism and nationalism today.

## Bibliography

- Anderson, Benedict. 2006. *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*. London, UK: Verso Books.
- Bernstein, Richard. 2019. "Why China's Brightest Abroad Show Team Spirit for Beijing's Hardball." *RealClear Investigations* website, October 14. Accessed January 22, 2020. [https://www.realclearinvestigations.com/articles/2019/10/14/why\\_chinas\\_brightest\\_abroad\\_show\\_team\\_spirit\\_for\\_repression\\_120715.html](https://www.realclearinvestigations.com/articles/2019/10/14/why_chinas_brightest_abroad_show_team_spirit_for_repression_120715.html)
- Blaut, James M. 1987. *The National Question: Decolonizing the Theory of Nationalism*. London, UK: Zed Books Ltd.
- Cabestan, Jean-Pierre. 2005. "The Many Facets of Chinese Nationalism," *China Perspectives* 59, no. 1 (May-June): 1-19. DOI : 10.4000/chinaperspectives.2793 <https://journals.openedition.org/chinaperspectives/2793#text>
- Chang, Kwang-Chih. 1964. *Archaeology of Ancient China*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.
- Chang, Maria Hsia. 2001. *Return of the Dragon: China's Wounded Nationalism*. Boulder, CO: Westview Press.
- Chen, Qin. 2019. "China Tells Schools to Step Up Patriotic Education." *Inkstone News* website, July 10. Accessed November 26, 2019. <https://www.inkstonenews.com/education/beijing-hopes-nurture-innovative-and-red-talents-its-latest-education-reform/article/3018050>
- Crane, George T. 1996. "Special Things in Special Ways: National Identity and China's Special Economic Zones." In *Chinese Nationalism*, edited by Jonathan Unger, 148-168. Armonk, NY: M.E Sharpe Inc.
- Duara, Prasenjit. 1996. "Deconstructing the Chinese Nation." In *Chinese Nationalism*, edited by Jonathan Unger, 31-55. Armonk, NY: M.E Sharpe Inc.
- DW. 2019. "Hong Kong: How Chinese Media Are Reporting the Crisis." *DW* website, November 19. Accessed January 24, 2020. <https://www.dw.com/en/hong-kong-how-chinese-media-are-reporting-the-crisis/a-51313412>

- Eberhard, Wolfram. 1977. *A History of China*. Los Angeles, United States: University of California Press.
- Ebrahimian, Bethany-Allen. 2020. "University of Minnesota Student Jailed in China over Tweets." *Axios* website, January 22. Accessed January 24, 2020. <https://www.axios.com/china-arrests-university-minnesota-twitter-e495cf47-d895-4014-9ac8-8dc76aa6004d.html>
- Fairbank, John. 1978. *China: Tradition and Transformation*. Boston, MA: Houghton Mifflin Co.
- Fay, Peter Ward. 1975. *Opium War: 1840-1842*. Chapel Hill, NC. University of North Carolina Press.
- Fitzgerald, John. 1996. "The Nationless State: The Search for a Nation in Modern Chinese Nationalism." In *Chinese Nationalism*, edited by Jonathan Unger, 56-85. Armonk, NY: M.E Sharpe Inc.
- Fisac, Taciana and Leilia Fernandez-Stembridge.. 2003. *China Today: Economic Reforms, Social Cohesion and Collective Identities*. New York, NY. Routledge Curzon
- Fish, Eric. 2018. "Caught In A Crossfire: Chinese Students Abroad and the Battle for their Hearts." *SupChina* website, January 18. Accessed January 02, 2020. <https://supchina.com/2018/01/18/caught-in-a-crossfire-chinese-students-abroad-and-the-battle-for-their-hearts/>
- Fong, Vanessa L. 2001. *Paradise Redefined: Transnational Chinese Students and the Quest for Flexible Citizenship in the Developed World*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.
- Friend, John M. and Taylor, Bradley A. 2018. *How China Sees the World*. Lincoln, NB. University of Nebraska Press.
- Gellner, Ernest. 1983. *Nations and Nationalism*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press.
- Gries, Peter H. 2004. *China's New Nationalism: Pride, Politics, And Diplomacy*. London, UK: University of California Press.
- Hail, Henry Chiu. 2019. "Patriotism Abroad: Overseas Students' Encounter With Criticism of China," *Journal of Studies in International Education* 19, no. 4 (September 2015): 311-326. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1028315314567175>
- Hanes, Travis W. and Frank Senello. 2002. *Opium Wars*. Naperville, IL: Sourcebooks Inc.
- Harrison, James. 1969. *Modern Chinese Nationalism*. New York, NY: City University of New York, Hunter College.
- Herold, David Kurt and Peter Marolt. 2011. *Online Society in China*. London, UK: Routledge Books.
- Hua, Yu. 2013. "The Three Americas of the Chinese Imagination." *Prospect Magazine* website, November 14. Accessed January 29, 2020. <https://www.prospectmagazine.co.uk/magazine/yu-hua-china-and-usa>
- Huang, Ray. 1997. *China A Macro History*. Armonk, NY, United States: M.E Sharpe, Inc.

- King, G., Pan, J., & Roberts, M. E. 2017. "How the Chinese Government Fabricates Social Media Posts for Strategic Distraction, Not Engaged Argument," *American Political Science Review* 111, no. 03 (October 2017): 484–501. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0003055417000144>
- Larmer, Brook 2017. "Alienation 101." *The Economist* website, April/May. Accessed January 02, 2020. <https://www.1843magazine.com/features/alienation-101>
- Li, Jane. 2019. "One Country, Two Phones: How People in China are Trying to Evade Beijing's Digital Surveillance." *Quartz Magazine* website, August 6. Accessed January 24, 2020. <https://qz.com/1659328/chinese-people-are-pushing-back-on-beijings-digital-surveillance/>
- Lone, Stewart. 1994. *Japan's First Modern War*. London, UK: Saint Martin's Press.
- Lu, Bwei and Guoping Wang. 1991. *The Revolution of 1911: Turning Point in Modern Chinese History*. Beijing, China: Foreign Languages Press.
- Lu, Rachel. 2014. "A New Definition of Chinese Patriotism." *Foreign Policy* website, September 11. Accessed November 20, 2019. <https://foreignpolicy.com/2014/09/11/a-new-definition-of-chinese-patriotism/>
- Meinhof, Marcus. 2018. "Contesting Modernity? Postcoloniality and Discourses of Modernisation at a Chinese University Campus," *Postcolonial Studies* 21, no. 04 (October 2018): 469-484. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13688790.2018.1507620>
- Michael, Franz. 1966. *Taiping Rebellion*. Lincoln, MA: University of Washington Press.
- O'Connor, Richard. 1973. *The Boxer Rebellion*, London, UK: Robert Hale & Co.
- Ong, Aihwa and Donald Nonini. *Underground Empires: The Cultural Politics of Modern Chinese Transnationalism*. New York, NY: Routledge Books.
- Osburg, John. 2013. *Anxious Wealth: Money and Morality Among China's New Rich*. Stanford, United States. Stanford University Press.
- Porter, Catherine. 2019. "China's Dissidents Feel the Heat of Beijing's Wrath. Even in Canada." *New York Times* website, April 1. Accessed January 24, 2020. <https://www.nytimes.com/2019/04/01/world/canada/china-dissident-harassment-sheng-xue.html>
- Pye, Lucian W. "How China's Nationalism was Shanghaied." In *Chinese Nationalism*, edited by Jonathan Unger, 86-112. Armonk, NY: M.E Sharpe Press.
- Purdue University. 2018. "Purdue Survey of Chinese Students and Scholars in the United States: A General Report." *Purdue Center on Chinese Religion and Society* website, October 17. Accessed January 18, 2020. [https://www.purdue.edu/crcs/wp-content/uploads/2018/10/2018-Purdue-Survey-Report\\_Rev.pdf](https://www.purdue.edu/crcs/wp-content/uploads/2018/10/2018-Purdue-Survey-Report_Rev.pdf)
- Qiang, Song, Zhang Zangzang, Qiao Bian *et al.* 1997. *Zhongguo keyi Shuo Bu – Lengzhanhou shidai de zhengzhi yu qinggan jueze*. Beijing, China. Zhongguo Nonggongshang Lianhe Press.
- Roberts, M. 2018. "Censorship in China," in *Censored: Distraction and Diversion Inside China's Great Firewall*. Princeton, NJ, United States: Princeton University Press. P 93-112. Retrieved from <http://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctvc77b21.6>

- Rowe, William T. 2009. *China's Last Empire: The Great Qing*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press
- Schneider, Florian. 2018. *China's Digital Nationalism*. New York, USA: Oxford University Press.
- Smith, Anthony D. 1991. *National Identity*. London, UK: Penguin Books.
- Sonam, Palden. 2018. "The Contours of Xi's Nationalism." *Eurasia Review* website, December 8. Accessed January 2, 2020. <https://www.eurasiareview.com/08122018-the-contours-of-xis-chinese-nationalism-analysis/>
- Spence, Jonathan D. 1990. *The Search For Modern China* New York, NY; W.W Norton & Co.
- Spencer, Joseph E. 1970. "General Characteristics of Chinese Geography," in James Liu and Wei-Ming Tu. (Eds.) *Traditional China*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall. P28-40.
- Su, Xiaochen. 2019. "The Paradox Facing Nationalist Chinese In The West." *Asia Times* website, October 14. Accessed December 28, 2019. <https://www.asiatimes.com/2019/10/opinion/the-paradox-facing-nationalist-chinese-in-the-west/>
- Sun, Yat-Sen. 1953. *San Min Chu I (San Min Zhuyi)*. Taipei, Taiwan: Sino-American Publishing Co.
- Szonyi, Michael. 2017. *A Companion to Chinese History*. Hoboken, NJ: Wiley and Sons Inc.
- Tan, Huileng. 2019. "Despite a Landslide Win For Hong Kong's Pro-Democracy Parties, the Root of the Problem Remains." *Cnbc* website, November 25. Accessed January 24, 2020. <https://www.cnbc.com/2019/11/25/hong-kong-protests-landslide-win-for-pro-democracy-parties-in-elections.html>
- Tatlow, Didi. 2019. "The Chinese Influence Effort Hiding in Plain Sight". *The Atlantic* website, July 12. Accessed December 23, 2019. <https://www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2019/07/chinas-influence-efforts-germany-students/593689/>
- Taylor, Jay. 2009. *The Generalissimo: Chiang Kai-shek and the Struggle for Modern China*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Teng, Ssu-yu and John Fairbank. 1973. *China's Response to the West: A Documentary Survey 1839-1923*. New York, NY: Atheneum.
- The Economist. 2016. "The East is Pink." *The Economist* website, August 13. Accessed January 07, 2020. <https://www.economist.com/china/2016/08/13/the-east-is-pink>
- The Economist. 2018. "A Formative Experience: For China's Elite, Studying Abroad is De Rigueur." *The Economist* website, May 17. Accessed December 17, 2019. <https://www.economist.com/special-report/2018/05/17/for-chinas-elite-studying-abroad-is-de-rigueur>
- The Economist. 2020. "The New Red Scare on American Campuses" *The Economist* website, January 2. Accessed January 22, 2020. <https://www.economist.com/briefing/2020/01/02/the-new-red-scare-on-american-campuses>

- Townsend, James. 1996. "Chinese Nationalism." In *Chinese Nationalism*, edited by Jonathan Unger, 1-30. Armonk, NY: M.E. Sharpe Inc.
- Tsuzuki, Chushichi. 2000. *The Pursuit of Power in Modern Japan*. Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press.
- Walder, Andrew. 1983. "Organized Dependency and Cultures of Authority in Chinese Industry," *The Journal of Asian Studies* 43, no. 1 (November 1983): 51-76.  
<http://www.jstor.org/stable/2054617>
- Walker, Richard. 1967. *China and the West: Cultural Collision Selected Documents*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Far Eastern Publications.
- Wang, Zheng. 2012. *Never Forget National Humiliation: Historical Memory in Chinese Politics and Foreign Relations*. New York, NY: Columbia University Press.
- Wei, C.X George and Xiaoyuan Liu. 2001. *Chinese Nationalism in Perspective – Historical and Recent Cases*. Westport, CT: Greenwood Press.
- Wei, Julie L, Meyers, Raymond H. and Donald G. Gillin. 1994. *Prescriptions for Saving China: Selected Writings of Sun Yat-Sen*. Stanford, CA: Hoover Institutions Press.
- Weiss, Jessica C. 2014. *Powerful Patriots: Nationalist Protest in China's Foreign Relations*. Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press.
- Wells, Audrey. 2001. *The Political Thought of Sun Yat-Sen*. New York, NY: Palgrave Books.
- Womack, Brantly. 1982. *The Foundations of Mao Zedong's Political Thought 1917-1935*. Honolulu, HI: The University Press of Hawaii.
- Wright, David C. 2001. *The History of China*. Westport, CT, USA: Greenwood Publishing
- Xu, Wu. 2007. *Chinese Cyber Nationalism: Evolution, Characteristics and Implications*. Lanham, MD: Lexington Books.
- Xu, XiuZhong. 2019. "China's Youth Are Trapped in the Cult of Nationalism." *Foreign Policy Magazine* website, October 1. Accessed January 22, 2020.  
<https://foreignpolicy.com/2019/10/01/chinas-angry-young-nationalists/>
- Zang, Xiaowei. 2015. *Ethnicity in China*. Cambridge, United Kingdom: Polity Press.
- Zhao, Shirley. 2019. "China Screens Patriotic Movies to Whip Up Nationalistic Fervor." *Bloomberg News* website, September 29. Accessed January 23, 2020.  
<https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2019-09-29/china-screens-patriotic-films-to-whip-up-nationalistic-fervor>
- Zhou, Youyou. 2018. "Reverse Brain Drain: Chinese Students Increasingly Return Home After Studying Abroad." *Quartz* website, July 29. Accessed [December 07, 2019].  
<https://qz.com/1342525/chinese-students-increasingly-return-home-after-studying-abroad/>

