Rethinking Global Civil Society (GCS) Theory

----- A Political Analysis on the Rise of Popular Nationalism in China

Name of the author: Li Boyang
# Table of Content

1. Introduction ........................................................................................................... 2  
2. Research Summary .................................................................................................. 5  
   2.1 Research Summary on GCS Theory ................................................................. 5  
   2.2 Research Summary on Popular Nationalism in China ................................. 7  
3. Theory for Analysis .................................................................................................. 9  
4. Methodological Approach ......................................................................................... 11  
   4.1 Case Study Design ............................................................................................. 12  
   4.2 Narrative Analysis Design ............................................................................... 14  
5. Political Analysis ....................................................................................................... 15  
   5.1.1 Process Tracing on the Case 2008 ............................................................... 16  
   5.1.2 Process Tracing on the Case 2010 ............................................................... 19  
   5.1.3 Least Similar Case Comparison ................................................................... 21  
   5.2 Narrative Analysis ............................................................................................. 25  
   5.3 Analysis on Why Popular Nationalism in China is Rising ......................... 29  
6. Discussion .................................................................................................................. 35  
7. Conclusion ............................................................................................................... 38  
8. Reference .................................................................................................................. 40
Abstraction: Global Civil Society (GCS) Theory maintains that nationalism will gradually decline as processes of globalization increase. However, the recent rise of popular nationalism in China is one counterexample to GCS theory. By using case study and narrative analysis on researching recent popular nationalist movements in China, we find that it is the “victim-superpower” identity among Chinese people that inspires popular nationalism. Nevertheless, GCS theory cannot explain this phenomenon because GCS theory neglects the identity struggle within the global context and takes for granted that global citizen identity will become the natural salient identity. We should be aware of such essentialism in GCS theory and focus more on constructivism when studying nationalism and globalization.

1. Introduction

Nationalism has always been an attractive research topic since the emergence of the nation-state in modern world history. There are plenty of academic works on the nation and nationalism. Gellner (Gellner, 1983: 19-50) claims that the rise of the nation-state is a consequence of industrialization, and that nationalism is an industrial culture corresponding to the nation-state. In contrast to Gellner’s opinion, Anderson (Anderson, 2006: 6) contends that the nation is an imagined political community and that it is nationalism that invents nations where they do not exist. Additionally, Smith (Smith, 1991: 73) alleges nationalism is an ideological movement that attains and maintains autonomy, unity and identity on behalf of a population deemed by some of its members to constitute an actual or potential “nation”. Lastly, Shapiro maintains that the myth of a nation created by nationalism can provide a locus for national identity in the face of a pluralistic civil society that can preserve the autonomy of the political (Shapiro, 2003: 107).

In spite of the differences among them, the theories mentioned above do share a common feature. They all believe that nationalism can inspire members of a nation to sustain the nation state that they belong. Some scholars (Dekker et al., 2003: 245-276) have made a concise division of the different levels of nationalism:

“One neutral and five positive national attitudes can be distinguished on the basis of differences in type and strength of affection. The basic neutral national affection is the national feeling (feeling of belonging to one’s own people and country). The five positive national attitudes are national liking (liking one’s people and country), national pride (being
proud of one’s people and country), national preference (preferring one’s people and country over others), national superiority (feeling that one’s people and country are superior to others), and finally, nationalism (feeling a sense of belonging to a particular “nation” with a common origin, wanting to keep that “nation” as pure as possible, and desiring to establish and/or maintain a separate and independent state for that particular “nation”)."

Accordingly, the so-called “defense of national interest” is normal and natural within the framework of nationalism. However, if states involved in conflicts refuse to compromise in the name of national interest, conflicts between states may increase or even fall into war. For this reason, nationalism is always considered a negative sentiment that separates the entire human world and causes troubles in international relations, though it does not necessarily mean to do so.¹

Nowadays, the forces of globalization have impacted almost all nation-states. It appears that globalization gradually erodes the traditional functions of the nation-state. Some scholars believe that it is the new transnational communicative network created by non-state actors that erodes the traditional nation-state (Lechner and Boli, 2008: 78-87). In addition to this, Robertson reminds us that globalization can inspire an identity crisis, as people become faced with a condition of multiple identities in the global context, as his/her nation state is no longer the only object a person needs to show loyalty (Lechner and Boli, 2008: 87-95). Moreover, Susan Strange emphasizes that world-spread technology and finance will reduce the power and authority of the nation-state (Lechner and Boli, 2008: 228-235). In the end, Giddens (Giddens, 2002: 67-83) concludes that a single nation-state is too small to solve global problems, so cooperative global governance by all nation states is necessary in a global era.

As a result, whether nationalism will still exist in a globalized world becomes a hot topic for debate. Some scholars like Hobsbawm (Hobsbawm, 2000: 196-230) believe that nationalism will gradually lose its traditional functions, such as social mobilization, in the wave of globalization. Contrary to their opinions, other scholars like Smith (Smith, 1995: 22-28)¹

argue that the cultural foundation of nationalism cannot be replaced by any cosmopolitan ideology. Thus, cosmopolitanism cannot provide people with a specific identity they need, so nationalism is not projected to disappear anytime within the global era.

Global Civil Society (GCS) theory is one of the leading theories insisting that nationalism will decline as globalization continues. According to Walzer, Global Civil Society is a realm of free association, independent from states and markets, in which sovereign individuals come together to engage in collective projects (Barnett and Duvall, 2005: 229-248). GCS theory believes that global civil society generated by globalization will substitute the major functions of the nation state and will eventually draw people’s attention to the welfare of the whole world rather than that of a single nation state. Consequently, nationalism that only sticks to the benefits of its own country will become inadequate and outdated in the context of globalization. Therefore, GCS theory deems that the final fate of nationalism is obsoleteness.

However, the rise of popular nationalism in China draws our attention to the problems of GCS theory. In comparison to official nationalism created by the government, popular nationalism is initiated by non-state actors. I make this division within Chinese nationalism because popular nationalism in China does not always correspond with official nationalism. Sometimes they even contradict each other. Although China is one of the most active countries participating in globalization, popular nationalist movements in China seem to have increased rather than decreased in the last ten years. Several popular nationalist movements like anti-Japan demonstrations in 2005 even attract global attention. Surprisingly, the major supporters of popular nationalism in China are ordinary people in civil society. According to GCS theory, these people are supposed to be willing to give up nationalism as they become more exposed to the growing forces and processes of globalization. Apparently, the rise of popular nationalism in China provides a counterexample to GCS theory’s prediction.

Due to my interest in the rise of popular nationalism in China and its discord with GCS theory, my main research question is as follows: “To what extent does GCS theory prevent us from understanding the rise of popular nationalism in China?” In order to answer this question, two subordinate questions are formulated: “What are the specific contents of GCS theory?” and “Why is popular nationalism in China rising?” In order to find the answers to
the above questions, it is imperative to first state my research summary on GCS theory and on rising popular nationalism in China. Then I will explain the theoretical and methodological approaches to the research. Following these explanations, I will conduct a political analysis on why popular nationalism is rising in China. Finally, I will draw my conclusions in regard to my main research question.

2. Research Summary

The aim of this section is to summarize present theories and arguments on GCS theory and popular nationalism in China. By understanding these two dimensions, I can gain a clear overview of the contemporary research about these topics and how they related to my own research. This section will be divided into two parts. The first part is a research summary on GCS theory and the second is a research summary on popular nationalism in China.

2.1 Research Summary on GCS theory

Ulrich Beck is a leading scholar on studying GCS theory. In his classic book *Power in the Global Age*, Beck advocates for rationality from civil society to form a critical power to balance market forces (Beck, 2005). In Beck’s theoretical framework, a state must balance the extreme market power in order to gain legitimacy from civil society. At the same time, the expansion of the world market and knowledge production will unite the national civil society with the transnational civil society, in order to keep a balance on transnational market power. Consequently, if a state resists transnational cooperation and only sticks to its own interest, it will face a crisis of legitimacy (Beck, 2005: 172-178). Therefore, Beck believes the rise of GCS will transform the concept of the traditional nation state and eliminate the hatred inherent in nationalism, since nationalism will no longer be functional (Beck, 2005: 41).

Additionally, Beck (2005: 172-178) insists that states must renew themselves in the transnational space by projecting a political vision of a regulated market under the norm of social justice. In Beck’s opinion, the best way to escape the powerlessness of the nation-state is to rediscover grand politics. He also criticizes methodological nationalism as a paradigm in social science research because it limits the researchers’ view on the nation state framework, and does not reflect the current rise of GCS (Beck, 2008: 793-804).
Similar to Ulrich Beck, other scholars, such as Lipschutz are in favour of GCS theory. According to Lipschutz (Barnett and Duvall, 2005: 229-248), members of civil society will use productive power, like the idea about “good and just life,” to emphasize how governments can use institutional power to change the market-centred structural power of economic globalization. Lipschutz believes that the sphere of civil society will expand to the global level and finally form a united GCS, in accordance with Beck’s arguments. Furthermore, Lipschutz emphasizes that the development of GCS cannot be denied and global media, especially activist media, will play an important role in constructing GCS (Jong, et al., 2005: 17-34).

However, there are a lot of disagreements on GCS theory from both a theoretical perspective and from a practical perspective. Unlike the two scholars mentioned above who are optimistic about the success of GCS, other scholars show scepticism towards GCS theory.

Daniel Chernilo (Chernilo, 2006: 5-22) argues that Beck’s opinions only focus on the influence of states brought by the interaction between market and civil society, but neglects other aspects like military, security and culture. He criticizes Beck’s GCS theory for oversimplifying nation states because military security and culture are two independent factors that cannot be explained by an economic framework alone. Chernilo (Chernilo, 2006: 5-22) points out that the lack of a monopoly on violence in world society, and cultural differences between nations will help sustain the political unit of the nation state and the ideology of nationalism, even within the era of globalization.

Takeshi Nakano (Nakano, 2004: 211-229) explains that the expansion of world markets may stimulate economic nationalism rather than GCS as long as one nation state still needs economic nationalism to protect its own industrialization. In this situation, the resistance to the expansion of world markets will not constitute GCS, but economic nationalism. Hence, even when focusing on economic issues, there is more than one possible response from local civil-society towards economic globalization, and GCS model is not the only potential consequence.

---

2 Institutional power means actors’ control over socially distant others. Law is one example of institutional power. Structural power is the direct and mutual constitution of the capacities of actors. Economic power is one of structural power. While productive power is a production of subjects through diffuse social relations, like ideology. See Michael Barnett and Raymond Duvall (2005) Power in Global Governance, UK: Cambridge University Press, pp.1-33.
In addition, Colin Sparks (Jong et al., 2005: 34-50) opposes Lipschutz’s assumptions about a global communicative network as he contends that there is no such network, since communication is always culturally bound. This suggests that nationalism will still exist, since cultural differences within local society will exist.

Finally, Alexander doubts the essential meaning of GCS theory and concludes that the development of a real GCS is obscure and inconsistent in practice. His (Alexander, 2007: 81-90) explanation is as follows:

“The utopia discourse of world civil society was even embedded in formally democratic institutional regimes, the quasi-world governments of first the League of Nations and then the United Nation...Yet, the carrier groups for these ideas at renewing the cosmopolitan dream were the victorious national hegemonies themselves. Such an infrastructure of national power belied the aspirations for a global civil order.”

Frankly speaking, Alexander points out a practical problem of GCS theory. That is, the ideology of GCS may only reflect the discourse of hegemonies, and hegemonies could use GCS rhetoric to defend their own national interest when needed. As a result, the non-hegemonies will certainly use nationalism to resist such GCS discourse. To this point, Alexander casts doubt on whether GCS theory is really as good and/or as just as some people proclaim.

There is one more issue worth mentioning, in conclusion of this section. Based on the literature review, it appears that European Scholars tend to utilize literature that is in favour of GCS theory. It seems European scholars are more determined on proving that the GCS model is applicable and that nationalism is out-dated. It is understandable why they would be motivated to do so since Europe is a place with advanced regional integration. This social context must influence the research of these European scholars. Lars Rensmann (Rensmann, 2006: 139-170) even uses the term “Europeanism” to describe this “unique cosmopolitanism” trend in the study of the social sciences within Europe.

2.2 Research Summary on Popular Nationalism in China

Now that the debate of GCS theory has been explored, I will now turn my attention to my research summary on popular nationalism in China.
From the literature I have read, not one has treated popular nationalism in China as an independent research object. Instead they focus on the entire condition of Chinese nationalism. Chen (Chen, 2005: 35-53) traces the historical developments of Chinese nationalism and concludes there are three steps in the development of Chinese nationalism: nationalism seeking independence (from the end of Dynasty Qing to 1945), communism nationalism (from 1949 to 1979) and contemporary nationalism (from 1979 until now).

In addition, Stein Tonnesson (Tonnesson, 2009: 375-395) believes that China represents a fourth class route to modern nationhood, in addition to the ethnic (German), civic (French) and plural (American) routes. He maintains:

“This class route (of Chinese nationalism) leads to inevitable tension between the divisive history of how the nation was formed and the need of its later leaders to include and represent the same social classes that were originally excluded. These leaders and national storytellers are forced to undertake a redefinition of national self as ethnic, civic or plural in an attempt to recreate national legitimacy, often in competition with more radically nationalist opposition groups.”

Tonnesson’s description, along with Chen’s trace of the development of Chinese nationalism, accords with the transformation from communist nationalism to contemporary nationalism. However, neither of them provides a direct answer as to why popular nationalism in China is rising.

Why is popular nationalism in China rising? Based on my literature review, there are two major branches explaining this question. The first branch regards rising popular nationalism in China as a consequence of propaganda from the Chinese government. Scholars belonging to this group believe that the Chinese government utilizes nationalism to gain legitimacy in the Post-Mao period since communism is no longer attractive in China (Thomas, 1996: 5-40; Gliboy and Heginbotham, 2010). They argue that the Chinese government maintains its authority by carrying out nationalist education so as to disguise itself as a defender of the national interest (Doughty, 2009: 198-212). Moreover, some scholars even assert that the Chinese government encourages domestic popular nationalism to show the anger of the Chinese people in order to gain compromise from China’s opponents (Lei, 2005: 487-514; Shen and Chueng, 2007: 475-497). In summation, scholars within the first branch are
convinced that rising popular nationalism in China is a consequence of governmental manipulation.

In contrast to the opinions mentioned above, the second branch emphasizes that rise of popular nationalism in China has its own original sources, not just from governmental propaganda. The scholars belonging to this camp suggest that we should alter the state-centered approach when studying Chinese nationalism. For example, Zheng (Zheng, 1999: 12) interprets the rise of popular nationalism in China as an outcome of declining state authority after the Great Cultural Revolutionary. He regards the rise in Chinese nationalism not only as a hostile reaction to the outside world but also as a symbol of civil disobedience in Chinese society, as people use nationalism to criticize the government’s breach of duty (Zheng, 2009: 35). Shirk (Shirk, 2007: 79-105) discovers that Chinese government had to face the pressure from popular nationalism since the expansion of multimedia, especially the internet, declines governmental monopoly on nationalism discourse. Thomas (Thomas, 2010: 130) also argues that the Chinese government cannot totally control and manipulate nationalist movements because of the development of an open society. Finally, Zakaria (Zakaria, 2008: 39) notices that it is the economic progress of China, brought by globalization, which has caused the increase of popular nationalism in China (national pride). According to Zakaria, there exists a correlation between globalization and the rise of popular nationalism in China. Scholars belonging to the second branch disapprove of the state-centred approach to explain why popular nationalism is rising in China.

3. Theory for Analysis

I would argue that both of the two branches contain important and relevant insights for the study of popular nationalism in China. The first camp emphasizes the functions of nationalist elites in mobilizing a nationalist movement, which corresponds to what Benedict Anderson and Eric Hobsbawn stipulate. While the second camp insists nationalist movements fulfil a bottom-up approach as they are created from the heart of people.

Xu (Gries, 2004: 119) writes about exactly that:

“Nationalism, like all social movements, involves both leaders and followers. Focusing on one group at the expense of the other, therefore, dangerously distorts our understanding of nationalist politics. Because regime legitimacy is at stake, a better understanding of how the Chinese Communist Party and the Chinese people interact in Chinese nationalism is urgently needed. Today, Chinese nationalist politics exhibits the claim-response dynamic central to negotiation of legitimacy in all political systems.”

However, arguments from both camps only concentrate on the external sources that could stimulate popular nationalism, like governmental propaganda or civil disobedience but ignore the internal causes that might boost popular nationalism. According to Gries (Gries, 2004: 9):

“Nationalism “is very much a matter of one’s self-view, of one’s estimation of oneself and one’s place in the world.” Following social identity theorists, national identity is aspect of individuals’ self-image that is tied to their nation, together with the value and emotional significance they attach to membership in the national community. For this reason, “Nationalism” will refer to any behavior designed to restore, maintain, or advance public images of that national community.”

Therefore, neglecting identity issues surrounding nationalist movements will render any research on nationalism insufficient. Carlson (Carlson, 2009: 20-35) noticed this problem of the two branches when researching rising popular nationalism in China, and warns that scholars should pay more attention to the issue of identity construction among popular nationalist movements.

I agree with Carlson’s claim. Constructivism maintains that it is identity that tells us who we are and what are our interests. But we will only be able to identify our interests once we know who we are (Wendt, 1999: 224-238). Calhoun (Calhoun, 1994: 20) also believes that the issue of identity leads to the interrelated problems of self-recognition and recognition by others. Recognition is vital to any capacity to be self-reflective, to choose one’s actions and see their consequences (Calhoun, 1994: 20). Theories of identity posit that “I act because of who I am,” not because of a rational interest or set of learned values (Calhoun, 1994: 53).

4 Yet, the disobedience from popular nationalism to official nationalism makes the second branch more reasonable compared to the first one in recent Chinese society. See Peter Hays Gries (2004) *China’s New Nationalism*, USA: University of California Press, pp.116-135.
Hence, it is identity rather than rationality that determines an actor’s definition of its interest, and its consequent behaviours for protecting its interest (Wendt, 1999: 238-243). Accordingly, popular nationalist movements take place in China because Chinese popular nationalists believe they need to protect their national interest, as that they believe their interests been threatened or damaged. They are inspired by their national identity to act like “patriots”. When trying to explain why popular nationalism is rising in China, it is imperative to find out how these nationalists identify themselves, their national interest and their enemies.

Additionally, identity is neither “objective” nor “subjective”, it is “intersubjective”. This means identity is neither given naturally nor produced purely by acts of individual will (Calhoun, 1994: 13). Identity is always changeable and the generation of an identity is a process of social construction (Wendt, 1999: 238-243). National identity is no exception. The centrality of Chinese nationalism points to the dynamic, intersubjective nature of Chinese national identity. Gries (Gries, 2004: 19) reminds us that national identity evolves through international relations, just as personal identity emerges through our interpersonal relations. Chinese national identity is not static, but evolves as Chinese interact with the world. As a result, we must figure out the process of identity construction of these Chinese popular nationalists in order to answer why popular nationalism is rising in China.

For all the reasons mentioned above, constructivism will be used as my theory for analysis on why popular nationalism in China is rising. Thereafter, I will be able to answer the research question: “to what extent does GCS theory prevent us from understanding the rise of popular nationalism in China?”

4. Methodological Approach

So far by now, I have summarized GCS theory and its critique, and the debate on why popular nationalism is rising in China. I have also clarified why I use constructivism as my theory for analysis. In this section, I will explain the reasons why I have chosen a case study and narrative analysis to conduct my political analysis on why popular nationalism is rising in China.
4.1 Case Study Design

Compared to a quantitative study, which focuses on mass statistics, process tracing in a case study is one obvious advantage for discovering how an independent variable causes change on a dependent variable (Van Evera, 1997: 52). George and Bennett (George and Bennett, 2005: 5, 19-21) also remind us that case study is a good method as it allows researchers to achieve high levels of conceptual validity and explore causal mechanisms since it is a detailed examination of one aspect of a historical episode to develop or test explanations. These are the reasons why I choose case study as one of my methods.

I have decided to select the “2008 Olympic torch incident” (Case 2008) and the “2010 China-Japan fish ship crash incident” (Case 2010) as my cases for study. Both incidents aroused huge popular nationalist movements in China. I will illustrate and describe the specific origin and developments of the two popular nationalist movements. On the one hand, they could reflect contemporary conditions of Chinese popular nationalism. On the other hand, it would be quite easy to perform process tracing on them since they took place no more than three years ago.  

After conducting process tracing on the two cases, I will summarize the commonalities and differences that exist between the two cases. Based on my materials, the two cases have similar outcomes (breaking out popular nationalist movements in China) though they are very different in many aspects. Consequently, they can be seen as “least similar cases with most similar outcomes.” George and Bennett (George and Bennett, 2005: 82) explain that if two cases are similar in outcome but differ in all but one independent variable, then the inference might be made that it is this variable that contributes to the invariant. Accordingly, I will exclude the different independent variables and summarize the common ones that could be seen as contributors to popular nationalist movements. By doing so, I am able to reveal what variables can stimulate a popular nationalist movement in China, such as the national interest of Chinese popular or the requirements that popular nationalists identify as necessary for protecting these national interests (See Figure 1).  

---

5 Due to the limitation on length of methodological approach, I am supposed to write this process tracing in my political analysis.
Figure 1 Least similar case comparison

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Case 2008</th>
<th>Case 2010</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Relevant national interests</td>
<td>?</td>
<td>?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enemies of national interests</td>
<td>?</td>
<td>?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Requirements of popular</td>
<td>?</td>
<td>?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>nationalists</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Historical hatred with enemies</td>
<td>?</td>
<td>?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Similar outcomes: Breakouting</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>huge nationalist movements in</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>China including demonstrations,</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>publications, internet</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>mobilization and so on.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

There are some limitations and technical problems in my case study design that cannot be ignored. Limitations here mean inherent disadvantages in any methodological approach while technical problems mean the challenge of the researcher to overcome these obstacles when carrying out successful research.

According to George and Bennett (George and Bennett, 2005: 17, 22-31), a case study is characterized by “small-n” studies, in contrast to “Large N” statistical studies. It carries some limitations such as case selection bias, lack of representativeness in the cases and interdependence. Based on my case study design, case selection bias is not obvious since both of my cases are recent breakouts of popular nationalist movements in China. Interdependence between the two cases is not apparent either since there is no diffusion from Case 2008 to Case 2010. However, my case selection is not intended to represent all kinds of popular nationalist movements in China since my case selection only focuses on political nationalism.

---

6 Please note this is only a demo for instruction. The details could be found in my political analysis section.
and ignores others forms such as economic nationalism, cultural nationalism etc. Hence, I admit my case study may not reflect all branches of popular nationalism in China.

As for the technical problems, all the information I am going to use in my process tracing is from media. Any biases or distortion of reality that may exist within the media will certainly have a negative influence on my research. Perhaps the best way to solve this problem is to do an ethnography study. However, I could not go back to China to carry out an ethnography study due to limitations of time and money.

4.2 Narrative Analysis Design

The case study can help uncover what national interests Chinese popular nationalists are seriously concerned with, as well as discern their perceived requirements for defending such national interests. But merely these answers are not enough for explaining why popular nationalism in China is rising since they could not clarify the reasons for Chinese popular nationalists’ considerations. In order to find out the answer, it is necessary to find out the identity of popular nationalists. Narrative analysis could be helpful in answering this question.

According to Somers and Gibson (Calhoun, 1994: 38), social life is itself storied, and narrative is an ontological condition of social life. They (Calhoun, 1994: 38) declare:

“...stories guide action; that people construct identities by locating themselves or being located within a repertoire of emplotted stories; that “experience” is constituted through narratives; that people make sense of what has happened and is happening to them by attempting to assemble or in some way to integrate these happenings within one of more narratives; and that people are guided to act in certain ways, and not others, on the basis of the projections, expectations, and memories derived from a multiplicity but ultimately limited repertoire of available social, public, and cultural narratives.”

These concepts posit that it is through narrativity that we come to know, understand, and make sense of the social world, and it is through narratives and narrativity that we construct our social identity (Calhoun, 1994: 59). Narrative analysis is an investigation on the story itself. Employing this method could help understand how popular nationalists in China use
story telling (narrative) as a method to construct the image of themselves and their motherland, the threats to their motherland and finally, their own identity.

Moreover, Pier and Landa (Pier and Landa, 2008: 9-11) believe narratives are a dynamic frame of reference, and based on one’s cultural and historical context. After all, narratives are constellations of relationships embedded in time and space, constituted by causal events, and narrative analysis demands that we discern the meaning of any single event only in temporal and spatial relationship to other events (Calhoun, 1994: 59). As a consequence, narrative analysis can reflect some social and historical context of the narrative itself, which can be very useful in explaining the formation of popular nationalists’ identity.

Constructivism stipulates that identity is a consequence of social construction and it is identity that decides an actor’s behavior. My methodological approach of narrative analysis tries to explain the activities of popular nationalists in China by figuring out their identity formation. My theory shares the same sociological background as the narrative analysis, which makes them compatible approaches within a research design.

To be specific, the aim of the narrative analysis within my research design is to find out how the popular nationalists in China tell the story to their audience and why they do so. I will use pieces of texts used by popular nationalists in social movements such as popular nationalistic publications, slogans in demonstrations and online messages as my samples for analysis. There are three steps in my narrative analysis: recording narratives, transcribing narratives and analyzing narratives.

There are, however, some limitations and technical issues of a narrative analysis that need to be addressed. As a qualitative method, narrative analysis shares the same weakness as a case study. Narrative analysis is not available for carrying out large sample research, so it also faces the question of whether its results are generalizable. Additionally, my personal identity as Chinese might influence the neutrality of my analysis since I will also be influenced by the same social contexts. This is, of course, a technical problem.

5. Political Analysis

In this section, I will start with the process tracing of my two cases and then make a comparative case study between them. After that, I will continue with a narrative analysis. At
the end of this section, based on my analysis, I will draw conclusions on why popular nationalism is rising in China.

5.1.1 Process Tracing On the Case 2008

On March 14th 2008, a large, violent riot took place in Lhasa, the capital of Tibet. This movement was led by Tibetan activists to demonstrate against the 2008 Beijing Olympic Games, and champion the cause of Tibetan independence. Coverage of the demonstration was explained by the Chinese government as a revolt instigated by the Dalai Lama, leader of the Tibetan exile government. These sources depicted the Dalai Lama as directly responsible for the whole conflict, having plotted the incident in an effort to pressure Beijing before the internationally publicized Beijing Olympic Games (China Review, 2008). However, mainstream Western media networks, including CNN and BBC, treated the event quite differently; depicting the Tibetan movement in a much more positive light, contending the riot emerged because of Beijing’s unjust domination of Tibet and its ethnic discrimination against Tibetans.

On April 7th, nearly one month after the Lhasa riot, the parade of the Beijing Olympic torch in Paris encountered vast demonstrations from many “Free Tibet” organizations. Local guards were forced to extinguish the torch four times in case any conflicts may erupt between the pro-torch Chinese parade and the “Free Tibet” people. When female Chinese athlete Jinjing was carrying the torch at the front of the parade, several mobs tried to break the guard line and grab the torch from her (Sina News, 2008a).

All these scenarios were broadcast by Chinese mass media to Chinese audiences instantly, and popular nationalists in China were enraged. Unlike some Westerners who might consider the Beijing Olympic Game as a victory for an authoritarian government, most Chinese considered it as a glorious renaissance of their nation. Consequently, Chinese popular nationalists viewed such protests and demonstrations, especially the crush of the Beijing Olympic torch parade in Paris, as a humiliation against their motherland from the West. When these nationalists heard denouncements of Beijing’s human rights or its handling of Tibet in Western media, they became more and more angry. A university student in China set up a webpage titled “Anti-CNN” and declared that the mission of his website was to disclose

---

7 Actually, this case consists of series incidents. I call them as one incident because the series incidents stimulate the same popular nationalist movement in China.
how Western media smeared China. He posted texts and photos of China from the websites of Western media sources, such as CNN and BBC, and pointed out the mistakes and distortion that existed in these media sources, so as to show Western media’s bias and hostility toward China. The student’s webpage was browsed over a million times after only one month of its creation (Global Times, 2009). “Do not be like CNN”, “Stop lying, Western media”, “Stop demonize China and Beijing Olympic” soon became well-known slogans among Chinese popular nationalists. Some popular nationalists sent thousands of emails to Western journalists in China to show their dissatisfaction with reports on China by Western media (ChinaWatch, 2008). Even overseas Chinese students joined this online protest.8

At the same time, there were rumours in China that claimed Louis Vuitton, the biggest stockholder of Carrefour, had been a benefactor to the Dalai Lama. Considering the protest march of the Beijing Olympic torch parade in Paris, this French enterprise could not avoid becoming the enemy of Chinese popular nationalists. Great demonstrations broke out in China calling for the boycott of Louis Vuitton and Carrefour, or even of all French goods. At one demonstration in Beijing, popular nationalists carried a big picture showing Jingjing, the female Chinese athlete protecting the Beijing Olympic torch in Paris, being attacked by some mobs that tried to grab the torch from her. This picture was titled “Look at what the so called human right fighters are doing!” Some extreme nationalists even blocked the entrance of Carrefour supermarkets and bit people who had bought commodities inside (Sina News, 2008b).

Additionally, five famous Chinese popular nationalist leaders wrote a book titled “China is unhappy” to mobilize their comrades in upgrading the popular nationalist movements. Their book analyses Western stereotypes of China and asserts that the West does not want to see a powerful China, due to their realist beliefs (CNN, 2008). Here is an excerpt from one of the book’s most well known sections:

“You (the West) always see China as an abnormal country but never rethink whether your prejudice on China is abnormal! The only reason to explain your behaviour is because you do not want to see a strong China. You never stop your temptation to prevent China from

8 This happened because these Chinese international students had more opportunities to receive the broadcast from Western media.
success. *When China rises to power, we shall force you to shut up!*” (Wang Xiaodong et al., 2008: 157)

This book also contends that Chinese diplomacy is too moderate, making China an easy target of the West. If China has a stronger foreign policy and says “No” to the West on occasion, the West would recognize how to appropriately deal with China (Wang Xiaodong et al., 2008: 154-159). Their book catered to popular nationalism and was one of the best sellers in 2008.

So what is the attitude of the Chinese government? In the beginning Beijing supported the online anti-West movements. In the eyes of Beijing, this was a good chance to destroy the authority of Western media that had been constructed after the Tiananmen incident in the eyes of the Chinese people. The Chinese Foreign Ministry asserted that the “Anti-CNN” website reflected the Chinese people's sentiments. The spokesperson for the Chinese foreign ministry warned Western media to take Chinese people’s emotions into consideration when they make reports (Chinese Foreign Ministry, 2008).

Yet when demonstrations against Louis Vuitton and Carrefour occurred, Beijing seemed to be frightened by these popular nationalist movements since it feared the xenophobic aspect of popular nationalism would ruin the Beijing Olympic Games and wipe out the friendly image of China it had worked hard to construct. Chinese Central Television (CCTV) made a special program persuading people not to boycott any French goods since boycotts would harm Chinese consumers as well (Sohu News, 2008). The mainstream official media in China highlighted repeatedly that most of foreign countries supported the Beijing Olympic Games, in order to curtail the growing anger of Chinese popular nationalists. Evidently, Beijing was intent on keeping the popular nationalist movements in a cage rather than let it rise freely. Two month later, a sudden earthquake in southwest China distracted people's attention from the topic of nationalism. Without this event, it is difficult to say whether Beijing could have controlled these popular nationalist movements or not.

---

9 The Tiananmen incident taking place in 1989 weakened the authority of Chinese government. Since then, a lot of Chinese people prefer to believe Western media rather then the state controlled one in their own country.
5.1.2 Process Tracing on Case 2010

The Diaoyu, or Senkaku, Islands comprise an archipelago of eight desolate rocks lying in the East China Sea between Taiwan and Okinawa. The islands are claimed by China and Japan. “Diaoyu” and “Senkaku” are the Chinese and Japanese names for the islands. Each name implicitly embodies a sovereignty claim. Disputes of sovereignty over these islands between China and Japan began in the 1970s when scientists discovered huge amount of oil and gas in the Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) nearby. Currently these islands are under Japanese control. Although China announced that it intends to set aside the dispute temporarily, and explore this area with Japan together, there is no sign Beijing will compromise on this issue. Since the 1990s, popular nationalists from mainland China have tried many times to land on these islands.10

On September 7th 2010, a Japanese coast guard detained a Chinese fishing ship near these islands. Japan unilaterally announced that the ship was fishing without consent in Japanese EEZ belonging to the disputed islands and intentionally crashed into the Japanese coast guard ship while trying to escape. Moreover, Japan wanted to put the Chinese captain of the ship on trial so as to demonstrate Japan’s sovereignty over these islands and its EEZ (BBC, 2010).

In retaliation, the Chinese government suspended its entire governmental foreign visit to Japan as well as the negotiations with Japan, over a common explored oil field in the East China Sea. China also banned the export to Japan of rare earth that is essential for Japanese industry, in order to add pressure to Japan. What is more, Beijing arrested four Japanese in China for allegedly mapping military bases illegally (CNN, 2010a). After two months of diplomatic strife, Japan released all the staff as well as the boat, unconditionally. However, the sovereignty of the disputed islands is still an unresolved issue. A few weeks after this incident, a Chinese coast guard ship confronted a Japanese coast guard ship in the same region once again (Yoree Koh, 2010).

Soon after the dispute took place, demonstrations formed by youths took place in front of the Japanese embassy in Beijing with the slogan “Japan, get your ass back to you home from our land”. When China negotiated with Japan on the fish ship crash incident, several huge demonstrations took place throughout west provinces of China calling for boycotts of

---

10 In 1996, the popular nationalists coming from mainland of China and Taiwan successfully landed on these islands. Japan released these men soon after it took them into custody.
Japanese goods. There were even riots to burn shops selling Japanese goods (Maxim Duncan, 2010). People involved in the demonstrations yelled anti-Japan slogans like “Defeat Japanese imperialism”, “Japan are still oppressing China and stealing Chinese land after the World War Two”, “Chinese people are too tolerate for those Japanese bastard”, “Japanese invaders roll out of the Diaoyu, we will not be repressed by you any more” and so on (CNN, 2010b). It seemed Chinese popular nationalists still viewed China as a victim of the Japanese invasion during the war between the two countries which ended sixty years ago. What is more, these popular nationalists believed it was useful to target the Japanese economy by boycotting Japanese goods since the Japanese and Chinese economies are so interdependent. They did not care whether such boycotts would damage the Chinese economy as well.

During this time, the main cyber forums in China were filled with anti-Japan discussions that encouraged a strong reaction against the Japanese, including cutting off economic cooperation and other harmful measures. One nationalist wrote on a cyber forum: “Today you buy the Japanese Goods, tomorrow the money you pay them will be used to produce bullet that kills your son in Japan’s second invasion to China.” Another nationalist wrote: “We boycott Japanese goods for one year, Japan will collapse. We are just civilians, we do not have so much power to play political struggle, but we can refuse to use Japanese goods in our daily life. That is what we can do! If every Chinese rejects to buy Japanese goods, Japan will be forced to surrender to us! (Tiexue Forum, 2010) ” Some Chinese popular nationalists even broke the internet block to log into Facebook, Twitter and YouTube in order to express their anti-Japanese sentiments to the outside world. Like the demonstrations in the real world, such online movements contained denouncements against Japan, suggesting Japan should feel guilt for what it did to China in the Second World War, as well as requirements to boycott Japanese goods; both claims went far beyond the incident itself.

Apparently, Chinese popular nationalists saw the fish ship incident as just another incident in Japan’s continuous history of offences against China, beginning with the Japanese invasion to

---

11 The demonstrations mainly concentrate on west provinces where the governments are not so sensitive to these movements. Local governments beforehand prevented the big demonstrations in Beijing and Shanghai since they have ever encountered similar demonstration in 2005. As for anti-Japan demonstration took place at Shanghai and Beijing in 2005, please see Peter Sandby-Thomas (2009) Legitimating the Chinese Communist Party since Tianan men, UK: Routledge Press, pp.118-149.

12 In China, people are not allowed to log in Face Book, Twitter and YouTube because of governmental censorship.
now. There is no doubt that the historical hatred of the Japanese invasion is intertwined with the present China-Japan dispute, at least in the eyes of these Chinese popular nationalists. In contrast to the weak image as the historical victim, Chinese popular nationalists trusted China was strong enough to punish Japanese offenses on their motherland by using economic means.

Afraid that such anti-Japan demonstrations would break the normal social order and diplomatic efforts to solve the dispute, the Chinese government tried to control these popular nationalist movements from even beginning. The Chinese government ordered universities to persuade students not to participate in demonstrations. Additionally, local governments were required by Beijing to keep their eyes on the leaders of such demonstrations in case of any illegal behavior (International Business Times, 2010). With the aim to assuage the people’s anger and keep society in order, the Chinese Foreign Ministry called for “rational patriotism” and opposed any violent activities on the mainstream media several days after the demonstrations took place. Furthermore, Mr. Wu Jianmin, who was the former Chinese ambassador to the EU, wrote a special report in a Chinese newspaper saying boycotting Japanese goods was stupid since it would damage the Chinese economy as well (People’s Daily, 2010). Mr. Wu’s behavior was in accordance with official instructions from Beijing. Obviously, what the Chinese government wanted was to keep popular nationalism under control and replace it with official nationalism (rational patriotism).

However, popular nationalists did not follow what the government wanted them to do. They thought their government was too hesitated in punishing Japan. They believed Beijing should be stronger in negotiating with Japan. A nationalist named Deng Haijian even wrote in an online paper condemning Mr. Wu Jianmin, and alleged that patriotism was always right and silence cannot protect the national interest (Deng, 2010). This paper spread wildly on the internet and was welcomed by popular nationalists. The “Rational Patriotism” advocated by official nationalism was not attractive to these popular nationalists. The popular nationalist movements did not stop for several weeks after Japan’s release of the Chinese captain.

5.1.3 Least Similar Case Comparison

The above two cases are different in many aspects but similar in outcome: they succeeded in initiating popular nationalist movements in China. After carrying out process tracing on both cases, I will now conduct a least similar case comparison between the two cases. The aim of
this least similar case comparison is to find out what variables could contribute to a popular nationalist movement in China.

Before beginning my comparison, I must give an explanation of my variable design. The variables I am going to compare between the two cases are “Relevant national interest”; “Enemies of national interest”; “Historical Hatred with the enemies”; “Main Requirements of popular nationalists”; “Encouragement from government” and “Mobilization on the internet”.13

“Relevant national interest”, “Enemies of national interest” and “Main Requirements of popular nationalists” are basic variables in studies of nationalism that I must examine.

As for the variable “Historical Hatred with the enemies”, it has been added since what has happened in the past might have an effect on identity formation among Chinese popular nationalists. Kaviraj (Gries, 2004: 80) reminds us that nationalism involves a relentless project of enumeration – the endless counting of its citizens, territories, and resources--as it counts, what appears to be, every conceivable quantifiable entity. Thus, “historical hatred with the enemies” will always be mentioned in a nationalist movement. According to principles of constructivism, identity determines actors’ behaviours and the formation of identity is a consequence of social construction, for this reason I must not neglect this variable.

“Encouragement from government” and “Mobilization on the internet” were also included as variables of comparison since I intend to verify whether they exist as functional variables for stimulating a popular nationalist movement. Based on process tracing and my variable design, the results of the comparison are reproduced below in Figure 2.

---

13 Due to the limitation of time as well as lack of data, I cannot find enough material on whether age, living area, social status or gender of popular nationalists have any functions on boosting a popular nationalist movement. The research of Chinese popular nationalism based on these factors could constitute a good thesis on analyzing the structural reasons for the rise of popular nationalism in China.
Figure 2 Least similar case comparison

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Case 2008</th>
<th>Case 2010</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Relevant national interest</td>
<td>China’s sovereignty on Tibet and national dignity</td>
<td>China’s sovereignty on Diaoyu islands</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enemies of national interest</td>
<td>Western media demonizing China and groups supporting Tibet independence</td>
<td>Japan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Main Requirements of popular nationalists</td>
<td>Prevent Western media from demonizing China, economic boycott those supporting Tibet independence and require government to hold stronger foreign policy to the West</td>
<td>Economic boycott on Japan and require government to hold stronger foreign policy to Japan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Historical Hatred with the enemies</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Encouragement from government</td>
<td>Government encouraged it at first but opposed it at last</td>
<td>There was no governmental encouragement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mobilization on the internet</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 2 is not concise enough so I made a little amendment on it in order to make it easier for understanding. Please see Figure 3.

From Figure 3, we can see that territorial integration is the relevant national interest that Chinese popular nationalists are most concerned with in the two nationalist movements. They wanted an economic boycott as well as a stronger foreign policy response against the enemies that damage or threaten China’s territorial integrity. Unfortunately, but foreseeably, the West and Japan, who have historically been hated by China are still the enemies to Chinese territorial integrity, according to Chinese popular nationalists. Additionally, governmental
encouragement is not a necessary variable for enhancing a popular nationalist movement in China. Through process tracing, it was found that popular nationalism and official nationalism (rational patriotism) usually contradict each other. In fact, popular nationalism in China is more hostile to the West and Japan, in comparison to official nationalism.\(^\text{14}\) Finally, it is quite clear that the internet plays an important role the mobilization of popular nationalist movements in China. This happens not only because the internet is a low cost network for spreading information, but also, and most importantly, because it offers a space where popular nationalists can circumvent governmental censorship.

Figure 3 Modified least similar case comparison

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Case 2008</th>
<th>Case 2010</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Relevant national</td>
<td>Territorial integration</td>
<td>Territorial integration</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>interest</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enemies of national</td>
<td>The West</td>
<td>Japan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>interest</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Main Requirements of</td>
<td>Economic boycott on the enemies and a stronger</td>
<td>Economic boycott on the enemies and a stronger</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>popular nationalists</td>
<td>foreign policy</td>
<td>foreign policy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Historical Hatred with</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>the enemies</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Encouragement from</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>government</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mobilization on the</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>internet</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\(^{14}\) This proves the first branch on Chinese nationalism study that only focuses on the governmental propaganda is not appropriate for explaining why popular nationalism in China is rising.
5.2 Narrative Analysis

So far, I have figured out which variables could contribute to popular nationalist movements in China. I have also identified the national interest concerns of the Chinese popular nationalists, who they identify as their enemies and their requirements. But this is not enough to explain how identity inspires some Chinese to become popular nationalists. In order to discover the identity of Chinese popular nationalists as well as the formation of their identity, I will conduct a narrative analysis on the texts used by popular nationalists to mobilize their followers.

Since there is no uniform method of narrative analysis, I will accept the method advocated by Riessman (Riessman, 1993: 61). I will start from the inside of the texts, from the meanings encoded in the text, and then expand outward, identifying, for example, underlying propositions that make the text sensible. Of course, this strategy privileges the researcher’s experience, but my personal interpretation cannot be avoided (Riessman, 1993: 61). I will identify narrative segments, reduce stories to a core, examine how word choice, structure, and clauses echo one another, and examine how the sequence of action is built (Riessman, 1993: 40). My process can be divided into three steps: telling, transcribing and analyzing.

The poem below is named “What do you really want from us?” An unnamed Chinese popular nationalist wrote this poem in Case 2008 for expressing the anger of the Chinese people toward the West (Washington Post, 2008):

*When we were the Sick Man of Asia, We were called the Yellow Peril.*

*When we are billed as the next Superpower, we are called The Threat.*

*When we closed our doors, you launched the Opium War to open our markets.*

*When we embraced free trade, you blamed us for stealing your jobs.*

*When we were falling apart, you marched in your troops and demanded your fair share.*

*When we tried to put the broken pieces back together again, Free Tibet, you screamed. It was an Invasion!*

*When we tried communism, you hated us for being communist.*

*When we embraced capitalism, you hated us for being capitalist.*
When we were poor, you thought we were dogs.
When we lend you cash, you blame us for your national debts.

When we had a billion people, you said we were destroying the planet.
When we tried limiting our numbers, you said we abused human rights.

When we build our industries, you call us polluters.
When we sell you goods, you blame us for global warming.

When we buy oil, you call it exploitation and genocide.
When you go to war for oil, you call it liberation.

When we were lost in chaos, you demanded the rule of law.
When we uphold law and order against violence, you call it a violation of human rights.

When we were silent, you said you wanted us to have free speech.
When we are silent no more, you say we are brainwashed xenophobes.

Why do you hate us so much? We asked.
No, you answered, we don't hate you.

We don't hate you either, but do you understand us?
Of course we do, you said, We have AFP, CNN and BBC . . .

What do you really want from us? Think hard first, then answer . . .Because you only get so many chances. Enough is Enough, Enough Hypocrisy for This One World. We want One World, One Dream, and Peace on Earth. This Big Blue Earth is Big Enough for all of us.

This poem is not a masterpiece, but it does tell a lot about what Chinese popular nationalists wish to say to the West. In the following section, I will transcribe and analyze this narrative.\(^{15}\)

It is clear that each paragraph, except the last two, of this poem is using an antithesis-writing method to show the bias of the West toward China. From the first to fifth paragraph, the author compares the West’s past and current attitude toward China. The author is convinced that the West always wants to find reasons to blame or harm China, even after China transformed itself. This implies that the attitude of the West toward China has always been hostile. By doing this, the historical hatred between China and the West is being recalled and

---

\(^{15}\) Based on the attributes of this poem, I could start my transcribing and analyzing together.
related to present events (See Figure 4). As a result, the author successfully twists historical hatred with present contradictions and produces an image that West’s current oppression of China in nothing new, and simply a continuation of past oppression.

Figure 4 Historical hatred and present contradictions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Past</th>
<th>Present</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a. <em>When we were the Sick Man of Asia, We were called the Yellow Peril</em>&lt;br&gt; b. <em>When we closed our doors, you launched the Opium War to open our markets</em>&lt;br&gt; c. <em>When we were falling apart, you marched in your troops and demanded your fair share</em>&lt;br&gt; d. <em>When we tried communism, you hated us for being communist</em>&lt;br&gt; e. <em>When we were poor, you thought we were dogs</em></td>
<td>A. <em>When we are billed as the next Superpower, we are called The Threat</em>&lt;br&gt; B. <em>When we embraced free trade, you blamed us for stealing your jobs</em>&lt;br&gt; C. <em>When we tried to put the broken pieces back together again, Free Tibet, you screamed. It was an Invasion</em>&lt;br&gt; D. <em>When we embraced capitalism, you hated us for being capitalist</em>&lt;br&gt; E. <em>When we lend you cash, you blame us for your national debts</em></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In other antithesis paragraphs, the author continues to create this image by focusing on the contemporary conflicts between China and the West. He constructs a picture where the West is hostile to China on a lot of issues like population planning, environmental protection and market expansion, but provides China with no options. By doing this, the author tries to persuade his audience to believe a “truth” that no matter what China does, the West will always oppose.

What is more, the author also denounces the West for its unfair double standard in evaluating China’s behavior and its own behavior. In the paragraph “*When we buy oil, you call it exploitation and genocide; When you go to war for oil, you call it liberation*”, the author
alluded that Western society is too tolerant of the American invasion of Iraq but too critical of China’s oil strategy in Africa. Also when the author states “When we were silent, you said you wanted us to have free speech; When we are silent no more, you say we are brainwashed xenophobes”, he argue that liberalism was nothing but a Western discourse to blame China when necessary. In his opinion, if Chinese people really said what they wanted to say and made the West feel upset, the West would smear them as brainwashed xenophobes rather than listen to what they say. Thus, the author directly points out that Western society is hypocritical when it comes to the issue of democracy in China.

In the final two paragraphs, the author tries to ascribe Western society’s hostility toward China as Western media propaganda. This is, of course, rhetoric in his poem. The author intends to mobilize followers of Chinese popular nationalism, or even foreigners that were shocked by his poem, to rethink what Western media has broadcast so as to put pressure on Western media. By using the slogan of the Beijing Olympic Games “One world, one dream” as rhetoric in the end, the author tries to gain support for his poem as well as the Beijing Olympics.

No one could deny rhetoric does exist in this poem. However, I would argue this narrative does reveal some important information to understand the identity of Chinese popular nationalists, since the poem resonated so strongly among them. It is obvious that the author, as well as major Chinese popular nationalists, cannot forgive the historical offenses of the West against China. What is more, they even see the current contradictions between China and the West as a continuation of Western offenses against China.16 In summation, the Chinese popular nationalists believe that China is a victim of Western barbaric behaviors from the Opium War until now.17 Also in the author’s narrative on present China, the author believes China has totally changed from a weak and poor nation to a rising superpower. Therefore, the Chinese popular nationalists identify their motherland as both a historical victim and a rising superpower.

Keeping this in mind, it can be explained why Chinese popular nationalists always mention historical hatred, and the need for a stronger foreign policy in dealing with their national

16 Based on my two cases, this offense concentrates on disputes about China’s territorial integration.

17 Opium War is the first war between ancient China and the West (Britain). From that time on, China suffered the threat of colonization from the West and Japan for a hundred years until the end of Second World War.
enemies, at the same time. It is because they believe China should resist such continuous offense from the West or Japan, and also because they believe China has the capabilities to do so. Based on this identity of China as a historical victim and as a rising superpower, such “resistance” is not only “just” but also “rational”. Reconsidering the slogan in Case 2010 that was mentioned in the process tracing, one can find a similar narrative that could comply with such an identity: “Today you buy the Japanese Goods, tomorrow the money you pay them will be used to produce bullet that kills your son in Japan’s second invasion to China” (historical victim image); “We boycott Japanese goods for one year, Japan will collapse…If every Chinese rejects to buy Japanese goods, Japan will be forced to surrender to us!” (superpower image). I call this identity of Chinese popular nationalists on their motherland as “victim-superpower complex”.

5.3 Analysis on Why Popular Nationalism in China is Rising

The comparative case study describes the external features of popular nationalism in China and discovers how territorial disputes can easily initiate a popular nationalist movement in China. The narrative analysis discovers that it is the “victim-superpower” identity that motivates Chinese popular nationalists to recall historical hatred of their enemies and call for a stronger foreign policy against their enemies, as features of their nationalist movements. In the final part of this section, I will integrate my case study and narrative analysis by explaining the identity formation of Chinese popular nationalists. This will allow me to discover why popular nationalism is rising in China.

According to Gries (Gries, 2004: 46), a national narrative is the story we tell about our nation’s past and this story constrains, and is constrained, by what we do in the present. Simply put, the storied nature of social life provides our identity with meaning. Thus, the concept of a national narrative allows for an interdependent relationship between past and present (Gries, 2004: 46). Gries’ opinion accords with my constructivist theory as well as my narrative analysis. Therefore, in order to discover the identity formation of Chinese popular nationalists, I need to trace the history of China’s national formation.

War is a graveyard of people but the birthplace of nations. No true nation is born without war; indeed, nations define themselves through conflicts with other nations (Gries, 2004: 69). China is no exception to this. Chinese nationalism regards its own nation as a victim of history due to past collisions with the West and Japan (Carvalho and Gemenne, 2009: 13).
Although China was not a nation-state at that time, it was forces from the outside world that inspired Chinese nationalism. As a result, the sad memory as well as the resistance to oppressive outside forces certainly play a role in the Chinese national narrative and contribute to feelings of nationalism. Just like the Holocaust will always be a part of Israel’s history, the “Century of humiliation”, which includes both Western and Japanese invasion of China from the Opium War to the end of Second World War, cannot be easily forgotten by the Chinese (Gries, 2004: 48). And the narrative of the “Century of humiliation” helps constructs the historical victim identity among Chinese nationalists.\(^{18}\)

After the birth of PRC in 1949, nationalism in China became mixed with the ideal for a world proletarian revolution, due to Mao’s ideology. During this time, the ideal of a world proletarian revolutionary spread outward, while nationalism stayed inward. Mao always called for the protection of the nation in the name of protecting the real proletariat state.\(^{19}\) Through this, Mao created a national identity of China as the liberator of the working class and leader of world communism. However, the historical victim identity was never given up in this period. Mao just changed the way of interpreting Western or Japanese oppression of China, rather than totally abandoned the victim identity. According to Mao’s theory, the past invasions of China by the West and Japan were understood as a result of the greed of capitalism. It was the capitalists rather than the working class (civil people) of the West and Japan that were to blame (Thomas, 2009: 123-124). Just as Eric Hobsbawm (Hobsbawm, 1977: 13) points out, “Marxist” movements and states have tended to become national not only in form but in substance. Hence, Mao’s interpretation of Chinese history within that social context was quite reasonable.

The situation totally changed after Mao’s death. In the Post-Mao period, China moved from communism to pragmatism and nationalism, without any communist factors moving outward.\(^{20}\) According to Chen, this transformation of Chinese nationalism caused two huge changes: first, China did not identify itself anymore as a liberator of the world’s working class. The enemies constructed by Chinese nationalism that threatened the Chinese national

\(^{18}\) The official nationalism has this historical victim identity too.

\(^{19}\) This point is very obvious when China and Soviet Union had contradiction and China blamed USSR as revisionism of real Marxism.

\(^{20}\) However, CCP also produces a lot of new explanations on communism and history in order to keep its legitimacy. Due to the research topic, I am not going to represent further on this.
interest were no longer the greedy capitalists, but were now whole nations (Chen, 2005: 35-53). Second, due to the lack of legitimacy as well as the development of an open society in the Post-Mao period, official nationalism cannot monopolize the construction of the national identity in China, so non-state actors had the possibility and necessity to create a new form of Chinese nationalism (Zheng, 1999: 12). Both changes generated contemporary popular nationalism in China. Nevertheless, the historical victim identity still stayed at the core of Chinese nationalism, whether official or popular.

Nowadays, due to China’s economic success brought on by globalization, the proportion of those who have national pride and confidence in Chinese nationalism will surely increase. But this does not mean that the identity of China as a historical victim will vanish naturally in Chinese nationalism. On the contrary, the image of China as a historical victim and the image of China as a rising superpower coexist in the identity of Chinese popular nationalists. Fareed Zakaria (Zakaria, 2008: 33) has a fabulous description about this condition of China in his book *Post American World*:

“Imagine that you lived in a country that had been poor and unstable for centuries. And then, finally, things turn and your nation is on the rise. You would be proud and anxious to be seen. This desire for recognition and respect is surging throughout the world. It may seem paradoxical that globalization and economic modernization are breeding political nationalism, but that is so only if we view nationalism as a backward ideology, certain to be erased by onward march of progress.”

Zakaria’s description precisely reflects the “victim-superpower” identity of the motherland to Chinese popular nationalists. Although it is true that both the historical victim image and the rising superpower image are two aspects of Chinese popular nationalist’s identity, each of them represents a totally contrary image (See Figure 5).

---

21 Ironically, the West and Japan, especially Japan usually represent both the two kinds of enemy. Even in Mao’s period, these states were still enemies but with different explanations by China. This point shows the hard core of Chinese nationalism stays still by now.
Looking further into this complex, I would argue that the relationship between the two images is a typical dilemma since they look, at first glance, contrary to each other, but actually their relationship is quite logical, and helps sustain Chinese popular nationalism. The historical victim image always reminds Chinese popular nationalists that they must not repeat tragic history and the only way to avoid this tragedy is to make China more powerful. The rising superpower image, especially when compared to the historical victim image of old China, tells Chinese popular nationalists of the success they have already gained. The differences in the two images serve as a message to the Chinese popular nationalists that the events of yesterday will never happen again. The historical victim image stimulates the desire for national developments and the contributions of national developments brought by the rising superpower image, helps the Chinese gain confidence about their efforts to get rid of fears from the past. These two images exist as a circular relationship -- both complementing and reinforcing each other. Rather than agree on this point, I would rather say the enemies of Chinese popular nationalism is China’s past, just like the enemy of European identity is Europe’s past (Buzan, 2004: 18).

Unfortunately, there are still some states that have hurt China in the past who have current conflicts with China, such as Japan or the West. China considers its territorial integrity as the
first priority of its national interest, like all modern nation states.\textsuperscript{22} Therefore, the threats brought by Japan and the West against China’s national interest, especially its territorial integrity, bring back memories of past instances of humiliation caused by these two states.\textsuperscript{23} As a result, Chinese popular nationalists certainly view the West and Japan as past and current enemies of its territorial integrity.

At the same time, the economic success of China constructs the national pride and confidence that makes popular nationalists believe China is a rising superpower. Hence, it is reasonable for those Chinese popular nationalists to desire economic punishments against their enemies since they believe that China will more easily overwhelm its opponents in the economic arena. Accordingly, the historical victim image inspires Chinese popular nationalists to be sensitive to the territorial integrity of China, while the rising superpower image motivates them to request economic punishments for China’s enemies. We can clearly see how the “victim-superpower complex” functions in initiating a popular nationalist movement in China.

But there is still one point that needs to be explained: how to understand differences between official nationalism and popular nationalism? I will analyze this point from an identity perspective. The division of official nationalism and popular nationalism in China implies that ordinary people and government leaders in China have a different identity for their nation. Based on my analysis on the formation of Chinese nationalism, the historical victim image is always a part of Chinese nationalism, no matter if it is official nationalism or popular nationalism. Hence, the identity differences between official nationalism and popular nationalism must concentrate on how they identify the present condition of China. Unlike government elites who are quite familiar with China’s national power and diplomacy, popular nationalists tend to be over confident about China’s rise (See Figure 6). As a result, they would like the Chinese government to maintain a stronger foreign policy against their national enemies.

\textsuperscript{22} Barry Buzan and Ole Waver divided nation states into three types: postmodern nation states in EU, modern nation states like India and China, premodern nation states in Sub Sahara African region. In their opinion, postmodern states will not see territorial control as an issue of securitization, but modern nation states like China will still securitize territorial issue as important national interest. See Barry Buzan and Ole Waver (2004) \textit{The Regions and Powers: The Structure of International Security}, section one, UK: Cambridge University Press.

\textsuperscript{23} In the “Century of humiliation”, China lost lots of territorial control in the resistance to the West and Japan. This could explain why Chinese popular nationalists concern so much about their territorial integration.
Figure 6 Identity differences between official nationalism and popular nationalism in China

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Official nationalism</th>
<th>Popular nationalism</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Similarities</strong></td>
<td>China is a historical victim of the Western or Japanese</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>oppression</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Differences</strong></td>
<td>China is still a developing</td>
<td>China is a superpower and has the</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>country that needs a peaceful</td>
<td>capability to punish their enemy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>environment</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Outcomes</strong></td>
<td>Persist moderate foreign policy and solve disputes in</td>
<td>Require stronger foreign</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>peaceful manners</td>
<td>policy to national enemies</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

So far, it is clear that “victim-superpower” identity boosts popular nationalism in China. Since the image as a historical victim is a traditional factor in Chinese nationalism, I would argue that rising popular nationalism in China is a consequence of globalization because globalization enhances Chinese national pride and therefore helps constructs the image of a rising superpower.

What is more, the “victim-superpower” identity inspires popular nationalist movements in China when contemporary conflicts bring up China’s fear of the past. According to the “victim-superpower” identity, any compromises on territorial disputes are unacceptable to those Chinese popular nationalists. Unfortunately, China is still a state with several unfinished boundary disputes, so there will be endless sources for boosting popular nationalism in China (Li, 2009: 171). Thus, there is no evidence that popular nationalism in China may decrease in the future.

24 The best way to eliminate Chinese nationalism is that USA gives up Taiwan, Japan and ASEAN give in on the territorial see dispute, the West keeps silent on Tibet issue on so on. But this is absolutely impossible.
The fierce hostility of popular nationalism toward the outside world, and declining authority of official nationalism in China casts a shadow on peaceful developments in China. Contemporary Chinese popular nationalism will impair China’s promise for peaceful development and peaceful international relations since no Chinese government in modern history has succeeded in extinguishing popular nationalism (Thomas, 2009: 130).

6. Discussion

After clarifying“What are the specific contents of GCS theory?” in my research summary and discovering “Why is popular nationalism rising in China?” in my political analysis, I could then begin my discussion on my main research question: “To what extent dose GCS theory prevent us from understanding the rise of popular nationalism in China?”

China is widely considered a beneficiary of economic globalization, especially since trade and foreign investment play essential roles in boosting China’s economy. Paradoxically, economic globalization does not reduce, but enhances popular nationalism in China since it is China’s economic growth that produces the image of a rising superpower in the “victim-superpower” identity. This phenomenon is absolutely a counterexample to GCS theory. Some scholars even call this phenomenon “Liberal Dilemma” (Hughes, 2006: 106-115).

I would argue that GCS theory fails to provide us with an appropriate answer for understanding rising popular nationalism in China because the sociological background of GCS theory is essentialism. When studying politics of collective identity (like nationalism), essentialism often takes for granted that the members of a group always have a salient identity. According to Calhoun (Calhoun, 1994: 26): “Such in-group essentialism-ironically often juxtaposed to strident attacks on the essentialism of dominant categorizations of identities- is linked to portrayals of identities as more singular and/or fixed than they easily can be.”

However, social constructivism theory challenges essentialism’s notions that collective actors can have a singular, integral, harmonious and unproblematic identity (Calhoun, 1994: 13). At the same time, constructivist arguments challenge accounts of collective identities as based on some “essence” (like biological factors, cultural factors, economic factors etc) or set of core features shared by all members of one collectivity, and to none other (Calhoun, 1994: 13). Instead, constructivism maintains that multiple identities are the usual condition of our
social lives and there is tension and struggle between identities on both the individual and collective levels (Calhoun, 1994: 27). As a result, identity formation is always a project, and not a settled accomplishment. In other words, identity is always changeable and transformation of identity happens in the process of social construction. Therefore, essentialism that tries to fix identity by an appeal to “objective” factors is not appropriate for explaining social behaviors.

Now, let us review GCS theory and find the inherent problems in it. Whether Beck’s or Lipschutz’s theory, GCS theory assumes GCS will finally succeed and nationalism will become dysfunctional, based on the analysis of the structural change of world politics in a global era. Yet, GCS theory oversimplifies identity construction and transformation in the process of globalization. In the framework of GCS theory, it takes for granted that people in civil society will identify themselves as members of GCS because they need to unite in order to keep a balance on world markets. What is more, GCS theory claims that global citizen identity will become a salient identity that dominates people’s behaviors. This assumption is a kind of essentialism. It ignores the tension and struggle between a global citizen identity and other collective identities, like national identity, that is included in nationalism. It also overlooks the factors that may sustain nationalism and national identity.

To be specific, identity is a consequence of social construction according to constructivism. Hence, a collective identity of a group is influenced by the historical experience and shared knowledge of the group (Wendt, 1999: 184-189). Thus, nationalism as a collective identity is shaped and generated from national history and relevant shared knowledge. This means nationalism and national identity will not easily disappear, as GCS predicts, since the collective memory cannot be so easily forgotten. Smith (Smith, 1995: 22) believes that shared memory, constituting the culture of the past, supplies people an identity that sustains the unit of a community, but this so-called global culture does not have such functions, as it is too ambiguous. Ulf Hedetoft (Hedetoft, 1999: 71-94) also blames GCS theory for it underestimation of the resistance of national identity to globalization.

In addition, even as the formation of a global citizen identity is happening in globalization as GCS theory assumes, we should not neglect that there is tension and struggle between national identity and global citizen identity. Robertson (Lechner and Boli, 2008: 78-87) reminds us that a person will face a multi-identity condition in the global context. This means
that a person will struggle between self-identity, national identity, transnational identity and cosmopolitan identity due to globalization (See Figure 7). However, it is obvious that GCS theory neglects such an identity struggle and presumes that a global citizen identity (transnational identity) will naturally become the salient identity in civil society because of its sociological essentialist approach.\textsuperscript{25}

Figure 7 Multiple identities in the global context

Judging from my analysis on rising popular nationalism in China, it is clear that the “victim-superpower” identity sustains and increases popular nationalism in China within the global context. The people within Chinese civil society, who are supposed to be the main supporters of GCS, are growing more and more nationalistic, as the processes of globalization proceed. This counterexample to GCS theory happens because their “victim-superpower” identity is consolidated when China involves itself in international relations. The historical victim image, together with the rising superpower image will absolutely boost Chinese popular nationalism when conflicts take place between China and other countries. Since GCS theory does not take

\textsuperscript{25} Cosmopolitan identity here means an identity that concerns about the entire humankind. This collective identity includes but not limits to global citizen identity in GCS. Therefore, I call the global citizen identity in GCS as transnational identity.
the identity struggle into account and imagines that a global citizen identity will naturally become most salient, it surely cannot explain why popular nationalism is rising in China.

What is more, the factors that generate rising popular nationalism in China may be representative in other developing countries since the “victim-superpower” identity does not only exist in China. Zakaria (Zakaria, 2008: 31) notices that while economics, information and even culture might be globalized, formal political power remains firmly tethered to the nation state, though nation states have become less able to solve most of these problems unilaterally and the rise of nationalism always goes along with globalization. What Zakaria discovered reflects the resistance of national identity in Robertson’s identity struggle. However, GCS theory is unable to explain why this happens because of its sociological essentialist approach.

7. Conclusion

GCS theory insists GCS will eventually change traditional nation states, and a global citizen identity will eventually take the place of national identity. According to Lipschutz (Barnett and Duvall, 2005: 229-248), the members of GCS will use productive power, like good and just life, to lobby the government to use its institutional power to change the market-centered structural power of economic globalization. Contrary to his prediction, people within Chinese civil society are using productive power (popular nationalism) to challenge institutional power (official nationalism supported by government), not for the welfare of the entire world, but to champion stronger foreign policies towards other states.

Based on the reality of rising popular nationalism in China, there is no doubt that GCS theory has some limitations. After my political analysis on why popular nationalism in China is rising, I conclude the sociological essentialism in GCS theory prevents us from discovering the “victim-superpower” identity that boosts popular nationalism in China since GCS theory

26 India is just such an example similar to China although someone believes a democratic India will be peaceful when it rises to power.

27 Funny enough, the cosmopolitanism dream contained in GCS model is quite similar to world proletarian revolutionary model in classic Marxism if we disregard their different attitudes towards civil society. Classic Marxism regards civil society as a part of free market and will be removed when world proletarian revolutionary succeeds at last.
neglects identity struggle in the global context and takes for granted that global citizen identity will become salient identity among civil people.

Yet, I cannot totally deny the explanatory capabilities of GCS theory since it does contain some reasonable explanations on the structural changes in world politics. Even constructivism does not totally deny the functions of structure on determining people’s behavior. Moreover, I believe GCS theory partly reflects the social context of the EU since Anderson (Anderson, 2006: 141) reminds us that European intellectuals tend to dislike nationalism because of Europe’s tragic history (the First and Second World Wars) caused by nationalism. While, I understand the cosmopolitan complex in GCS theory and respect its intention to get rid of the hatred that has been historically rooted in nationalism. However, nationalism is constructed through the interaction between one state, and another. In other words, we should not ignore that nationalism originates from historical experiences and shared knowledge. Neither should we neglect the identity struggle that has, and will continue to emerge in the global context. The rise of popular nationalism in China in the global era reminds us that we should be aware of the essentialism in GCS theory and pay attention to identity issues when we study nationalism and globalization.

In the final, we should not be too pessimistic on the rise of popular nationalism in China, or the potential revival of nationalism throughout the rest of the world. As long as we are aware of our national identity and understand both its positive and negative aspects, we can alter our behavior for the advancement of the common good. If this becomes a custom among nations, we can make long-term cooperation among nations possible. After all, identity is always changeable and nationalism is not necessary offensive to other nations.
8. Reference:


