CHAPTER – VI

CONCLUSION

This study based on the paradigm of cultural nationalism sought to explore what is the nature of Chinese nationalism today. Second, how far is Culturalism to nationalism debate tenable? Third, does the ‘civilizational nation’ concept apply to the Chinese State identity? Fourth, if Chinese nationalism is not Westernization, then does any dichotomy exist between understanding nationalism and modernization? Fifth, what are the Chinese characteristics of Chinese nationalism? Sixth, how does China use nationalism in its domestic and external policies?

Nationalism and globalization are two contradictory trends in the world today. Yet, in Chiq, the two trends are not incompatible. This is because the purpose of the Chinese reform and opening up is primarily to build a strong Chinese state that can stand up and be counted as an equal among world powers.¹ State nationalism is emphasized with the insistence that the CCP is to be the vanguard of this reform and modernization implying that China can survive and progress only under the Chinese Communist Party. While the nationalism which the state promotes is essentially state nationalism, there is however, a parallel nationalism emerging among the Chinese people as evidenced in the popular reaction to the Belgrade Embassy bombing or popular literature like ‘China Can Say No’. In China today nationalism is an amalgam of state and popular nationalism.

The origin of this nationalism is definitely traceable to the post- Cold War era which saw the gradual erosion of Communist ideology and the Chinese

government's use of nationalism to shore up party legitimacy. However, nationalism has existed throughout modern Chinese history. Modern Chinese nationalism was a reaction to the humiliation that China suffered at the hands of Western imperialism. Chinese leaders, in the late 19th and 20th centuries, aimed at the freedom of the nation, building a strong country and enhancing China's prestige in the world. The aim of achieving power and wealth or the *fuqiang* concept appropriated by the nationalists from the early 19th century has relevance in present day China. This power and wealth philosophy ultimately serves to preserve the Chinese nation, its culture and identity. In effect, it aims at preserving the Chinese civilizational identity. This idea of nationalism is promoted by the state and is officially hailed as patriotism (*aiguo zhuyi*) rather than nationalism (*minzu zhuyi*). Patriotism is not regarded as a divisive term and rallies together all the people of China including the minorities.

Yet, the Chinese nationalism which has emerged is representative of Han nationalism and ignores ethnic minority nationalism in the larger cause of China's unity and integrity. Therefore, the strains in Chinese nationalism are visible today in the separatist movements in Tibet and Xinjiang. This is a problem typical of multinational countries and China's challenge lies in its effective handling of this tool of nationalism to forge national unity and integrity.

This study has investigated the complexity in the meaning of Chinese nationalism today. While nationalism is a contested issue, scholars have generally used the culturalism to nationalism thesis to understand the phenomenon of nationalism in China. However, the culturalism to nationalism debate has many pitfalls. Arguing against the central theme of the culturalism to nationalism debate that Confucian culturalism failed the Chinese state and was supplanted by
nationalism, this thesis revealed an essential continuation between the culturalism of the imperial period and contemporary Chinese nationalism. The culturalism of the imperial Chinese state represented an ideology of the imperial state, which imparted a cultural rather than political identity to the state. This became the defining characteristic of the Chinese community and confined membership to those who adhered to it. Therefore, apart from the Han Chinese, the Mongols, and the Manchus also became part of this community by virtue of accepting the norms of culturalism. Also the legitimacy of the rulers depended on the adherence to these principles. Coupled with the membership criteria, culturalism also marked the boundaries of the Chinese state which was not fixed except in that the omnipotence of the Chinese state spread wherever the norms of 'culturalism' were accepted. Therefore, the Chinese state represented not a political state with fixed boundaries, but a civilizational state with culture as the defining characteristic of its existence. A broader identification of the Chinese state with culture and civilization, rather than merely with political ideology, has provided us with a set of different definitions of nation, nationalism and nationalities as these concepts relate to China.

In modern China culturalism has permeated in two ways. First, it is reflected in the promotion of state nationalism by the CCP. Second, it is evidenced in the predominance of Han ideology and Han ethnicism. Therefore, modern Chinese nationalism has also did not resolve the possible contradiction between the state and ethnic nationalism. Therefore, in China ambiguity over ethnic relations exists. These two features indicate that culturalism neither collapsed under the onslaught of Western imperialism, nor was it replaced by nationalism. In fact,
Chinese nationalism as it emerged in the nineteenth century was imbued with Chinese culturalism.

A survey of the growth of nationalism in China from the late Qing period to the present reveals that Chinese intellectuals, scholars and officials have been pre-eminently occupied with their search for qiang guomeng (dream for a strong China). The second feature that emerged from this survey is that there is a continuing debate between tradition and modernity, and between Westernisation and modernization in China. This debate primarily harks back to the ti-yong dilemma in Chinese tradition. In fact, the ti-yong dilemma – Chinese learning for cultural identity and Western learning for practical utility – became an essential feature in the Chinese state’s search for identity and survival in the 19th century. But China still seems to be groping for a solution to this dilemma with the avowed aim to modernize China without falling into the trap of Westernisation while retaining Chinese identity and Chineseness. Hence, if this spirit of ti-yong was epitomized in the Self-Strengthening Movement (Ziqiang Yundong) in 1861 it also addressed Deng Xiaoping’s dilemma of opening to the global economy while building a socialist spiritual civilization. The implications for China is search for nationalism with Chinese characteristics is clear. Hence, China has consistently defined the nation, nationalities and nationalism from the perspective of Chinese tradition and Chinese experiences.

The Chinese nation state has redefined itself in the process of confronting internal and external threats. Since the question of saving the nation was the primary goal, this meant, in effect, saving Chinese identity or Chineseness. Hence, the notion of China as a civilizational state or a cultural entity remained intact. Therefore, instead of trying to fit China’s understanding of nation, nationalities and
nationalism into the Western perspective, this study has argued that the "theory of a civilizational state" best explains the Chinese experience. Chinese nationalism then, essentially follows the paradigm of cultural nationalism. Cultural nationalism "imagines" the nation to have a distinctive civilization based on a unique history, culture and territory. Its primary concern is the regeneration of a nation as a distinctive cultural and moral entity. It is also "characterised by a politically motivated (re)essentialization of Chinese culture- very often with the help of "post-modern theory- in order to resist Western cultural hegemonism".

However, the decisive factor influencing the study of China as a civilizational state is its relationship with the West. Therefore, nationalism in China is also interwoven with the term modernization. However, in China modernization cannot be equated with Westernisation although Chinese modernization has followed the trajectory of industrialization, science and technology and economic growth. In fact, from the time of the 1898 reforms through the May Fourth Movement down to the Four Modernizations of the post-Mao period, a constant theme has been the importance of science and technology as the base for creating China's wealth and power. This led to China's policy of opening its door to the outside world thereby integrating its economy with the world economy. But the Chinese involvement in the world economy is distinct in that it was for long characterised by a limited and cautious approach. This cautious

---

approach is evidenced in China’s adoption of “confident nationalism”\(^5\) characterised by China’s determination to regain its former greatness through economic growth based on the import of foreign technology and ideas. Confident nationalism is also committed to preserve national independence, the reunification of China and the attainment of national wealth and power.

The study at the outset focussed on the prevailing Chinese domestic debates on the three terms—nation, nationalities and nationalism in opposition to the Western debates on these terms. By understanding the intricacies of the debate the study attempted to move away from the Euro-centric definitions and thereby deal with Chinese experiences of the terms and concepts. By conceptualising itself as a civilizational state, China overcame the problem of defining nationalities in China. The use of the prism of the civilizational state facilitates the accommodation of all nationalities within itself without raising the question of the principle of national self-determination, an issue that emerges out of the European experience of nationalism. This unravelling of the Chinese meanings of nation, nationalities, and nationalism has facilitated an understanding of the Chinese idea and the issues/concerns related to Islamic fundamentalism, human rights and diasporic populations.

This thesis has argued that certain features of a nation state system were present in the imperial Chinese State. These features of a nation state demonstrate that characteristics, which are intrinsic to the state in the modern West, were also present in the civilizations of the East although this, does not mean that the Chinese State was similar to the Western nation state. Since the historical experiences of the Chinese State were different from those of Western state, the

Chinese State was grounded in a different political tradition with implications for a different trajectory of development.

China represented one of the earliest civilizations of the world. Its civilizational influence spread to a vast area enveloping almost whole of East Asia. This civilization was underscored by Confucian philosophy. The Confucian philosophy was reflected in the Chinese notion of territory, centralized government structure, sovereignty and loyalty of the people. These notions, in fact, constitute the notion of a modern state and these features were present in China but with Chinese characteristics. The idea of China as a civilizational state has been understood under the following heads.

- Confucianism & notion of territory
- Confucianism & notion of sovereignty and state power
- Confucianism & notion of morality/ ethics
- Confucianism & China’s political tradition

Such a civilizational state with its distinctive way of engagement with the neighbouring powers was confronted with an entirely new civilization from the West in the 18th and 19th centuries. This was a civilization that valued mercantilist initiative and diplomatic and military interactions based on economic need and justified by a body of international law developed around just these notions. In the 1840s, the Chinese State, which was already in the throes of socio-economic crisis and dynastic decline, could not meet the challenge of Western intrusion and thus succumbed to it. Since the civilizational state was knocked down by Western military might, the post-Opium War period saw a frantic search for solutions among the Chinese literati and officials to regain Chinese power. However, since China envisaged itself as a cultural power rather than a military power, it sought a
cultural strategy to resolve the cultural crisis of the state - the strategy of self-strengthening. In fact, starting from the self-strengthening movement of 1861-1894, the Reform Movement of 1898, the May Fourth Movement of 1919, we find that the principal motive of the Chinese state was that of reviving China’s power. Fuqiang or Wealth and Power, thus, became the dominant theme in the Chinese quest for national greatness.

The concept of wealth and power or fuqiang is traceable to the self-strengthening movement launched in China whose aim was to borrow practical knowledge from the West in order to build a stronger China. The notion of fuqiang was, in effect, an attempt to lay the dilemma of ti-yong (Chinese learning for substance and Western learning for function) to rest. In fact, the notion of fuqiang also shaped the parameters of the current modernization of China. Therefore, post-Mao China’s socialism with Chinese characteristics was also essentially meant to introduce economic changes and liberalization while maintaining political control. This political control, in fact, would sustain the Chinese characteristics, while the economic reform would engender national power and wealth.

The fuqiang concept was in essence a cultural and political response to the Western challenge which created a crisis of legitimacy for the Chinese imperial state. Interestingly, the quest for wealth and power also underscores Chinese nationalism today. Deng Xiaoping’s ‘socialism with Chinese characteristics’ carried the message that while China would follow the socialist path, it would also allow its people to get rich. Getting rich was no longer condemnable and Deng, in effect, adjusted socialism with the Chinese conditions and saw the need for an open door policy and a vigorous reform strategy to make China equal or superior to the Western countries. Therefore, the quest for wealth and power represents a
central facet of Chinese nationalism. It gives Chinese nationalism the semblance of a national quest, and the people a common agenda for unity and identity. This, in turn, renders legitimacy to the CCP’s rule in China.

The meaning of Chinese nationalism, nation and nationalities was also impacted upon by Marxian ideology. In China, the Marxist appeal increased in the aftermath of the May Fourth Movement that questioned Chinese tradition. Marxian philosophy also took root in China in the context of colonialism and anti-imperialism. Therefore, in Chinese the Marxian definition of nationalism should be understood from this anti-imperialist and nation building perspective. However, Mao Zedong deviated from original Marxism in many important ways. This deviation was informed by the specific condition of Chinese society where capitalism had not developed sufficiently to give way to socialism. Secondly, this deviation is Mao’s own understanding of history and tradition. In doing this, he sinified Marxism and the very act of sinification was a step toward promoting Chinese nationalism.

The concept of *fuqiang* also ran through Chinese Marxism. However, to Mao the aim of augmenting national wealth and power was not merely to fend off foreign intrusion but he viewed national wealth as meant to alleviate the poverty of the Chinese population. Thus, the *fuqiang* concept had a dual purpose- one, to prevent foreign intrusion and bring liberation to the mass of the people correcting the economic situation through an equitable distribution of wealth. Therefore, Mao Zedong Thought and the Chinese Communist revolution was a response to Western and Japanese imperialism. This anti-imperialist note gave Chinese Communism a nationalist tone. Anti-imperialism in Mao’s ideology also informed
the CPC's policy shift towards the minorities. By the mid-1950s, the CPC had officially reneged on earlier promises on self-determination.

The CPC's stand fell in line with the early Republicans who coined the term *zhonghua minzu* (Chinese nation) to include the Manchus as well as other ethnic groups formerly governed by the Qing in the idea of the Chinese nation. This was done to ensure the survival of China as anti-Manchuism threatened to fragment the Chinese State. Therefore, in 1912, Sun Yatsen proclaimed the forging of the ethnic groups (i.e., the Han, the Manchus, the Mongols, the Tibetans and the Hui) into one nation. Sun and the new Republic also used the term ‘gonghe’ or Commonwealth of the five ethnic groups to describe the new identity of the Republican State. In 1931, under the influence of the Soviet Union, the Chinese Communist Party adopted Leninist policies promising minorities self-determination and even secession to enlist the support against the nationalists. However, such promises were soon abandoned in the greater interest of the unity of the nation. In 1953, the CPC classified its population into 56 nationalities of which 55 were minority nationalities. What ultimately prevailed was the creation of unified nation on the basis of the Qing imperial state. This Chinese State adopted the concept of state nationalism in place of ethnic nationalism.

The idea of state nationalism that emerged was predominantly cultural. Culturalism promoted a Han Chinese culture and others' participation in its practice. In effect, culturalism emphasized and extolled Han ethnicity, permitting an easy shift to cultural or racial nationalism. Incipient in the notion of culturalism is the Confucian idea of *Tianxia* or all under Heaven which referred to China. *Tianzi* referred to Son of Heaven who possessed the authority to rule the entire

---

civilized world. This civilized world indicated the area where the Chinese culture spread and incorporated the barbarians (yi). Therefore, since the Chinese state conceptualized itself as a civilizational state, it overcame the problem of defining nationalities in China and it facilitated the accommodation of all nationalities within itself without raising the question of the principles of national self-determination, an issue that emerges out of the notion of European modernity.

The minorities in imperial China comprise those groups who are non-Han, that is, 'barbarians'. The distinction between Han and non-Han was essentially based on stages of economic development. The Han represented the agricultural based society leading a sedentary life while the non-Han were largely food gatherers, herders and hunters leading a nomadic life. When barbarians accepted the Chinese notions of development they were looked upon as Chinese, though not Han. What this implies is that 'minority' is more a cultural concept. It does not denote a separate political identity. Therefore, the Chinese make no distinction between people (minzu) nation (minzu), nationality (minzu) and ethnos (minzu). All these terms fall within the rubric of a civilizational state where the defining characteristic is cultural rather than political.

Further, this notion of minority permeated the 1954 Constitution of China where the principle of self-government, not separation for minority people, and hence self-determination rights, were subsumed into the notion of the civilizational state. The prism of the civilizational state, therefore, allows the Chinese government to build a cohesive state and address the problem of separatism and political fundamentalism. Nevertheless, the separatist tendencies of Tibet and Xinjiang demonstrate the inability of the Chinese state to carve out a nation on the

---

basis of state nationalism that overlooks and represses the dissenting voices to the greater purpose of unity and integration.

It is little wonder that the Chinese state in the present times prefers to call Chinese nationalism as patriotic nationalism (aiguo zhuyi) devoid of dominant Han identity. But since the CPC is basically a Han party, patriotism remains the identity of the Han race not of the ethnic minorities. Chinese nationalism is fragile and the nation building process is yet not complete. The fuqiang concept, although a value-free notion, fails to evoke a patriotic response from the ethnic minorities for it does not solve their nationalistic aspirations. In conclusion, Chinese nationalism in present day China is the product of four developments:

- Confucian culturalism
- Western impact and the consequent fuqiang concept
- Marxist-Leninist and Mao Zedong thought
- Dominant Han ideology

While the first three essentially contribute to shaping the contours of Chinese nationalism, the fourth creates a constant challenge to Chinese nationalism. In fact, two issues- Tibetan ethnic nationalism, and Xinjiang ethno-religious nationalism have influenced Chinese nationalism since the 1950s. While these two essentially challenge Chinese nationalism, diasporic Chinese nationalism primarily enhances and complements Chinese nationalism. The three case studies (Tibet, Xinjiang and overseas Chinese) in this thesis indicate the influence of sub-nationalism and trans-nationalism on Chinese policy making today and reflects the nature of Chinese nationalism in general.

The first case study on Tibet indicates that the Chinese State that calls for submerging all minority identities within the dominant Chinese identity, to the
ends of national cohesion and nationalism, effectively precludes the possibility of
the assertion of Tibetan nationalism. In the process Tibetan nationalism has
become deeply mired in the wider human rights and nationalism debate.
Interestingly, since the Tibet issue has been intrinsically linked to the global human
rights discourse, a discourse which is in its dominant form the product of Western
modernity and which supports the right to the self-determination of minority
groups, the Tibetan question has been further complicated.

The propensity of the West, under the aegis of the UN’s Universal
Declaration of Human Rights, to view Tibet within a Human Rights framework
was fiercely contested by the PRC. The notion of human rights in China is
considered as culturally relative rather than universal. However, as a socialist
country, China has placed less emphasis on cultural arguments and instead has
harped upon different economic systems and levels of economic development that
influence the realization of human rights. Following this it appears that
developmentalism has increasingly characterized the PRC’s human rights policies
in China, particularly in the 1990s. China being a developing country needs to
promote economic welfare and give priority to subsistence rights like the right to
food, shelter and clothing. Therefore, present day China prioritizes subsistence
rights over political and civil rights. The Chinese government also adheres to the
collective notion of human rights instead of individual rights.

Tibetan nationalism, having latched on to the Western human rights debate,
came into conflict with the Chinese definition of human rights and nationalism
shaped by Marxist ideology and the conceptualization of Chinese notions of
nationality and minority rights. It defines minority nationalities as part of the
Chinese State and, thus, does not recognize their demand for self-determination.
Therefore, the Tibetan issue was marginalized in the wider Chinese notion of nationalism.

The weakness of the Tibetan movement in fact, lies in its heavy insistence on the human rights debate rather than on the notion of independence. It lacks logistical support to determine any military threat to the Chinese government, unlike Taiwan. On the contrary, the Chinese government has appropriated Western human rights criticism in mobilizing nationalistic voices in China. This nationalistic voice has enabled the Chinese leadership to stifle dissenting voices and this has further diluted the Tibetan influence in domestic spheres as well as in the international arena. In particular, the Tibetan question was viewed as a Western conspiracy to subvert the power of China enabling the leadership to mobilize the Chinese to oppose Western hegemonism. At the same time it has given the Chinese State leeway to apply stringent polices in Tibet like that of the ‘Strike Hard’ campaign of April 1996. By effectively portraying the Western criticism of human rights in China as a conspiracy to contain and dismember China reminiscent of the post-Opium War era, China not only deflected international criticism of human rights abuses in China but also helped to isolate the voice of minority Tibetan nationalism. The confusion and ambiguity about the question of the right to self-determination in international law with the priority given to territorial integrity over secession has further weakened the Tibetan nationalist voice. Hence, Tibetan nationalism remains a victim of the wider Chinese nationalism. By appropriating the culturalist view of human rights, China not only deflected Western infringement on its sovereignty rights but also effectively laid out its own discourse of nationalism where the sub-nationalist voices should integrate. The economic development and prosperity of the minority were thus viewed as
important steps to improve human rights condition of the Tibetans. This notion of
economic development of the backward minority regions was argued to solve the
national question. The regional autonomy system implemented by the Chinese
government was, thus, in conformity with the Chinese definition of nationality and
nationalism.

The Chinese autonomy system, thus, avoided the concept of a federated
union adopted under the erstwhile Soviet Union for it contained the seeds of
disintegration. Chinese regional autonomy was based on pragmatism and a
combination of Marxism and culturalism.\textsuperscript{8} Under this system Tibet enjoyed only
limited autonomy and its autonomy rights were sacrificed at the altar of national
unity. The Chinese leadership, thus, carefully intertwined the human rights issue
with the minority development issue to meet the challenge of Tibetan nationalism.
What actually happened was the imposition of Han nationalism on minority
cultures. As the Han were the majority group in China, Han nationalism was
presented as the leading cultural-political model for the minorities to follow.\textsuperscript{9}
However, this Han nationalism did not address the question of cultural identity and
the political autonomy of the minorities. Therefore, the prevalence of dissident
voices in China and the occurrence of Tibetan revolt from time to time signify the
fragility of Chinese nationalism today.

If Chinese nationalism was challenged by the Tibetan question, it has come
under threat in the Xinjiang issue. Xinjiang, like Tibet, constitutes an ethnic
minority movement striving for identity and self-determination. But, unlike Tibet,
Xinjiang presents a more complicated minority problem by virtue of its links with

\textsuperscript{8} Baogang He, "The Chinese Commitment to the Autonomy of Tibet: Theory and Reality", in
\textit{Tibetan Autonomy and Self-Government: Myth or Reality?}, New Delhi: Tibetan Parliamentary
and Policy Research Centre, p. 177.

the wider issues of Islamic identity in Central and West Asia. The Islamic factor
plus ethnic consciousness have been fused together to produce an ethno-religious
conflict in Xinjiang. This problem has been further exacerbated in the post 9/11
phase where the war against international terrorism has influenced the region, and,
effectively allowed the Chinese government to blur the distinction between
separatism and terrorism. The Chinese state has evolved a variety of strategies to
deal with this threat which have implications for the development of nation and
nationalism in China today.

The Uyghurs existed as an independent political entity in historical times
and they, therefore, shared a kind of political identity even after their state
disintegrated. During the Qing rule, the Uyghur attempted to carve out their
independent principality in response to the weakening of the Chinese imperial
state. The incorporation of Xinjiang, into China in 1884 which had hitherto
enjoyed independent political status, became the cause of unrest among the
Uyghurs and other minorities. The Uyghur movement also represents a concern for
human rights advocates. Human rights issues among the Uyghurs involve
repressed civil-political rights, the right to profess and propagate their religion, and
live their culture and customs. Since the State’s policy of assimilation seeks to
exterminate the minority culture and identity, the Uyghur movement has
appropriated the Western human rights strategy to battle the Chinese State.
Therefore, Uyghur grievances have crystallized around political, cultural,
economic and religious and environmental issues. From the 1990s onwards, there
has been a perceptible shift in the nature of the Uyghur movement. Although, the
separatist tendency in Xinjiang is part of the region’s history, the element of
violence in the movement does not predate 1986 when Uyghurs from the southern
Kashgar area of the province first joined the anti-Communist jihad in Afghanistan.\textsuperscript{10} Besides the characteristic of violence that entered the Uyghur movement, the movement also came to be inspired by the concept of Jihad that the Afghan Mujahideen were practising.\textsuperscript{11} The Uyghur conflict throughout history has been an ethnic conflict based on Uyghur identity informed by Turkic descent and Islamic religion. The roots of the present unrest lie in the government’s policies in the region rather than in the influence of foreign Islamic movements. However, the Uyghur movement has remained essentially fragmented. This fragility has allowed the influence of several alien visions on the movement. While the fragility of the movement explains its weakness, it also portrays that violence, terrorism, human rights, and ethnicity are in effect, only various means and ways to demonstrate the nature of unrest in the region. The unrest is essentially rooted in the Chinese policies on nationalities and demonstrates that the current autonomy principle creates scope for minority discontent.

China regards Xinjiang as an integral part of China. It determinedly opposes all efforts against national disintegration and regards all separatist acts as “splittism” an idea that is rooted in China’s fear of the ‘century of humiliation’ inflicted upon it by the West. This fear has fuelled China’s notion of nationalism today that calls for reviving its past glory and achieving national greatness. In this scheme, Xinjiang’s separatism has no place. The concept of China as a multi-ethnic country, however, artificial, ignores the realities of minority identity and minority culture. The Xinjiang problem is in fact, rooted in the distorted notion of Chinese nationalism that emerges from this concept. But the Chinese government


\textsuperscript{11} Anthony Davis, “Xinjiang learns to live with resurgent Islam”, \textit{Jane’s Intelligence Review}, Vol. 8, No. 9 (September 1996), p.420.
in its avowed goal of national unity, national security and modernization has promoted nationalism to turn past humiliation and current weakness into motivation for modernization.\textsuperscript{12} Through the economic modernization of Xinjiang the CPC attempts to enlist the support of the minorities to the Party. However, despite economic growth in the region consequent to the Western Development programme, the region is poor and backward. The Regional Autonomy system is also a sham fuelling further unrest. Nationalism, which helped to fight the imperialist forces, has failed to build a nation state based on the true equality of all nationalities. Therefore, the present Chinese nationalism that seeks to promote mainly Han nationalism has marginalized the concerns of minority nationalities and creating challenges to Chinese nationalism.

While Tibet and Xinjiang represent separatist and separatist/irredentist tendencies respectively that have exposed the fragility of Chinese nationalism, overseas Chinese nationalism has enhanced and complemented the notion of Chinese nationalism today. By understanding the Chinese State’s policies towards the diaspora and by exploring the diaspora’s notion of Chineseness, the thesis has sought to understand the impact of the Chinese diaspora in shaping nationalism in China.

Chinese nationalism today is the product of history- a century of humiliation. China wants to set its history right and therefore aspires for the great power status that it once enjoyed. To retrieve its glorious past, it has anchored itself to economic globalization and modernization. It also wishes to acquire the territories it once held and rightfully considers its own. By doing so, China intends

to raise self-respect for all Chinese reflecting the rise of “restoration nationalism” in China today.\(^\text{13}\) The success of this restoration nationalism has great impact on the diaspora and this reinforces the notion of China as a civilizational state. The fate and well being of the diasporic Chinese also depend on the restoration of China’s wealth and power.\(^\text{14}\) Thus, Chinese nationalism and the diaspora complement each other in strengthening the notion of Chineseness. The diaspora, on the one hand, by its economic dynamism helps to construct and strengthen the mainland economy and, on the other, by reinforcing the idea of Chineseness aids in building the concept of China as a civilizational state. These two characteristics of the diaspora shape the idea of Chinese nationalism in Mainland China today. Mainland China by its cultural appeal attempts to influence the Chinese diaspora in its cause for national unification. Thus, by imparting the notion of Chineseness, China appropriates the leadership of Cultural China. In doing so it sidelines Taiwan and emerges as a representative of what Chineseness means today. Thus, the Chinese diaspora plays an effective role in building the notion of Chinese nationalism in China. The three case studies- Tibet, Xinjiang and the overseas Chinese indicate how Chinese nationalism is defined under the impact of varied experiences. If Tibet and Xinjiang expose the fragility of Chinese nationalism, the overseas Chinese strengthens it. The separatist challenge to Chinese nationalism no doubt points to the failure of Chinese nationalism to emerge as a unifying ideology.

However, this is a challenge typical of multinational country where various groups coexist and compete with each other. Since the Han Chinese are in a


\(^{14}\) Ibid., p. 114.
majority in China, they naturally dominate the marginal voices. Further, the minorities though small in number in China, pose a security threat to China on account of their presence in more than 60% of China's territory and, more importantly, their location in the strategic border areas. Due to this security threat, throughout history China has tried to reign in the renegade provinces. This was largely done through the tributary system which was devised by the Chinese state to engage and accommodate the non-Chinese powers and co-exist peacefully. The tributary system was a highly institutionalized, a non-exploitative and accommodative system, incorporating economic, political and cultural dimensions which facilitated the intermeshing of the societies of Central, East and Southeast Asia. This system was uniquely flexible and consisted of three models.\footnote{Dawa Norbu, China's Tibet Policy (Surrey: Curzon Press, 2001), p. 27-30.}

The first model consisted of the Han Tang and Ming dynasties' relations with Korea, Vietnam and Japan which was based on true tributary relations. The relationship was based on shared Confucian culture and the symbolic subordination of the member states to China. The second model represented the Qin and the Han dynasties' relations with the Xiongnu or the north-western tribes; the Tang dynasty’s relations with the Tibetans and Turks and the Ming dynasty’s relations with the Mongols. These non-Chinese states were neither Han nor Confucian in culture. Their relations with China were marked by frequent conflicts and not by the payment of tribute. If the first model was based on Confucian tribute relation, the second was based on cultural realism and realpolitik driven by security considerations. The third model was the unique one of the patron-client relationship between China and Tibet or the Lamaist form of tribute relations. These three models of the tribute system failed to work with the coming of the
West and particularly with the late 19th century and early 20th century “Great Game” in Central Asia and Tibet. Under the threat of imperialist powers in China’s Northwest border, the Qing government realized the need to delineate its borders. Thus, Xinjiang was brought under direct Chinese administration and Tibet was turned into a Chinese protectorate.

While at the political level, China turned the fluid civilizational frontiers into solid boundaries, at the ideological level China outlined the features of Han nationalism- a theoretical construct that would include those non-Han people occupying about half of the Qing imperial territory. This nationalism as described from Sun Yatsen to Mao Zedong essentially extolled Han culturalism and since Han was the dominant Sinic group, it was duty of the Han to civilize and lead the smaller ethnic groups to enlightenment. While the Republic nominally accepted some degree of autonomy for the minorities, the Communists ruled out self-determination for the minorities. The PRC after 1949 stressed that the purpose of the liberation of the minorities was to end class oppression. Further, the PRC emphasized that local nationalisms no longer had any role to play, as all workers and agriculturalists within China were members of proletariat. The present emphasis on the economic development of non-Han areas in the post-Deng era carry the same implications of Han culturalism where the distinction between the Han and non-Han is essentially based on differences in the levels of development. Therefore, through the Western Development Project China seeks to create economic prosperity in the minority regions and cause greater integration of the region. However, the prevalence of minority discontent reflects that China’s

---


17 Ibid., p. 33.
"developmental nationalism" under Deng is yet to prove an effective tool for minority integration.

Understanding contemporary Chinese nationalism is, however, fraught with contention. Various shades of opinion exist among the Western scholars and the Chinese people on the nature of Chinese nationalism today. China experts in the West have explained contemporary Chinese nationalism in three main ways. The first group of scholars explained the nature of nationalism as a result of state mobilization strategy that the CPC promoted under the banner of "patriotism" (*aiguo zhuyi*). This strategy aimed at filling the ideological vacuum caused by the erosion of socialism in the post-Mao era and consequently shore up party legitimacy. The second explanation perceived Chinese nationalism as a reaction to the West’s past and present injustices toward China and thus, China’s firm "no" to such Western exploitation. The third opinion argued that in the wake of the end of the Cold-War, China by preaching nationalism sought to provide an alternative model to Western modernity.

As against this debate among the Western scholars, Chinese leaders and scholars have explained the notion of nationalism today in various ways as well. "China Can Say No" (*zhong guo ke yi shuo bu*), a 400-odd-page collection of views published in Beijing by a group of young people in their thirties suggested that China should persist in taking its own road and should resolutely say "No" to various unreasonable demands from the West. The book stated that U.S. criticisms of China on the issues of human rights, Taiwan, and trade are absurd.

---


The book's most powerful message was not to warn the Americans or the anti-China forces among them, but to warn the Chinese people about "pro-American sentiment" and "slavish mentality". A 1997 article in Xinhua lashed against the US and said that the so-called 'China Threat' is merely a pretext resorted to limit China's development. It further added that "China is striving to promote among its people a kind of patriotism with reasoning. The Chinese do not go in for expansionism, nor will they tolerate being suppressed or humiliated by anyone."

Criticizing the book China can Say No, "Shouting -- Five Voices in Contemporary China," was published by the Guangzhou Publishing House when it was rejected by a number of publishing houses in Beijing. The five voices commented on by the book include "mainstream, dogmatism, nationalism, feudalism, and democracy", which according to the authors have evoked repercussions and exerted influence on China. In the chapter "Voice of Nationalism" the authors criticized the books "China Can Say No" and "Demonic China," two best sellers that targeted the United States. The authors said that there was "too much prejudiced, extreme, improper, and sentimental stuff" in the books. This kind of nationalism will endanger China's national interests.

While popular literature in China viewed nationalism as primarily anti-American, the leadership generally talks about nationalism as patriotism. A Renmin Ribao article on "Patriotism, Collectivism, Socialism" states that "practice in the past more than 20 years since the beginning of reform and opening up, and

---

20 Ibid.
22 Ibid.
24 Ibid.
especially in the last 10 years, has fully shown that patriotism, collectivism, and socialism represent the main theme of our era and our national spirit.\textsuperscript{25} A subheading of the article, "Patriotism, a Great Banner With Strongest Rallying Force, Vigor" highlighted that, "Patriotism is the purest, the most noble, and the most sacred feelings of our nation condensed over the past thousands of years for our motherland. It is pure because being patriotic is a dedication."\textsuperscript{26}

Patriotism was an important component of Deng Xiaoping Theory as well. As Deng pointed out, "The Chinese people have their own national self-esteem and pride, and regard as the greatest honor loving the motherland and contributing all their efforts to the building of the socialist motherland, and regard as the greatest shame harming the interests, dignity, and honor of the socialist motherland."\textsuperscript{27} Patriotic education, in fact, became the guiding line for China's educational reform when in January 1993, the State Education Commission issued a document, "Programme for China's Education Reform and Development".\textsuperscript{28} The Patriotic education campaign reached its climax when the CCP Central Committee published a central document, "The Outline for Conducting Patriotic Education" drafted by the Central Propaganda Department and carried in Renmin Ribao on September 6, 1994.\textsuperscript{29} The document outlined that the goal of education in patriotism was "to boost the nation's spirit, enhance its cohesion, foster its self-esteem and sense of pride, consolidate and develop a patriotic united front to the


\textsuperscript{26} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{27} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{28} Suisheng Zhao, "'We are Patriots First and Democratic Second': The Rise of Chinese Nationalism in the 1990s", in Edward Friedman and Barrett L. McCormick (eds.), \textit{What If China Doesn't Democratize?: Implications For War And Peace} (London: M.E. Sharpe, 2000), p. 28.

\textsuperscript{29} Ibid., p. 29.
broadest extent, and direct and rally the masses’ patriotic passions to the greatest cause of building socialism with Chinese characteristics." Thus, the emphasis on patriotism provided the basic theme around which the Chinese leadership built the notion of Chinese nationalism.

Interestingly, the Chinese leadership conflated patriotism with socialism. Jiang Zemin’s speech on education in patriotism stated that “the Chinese people have come to realize from their own experience that only socialism can develop China, and patriotism and socialism are identical.” This implied that the nation’s greatness and survival depended on the leadership of the CCP. Therefore, the state and the party being the same the party could legitimately deploy patriotism to mobilize the people and legitimize its power. Chinese nationalism was clearly defined in terms of state-nationalism.

The impact of China’s state nationalism can be seen from the Chinese leadership’s careful handling of popular nationalism lest it spill over and affect China’s foreign policy. Thus, during the Belgrade bombing or the incident of EP-3 plane crash, the Chinese leadership quickly put a lid on mass protests after a point lest it jeopardize China’s economic and political relation with the US. During the Belgrade Embassy bombing in 1999 May, Vice-President Hu Jintao, on the one hand, expressed official support for the student-led protests and said that the demonstrations in major cities reflected the Chinese people's "strong indignation" at the NATO attack and their "keen patriotism." On the other hand, he said, "China will protect foreign diplomatic mission and institutes, foreign nationals in China and foreigners who come to China for economic, trade, educational and cultural

---

30 Ibid.
activities, according to (international and Chinese) law." Thus, Chinese nationalism is essentially defensive in nature.

Chinese patriotic nationalism is primarily based on a specific interpretation of Chinese history. By constantly harping on the need to build a strong China and to prevent all efforts by the West in subverting the Chinese nation, the Chinese state today attempts to forge a national identity. Past heritage and past humiliation is employed by China to evoke patriotism among all people; including the minorities. But since the party is a Han party, patriotism remains the identity of the Han race not of the ethnic minorities. The dream of a strong China or qiang guomeng fails to evoke a patriotic response from the ethnic minorities for it does not solve their nationalistic aspirations. However, given the Chinese leaderships efforts in developing the economy in the minorities areas, in the long run conditions might be created for the minorities to identify with state policies and rally their support behind the state. As of now China’s challenge remains to create a common national identity for both majority and minority populations in China.

On the other hand, Chinese nationalism seems to be on the upswing in the diaspora. The Chinese diaspora with its modern transformation based on Confucian humanism and democratic liberalism has constructed a new vision of Chineseness. Represented as an economic powerhouse, the diaspora has generated and directed economic transformation in the mainland. This transformative potential of the diaspora has, thus, complemented the notion of nationalism in contemporary China. The ‘Diaoyutai Incident’ of August and September 1996 particularly indicate an instance when mainland Chinese, Taiwanese, and Hong Kong Chinese

united against Japan's building of light house in one of the islets in the Diaoyu Island indicating the commitment of the diaspora to China's territorial integrity.

In conclusion, there is no doubt that Chinese nationalism is to a large extent state sponsored. While popular nationalism is also a parallel trend in Chinese politics, popular sentiments are never allowed to grow to the extent of jeopardizing China's national interest. In this sense Chinese nationalism is both pragmatic and cautious. This pragmatism is the hallmark of Chinese foreign policy today and this permeates the notion of Chinese nationalism. Second, Chinese nationalism is "restorative" in nature. It primarily aims at reunification of its lost territories, recovery of sovereignty, and restoring the past greatness and achieve a niche for itself in world politics. However, Chinese nationalism is defensive for it does not aim at threatening the interest of other powers. The national interest of China demands a continued condition of peace and prosperity. Its economic development is contingent on peaceful relationship with the US and its neighbouring countries. Thus, China's economic imperative will not allow it to adopt a confrontationist policy in world politics. Jiang Zemins' *Three Represents* is an answer to the protagonists of the China threat theory and the 'China's collapse' predictions. By legitimizing the position of the advanced productive forces, that of the capitalists within the party, the CCP has sought to strengthen the role of these advanced groups in society and also close their options of being a force from outside. In effect, by co-opting them, the CCP sought to strengthen the Party and deflect criticism from the West. The *Three Represents* theory, in fact, points that socialism is still the dominant ideology in China. Though nationalism is viewed as having emerged out of a response to the legitimacy crisis of the Communist regime in the aftermath of the Tiananmen Movement, it did not supplant socialism as state
ideology. In fact, nationalism is employed as a tool in Chinese politics in order to further strengthen the Party and reinforce the ideology of socialism in China. Nationalism in China is above all patriotic in nature. Patriotism is a value-free concept and seeks to bind people to the cause of the survival and development of the nation. Therefore, Chinese nationalism today is restorative, defensive, pragmatic and patriotic in nature and aims at political integration (Zhengzhi Zhenhe) internally and world peace (Shijie Heping) externally.