

Understanding the Identity Shaping Role of Popular Nationalism in China

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Abstract

The purpose of this essay is to give further understanding of the relatively new phenomena Chinese popular nationalism. I will have my benchmark in traditional theory of civic and ethnic nationalism but also in popular nationalism theory and the from-culturalism-to-nationalism thesis. To further understand the identity shaping role of the populist movement in China I will separate it from official nationalism of the state and argue for the statement that Chinese nationalism can be a beginning of a democratic civil society. I will use examples of the outbursts of popular nationalism in the 90's and in the first decade of the 21:st century to illustrate the nature of the popular nationalism movement. My conclusion will present an understanding of popular nationalism as not only a strong grass-root movement that is participating in shaping a Chinese-nation-state in the 21:st century, but as also a way for the Chinese people to express political opinions in an authoritarian nation.

Key words: Identity, Chinese nationalism, Popular nationalism, public opinion, civil society

Words: 9723

Abbreviations

CCP – Chinese Communist Party

CCTV – China Central Television

PRC – People's Republic of China

MFA – Chinas Ministry of Foreign Affairs

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1 Introduction

Nationalism has been a tool for shaping the Chinese identity since the beginning of the 20:th century. It has been a tool for the government to seize legitimacy from the people, to keep multicultural China together, and to create a Chinese nation-state strong enough to compete on an international arena. During the time Mao ruled the Chinese Communist Party (CCP), China was however governed by Marxist and Maoist-ideas, and at that time nationalistic content and traditional Confucian culture was officially criticized in national campaigns (Goldman 2005, p. 224).

But after the death of Mao and the fall of communism in 1989, we have seen Chinese nationalism reborn, in party propaganda but also in forms of strong grass-root movement among the Chinese people. In 2008 Chinese popular nationalism culminated and popular reactions towards western-media report were filled with nationalistic and anti-western expressions. Chinese people all around the globe demonstrated against distorted news coverage on China and aggressive nationalistic messages were communicated through Chinese social forums and other internet-portals. In the background for these strong reactions were the Sichuan Earthquake and western protests following the Olympic torch's ride through China.

Chinese grass-root nationalism has come to play a role in shaping the Chinese identity in the 21:th century. The popular nationalist sentiments of the Chinese people are no longer in the hands of the Chinese government and it can therefore come to challenge the authoritarian government it helped strengthen in the 90's.

1.1 The Research Problem and Statement of Purpose

The purpose of this study is to illuminate and discuss the role played by popular nationalism in defining Chinese identity in the 21:th century. I am guided by the following questions:

How can Chinese popular nationalism be distinguished from Chinese official nationalism?

What influence can popular nationalism have on creating a democratic civil society?

1.2 Justification

China is undergoing tremendous change, both in the economic, political and social sector, and to comprehend this changing identity of the Chinese nation-state in the 21:th century we have to understand the role that nationalism play. The populist nationalist movement cannot only be understood as successful party propaganda of the CCP, it might also be understood as a way to ventilate political stands in an authoritarian community.

Populist movement in China may be the beginning of a democratic civil society that put claims upon their government, and it is therefore of scientific and non-scientific value to illuminate and discuss different understandings of this specific phenomena.

1.3 Disposition of the Study

In this chapter I will discuss methodological framework, and methodological considerations. In chapter two I will present classic nationalist theory of civic and ethnic nationalism as well as cultural and political nationalism. I will also present the “from-culturalism-to-nationalism” theory created by Chinese nationalist scholar James Harrison. In chapter three I will discuss different forces that shapes Chinese identity in the 21:th century, and present an understanding of official nationalism and popular nationalism as separate concepts.

Chapter four is meant to be a mirror to reality, giving short accounts of the outbursts of popular nationalism during the 90’s, and the first decade of the 21:st century. In chapter five, I will look at the consequences of popular nationalism and by using the theory, examples and definitions presented above try to give a deeper understanding of the phenomena Chinese popular nationalism and its impact on Chinese identity in the 21:th century. At last I will sum up my considerations in a concluding discussion.

1.4 How can the Question be Answered?

1.4.1 Methodological Framework and Theoretical Approach

My ambition is to present an *understanding* of Popular nationalism, contrary to *explaining* Popular nationalism. The methods to do so must therefore be according to the question asked. Hollis argues in *The Philosophy of Political Science*, that an understanding can only be reached from within and with methods that are quite different from these of natural science (Hollis 1994, s. 142).

It can be argued that by sorting out the content of previous research, you can contribute with something new to the debate and also make conclusions about the material (Beckman 2005, p. 48-49).

The method I intend to use to answer my questions is theory consuming (Esiasson-Wägnerud 2003, p. 171). I will have my benchmark in traditional nationalist theory of ethnic and civic nationalism as well as popular nationalism. As traditional theories are constructed from the development of nationalism in the western world, they do not apply that well on Chinese nationalism, but they will however provide a ground for further understanding. James Harrison's from-culturalism-to-nationalism theory developed to understand Chinese nationalism will also serve as a valuable point of reference.

This is a single case study; to what extent that such a study is achievable. It can be argued that there is not such a thing as a single case study as you have to compare your results with something exterior (Esiasson-Wägnerud 2003, p. 120). My comparison partner can be seen as official nationalism; the Chinese governments' impact on identity shaping contra the people's impact on identity shaping. External identity shaping from the west can also be seen as a comparison-partner. Every method has its negatives, and by only studying one country and one type of nationalist movement you may lose the ability to make a generalising conclusion, but what you gain is a deeper understanding of the single case (2003, p. 171f).

The focus in this essay is to reach further understanding of the Chinese popular nationalist movement, and the impact it has on Chinese identity in the 21:th century. To research the role of ideas in social- life is complex and it can lead to theoretical and terminological confusion. One of the most important distinctions is to what extent ideas are something people create and use for special purposes, or if ideas are laid upon the people and determinate the way we look at the world (McAnulla, p. 284).

Nationalism is a phenomena that is hard to label, and many scholars argue that a separation of different types of nationalism is impossible, they are all imbedded in nationalistic discourse (Özkirimli 2005, p. 28). I hear these scholars, but I also listen to the scholars in Chinese nationalism who argue that Chinese nationalism must be seen in a specific context and partly as a grass-root phenomena growing from bottom-up. These scholars mean that if you ignore the nationalism from the masses, you conceive a misleading picture of Chinese identity in the 21:th century (Gries 2006, p. 489).

1.4.2 Methodology Criticism and Source Criticism

In the theory-section I have mainly used printed sources and scientific articles written on the subject. Peter Hays Gries work on Chinese nationalism has been given a lot of space since he is one of the most devoted scholars arguing for the growing power of popular nationalism. The arguments of Xu Wu has also been a valuable source since he in his book *Chinese Cyber Nationalism*, is one of the first

scholars to give account for the development of popular nationalism into cyberspace.

To be able to present an independent understanding of popular nationalism it is however important to give way to the different understandings of nationalism and it has been my aim to present an open and varied view of different scholars views on the subject. Allen Carlsens article “A flawed perspective: the limitations inherent with the study of Chinese nationalism” has been a helpful guide to my methodological delimitations. Carlsen criticises the focus on nationalism in determining Chinese identity in the 21:th century, and argues that nationalism is one factor that has had impact on Chinese identity, a factor among many others. It is therefore important not to overemphasis the role of nationalism in shaping Chinese identity (Carlsen 2009, p. 21f).

1.5 Definitions and Limitations

Limitation is difficult when dealing with nationalism as the phenomena stretches over a large area of contesting concepts (Hughes 2006, p. 2). Limitations has however been done in which type of nationalism to research (popular nationalism) and by limiting the case study to cover Chinese identity in the 21:st centaury. Popular nationalism is in itself a broad definition, and just studying a special cyber-nationalist movement could for example have been a limitation for this study. I however find it valuable to look at the popular nationalist movement without a limiting myself to only one-part of the populist movement. As a part of this study aims to achieve a deeper understanding of what popular nationalist movement is, it is important not to decide that in advance.

In chapter five we look into several cases of popular nationalism, the cases have been chosen from a wide range of populist actions, and they are a strategic selection meant to represent both extreme and moderate parts of the nationalist movement.

2 Nationalism

2.1 Ethnic Nationalism and Civic Nationalism

Nationalism has traditionally been separated in civic and ethnic nationalism. This can be tracked back to Hans Kuhn's distinction between western and eastern forms of nationalism. Kuhn's definition was geographical; identifying western nationalism as the first nationalism with political aims which was being created around or at the time that the modern nation state was formed (Özkirimli 2005, p.22). Kuhn perceived Asian nationalism as a nationalism developed later and at a backward stage in social and political development (Ibid). Breuilly defines *civic-nationalism* as follows: "Civic nationalism is commitment to a state and its values. State membership determines nationality, as in the multi-ethnic immigrant society of the USA" (Breuilly 2008, p. 404). Ignatieff, defines *ethnic nationalism* as more restricted:

"What gives unity to the nation, what makes it a home, 'a place of passionate attachment', is not the cold contrivance of shared rights, but the people's pre-existing characteristics: their language, religion, customs and traditions" (Ignatieff 1994, p. 4)

Ethnic nationalism has been labelled: integral, organic, exclusive and radical while civic nationalism is associated with terms like political, social and voluntarist and is also referred to as liberal nationalism (Brown 2000, p. 50). The goal of civic nationalism is supposed to strengthen the state, while ethnic nationalism is state-subverting (Breuilly 2008, p. 404).

Labelling nationalism in these two categories and to some extent valuing civic-nationalism as democratic good-nationalism and ethnic nationalism as bad-authoritarian or radical nationalism has been criticized. In recent years nationalist scholars have suggested that the term civic-nationalism should be left behind as it lacks the rootedness and belonging that give nationalism its fundamental power (Brown 2000, p. 51). It can be argued that civic-nationalism has less content, and that ethnic nationalism has too much content. David Brown argues that both ethnic nationalism and civic-nationalism has the capacity to emerge into illiberal or liberal forms (2000, p.50). Civic and ethnic nationalism should therefore not be considered contesting opponents, rather as two different understandings of

nationalism. In spite the critique given the two types of nationalism, they are still outdo a valuable distinction to fall back on in further discussion.

2.2 Cultural and political nationalism

Nationalism has been argued to be mainly political by a number of scholars. If you conceive nationalism as political, national identity is inseparable from the nation-state which one identifies himself/herself with. Such a definition of nationalism becomes too restricted and difficult to use if not preciously defined. The other school states that nationalism has a cultural aim, and the goal of nationalism is to save the cultural content within the nation. This theory is also criticized to be too restrictive by downplaying the political part of nationalism. (Özkirimli 2005, p. 21-22)

The most common conclusion in this dispute is to settle nationalism as both a political and cultural phenomena. Özkirimli states that nationalism involves both the “culturalization” of politics and the “politization” of culture (2005, p. 22).

2.3 Chinese Nationalist Theory: From Culturalism to Nationalism

A famous scholar in Chinese Nationalism, James Harrison, built his work on Chinese identity on the thesis “from culturalism to nationalism”, described in the book *Modern Chinese Nationalism* from 1969 (Townsend 1996, p. 2). James Townsend further discusses Harrison’s theory in the chapter “Chinese Nationalism” in the book with the same name (1996, p. 2).

Townsend illuminates how the Chinese self-image was transformed from cultural to nationalist. The Chinese civilization saw no international threat as its entire sovereignty was built on cultural values. There was no other way to rule China than the Chinese way, as political loyalty did not lie in the principles that defined a particular regime or nation, it lied in the manner of rule. The Chinese rulers did not need to be Chinese by ethnical means, but they had to be schooled in Confucian norms, which were of universal value. In a civilisation built on cultural principles, nationalism had never been needed to legitimize rule. But in the 19:th century, the western imperialists became a real threat, and the over 5000-year-old empire of China was nearly dissolving. (Townsend 1996, p. 2f)

The setbacks of the Century of Humiliation (described more detailed on page 9), which lasted from the end of the Opium war in 1842 until the foundation of the Peoples Republic of China (PRC) in 1949, was to a large extent due to the lack of a nationalistic ground to fall back on. The natural outcome of the foreign threat was to leave culturalism behind and embrace nationalism to strengthen Chinas

defence (Townsend 1996, p. 3). The process of exchanging culturalism with nationalism is by Townsend argued to have been a long and very painful one, that have had influence on Chinese identity ever since (1996, p. 3) James Townsend also argues that the case of Chinese nationalism separates from traditional theories that nationalism comes first – and then comes the nation (Unger 1996, p. xii). Nationalism in China is complex, and during the last century ethnic-nationalism has existed alongside with the elites or the states definition of the nation. Different leadership has also defined Chinese identity in its own ways. Townsend argues that Chinese nationalism today is a mixture of political nationalism, ethnic han-identity and a culturalist pride (Unger 1996, p. xiii).

2.4 Defining Popular Nationalism

A central question when studying nationalism is if the nation as state or nation as people comes first. Is it identities that create the state or the state that create identities? A famous scholar in the field of nationalism, Ernest Gellner, discuss the principle that nation-as-people should have their nation-as-state. (Gellner 1983, p.53). The traditional view is that identities were made by states. During the glory days of nationalism in the 18th and 19th century in Europe – ancient traditions were reborn by politicians to create nations. (Billing, 1995 p 14). This ultra- constructivist approach that sees identity as a blank page that politicians can create and rewrite for political reasons does not contain the impact of the past (Gries 2006, p. 495)

Rational choice theories and constructivist theories has, according to the scholar in Chinese nationalism Peter Hay Gries, been the main focus for nationalist theory in the past 25 years. This has lead to a shifting understanding of nationalism from a sentiment of the masses, to a political tool for the elites (Gries 2006, p. 495). Gries wants to shift focus back on the people, and he means that if we are to understand nationalism in the 21:th century, it is necessary to illuminate the theories of nationalism from the masses that social science theory focused on at the turn of the century. Gries goes back to the theories of sociologist Emile Durkheim, who argued that uprooted and 'anomic' individuals are drawn to the feeling of community provided by nationalist movements (2006, p. 495).

Further, Gries argues that history and narrative is an important factor to the creation of popular nationalism. He means that way that people narrate their own history by incorporating the past and the present is of great importance to popular nationalist theory (2006, p. 495). Gries defines national identity as:

“ [...] that 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. ”Nationalism” will refer to any *behaviour* (my italics) designed to restore, maintain, or advance public images of that national community” (Gries 2004, p. 9)

This behaviour can be carried out by the elites or the masses. Mass-nationalism is often linked to ethnic nationalism (Bruilly 2008, p. 404). Nationalism is according to the scholar Yongnian Zheng, the ideology of identity, and popular nationalism is organized public opinion in favour of the nation (not necessarily the state) (Zheng 1999, p, xi). Gellner means that nationalism can be seen as a sentiment and as a movement. The sentiment is built up by feelings that are aroused by a violation of a principle or by the satisfaction of the fulfilment of a principle. The movement is the actuation of the sentiment (Gellner 1983, p. 1).

Patriotism and nationalism are two other confusing concepts that I will try to separate from each other. Patriotism is an older phenomenon, narrating from the first communities created, while nationalism is most often connected with industrialisation and the rise of the modern nation state in the 19:th century. Patriots love the country as it is, while nationalists love the country as it was, or as it should be (Fitzgerald 1996, p. 84f).

As this study aim to present an understanding of Chinese popular nationalism it would be inappropriate to define what Chinese popular nationalism is in this section. I should however make clear my definition of popular nationalism. I see popular nationalism as a political and cultural discourse, carried on by the people or citizens at large, in favour of the nation but not necessarily the state. Further I, like Yongnian Zheng, consider popular nationalism as a phenomenon first when organised and put into practise (Zheng 1999, p. xi). But to understand nationalist movements, we have to understand also the underlying sentiments, as Gellner argues (1983, p.1),

3 In Search for a Chinese Identity

Chinese identity was first being articulated by political elites and intellectuals at the turn of the 19:th century in the 1898 “Hundreds days of reform”. The identity shaping process was interrupted by the formation of the PRC in 1949, and the rule of Mao Zedong until his death in 1976. In the 80’s intellectuals and the political elite resumed the identity-shaping process of the Chinese nation-state, but it was first in the end of the 20:th century that this consciousness reached the broader-spectrum of Chinese people (Goldman 2005, p. 224).

To understand the nature of popular nationalism in the 21:st century we therefore have to look back 100 years to the “Century of Humiliation” and 20 years to the collapse of communism.

3.1 The Century of Humiliation

Nationalism made its first entry into Chinese politics in the 19:th century. With being defeated, and Hong Kong occupied, by the British in the Opium war of 1840-42. And later defeated in the Sino-Japanese war of 1894-95; China had to embrace nationalism to keep the empire from falling into pieces (Zhao 2004, p. 124). What later came to be called “The Century of Humiliation”, resulted in a forced action to accept western concepts of nation, sovereignty, race and citizenship. (Zheng 1999, p. 89) The creation of the Chinese nation-state was a required action to survive in the competitive international society and the general Chinese self-image and nationalism was created to keep this new nation state together (Zheng 1999, s.89).

The paradox of Chinese nationalism is that it is partly a reaction to the west’s claims on nationhood. The Chinese nation is not essentially built on the similar attributes of common language, ethnicity, history etc, as the western-countries in the modern nation states in Europe. Some scholars argue that Chinese nationalism is hollow as it lacks content and the purpose is purely instrumental (Pye 1996, p. 87).

3.2 The Death of Communism and Crisis of Faith

After the death of Mao Zedong in 1976, China's new leader Deng Xiaoping launched a campaign to "reassess" Maoism, the main goal for this campaign was to "clean" the Maoist-ideology from its negative perceptions of capitalism and make way for market-oriented reform (Zhao 2004, p. 210). But the campaign did not have the wanted effect and instead led to the "three crisis of faith": crisis of faith in socialism, in Marxism and in the party. Socioeconomic backwardness was seen as the reason of keeping China poor and under-developed, and communism was publicly seen as a self-destructing method, that almost none outside the CCP seemed to believe in (2004, p.211).

During this time Chinese intellectuals began to look for new alternative visions of China's future and many intellectuals turned to western ideals of democracy and liberal forms of governing. Demonstrations against the CCP-led government took form in various ways, from the Democracy wall movement in 1979 to expressions of dismay in art, literature and other forms of popular culture. During the 80:s the party opposed the demonstrations by launching a number of pro-communism campaigns often with names such as "anti-bourgeois liberalization" (Zhao 2004, s. 211)¹. None of these campaigns worked, they rather gave the opposing masses more energy, and in short the inability to give the Chinese community an ideology that they wanted to believe, resulted in the student-led demonstrations at Tiananmen in 1989 (2004, p. 226f).

3.3 Official Nationalism

3.3.1 Nationalism to Legitimate Authoritarian Rule

To reassure the relationship between community and authority is important to legitimate the ruling government, even in a non-democratic state like China (Dittmer-Kim 1993, p. 9). According to Habermas "a legitimacy crisis is directly an identity crisis" (see Dittmer-Kim p. 9) After the instabilities of the fall of communism and the riots of Tiananmen in 1989, China was in desperate need of a new identity, and the Chinese government saw the urgent need of a stabilizing method that could keep China together. Communism no longer worked as a legitimizing ideology, and the leadership was in search for something that

¹ These campaigns criticized everything from western rock-music to free-minded intellectuals and sentiments against the CCP-leadership.

contradicted western values that had gained popularity among the people (Zhao 2004, p.219).

The new approach towards nationalism could actually be found by studying the demonstrators at Tiananmen. They were demonstrating in favour of a democratic China, but did not support the world's condemnation of the Chinese regime. The demonstrators at Tiananmen were not global democrats, rather liberal nationalists. That is, they believed in China, but in a different China than the Chinese government identified the party with (Zhao 2004, p.122ff). The new nationalism that the CCP-came to propagate was more patriotic and was also perfectly compatible with the goals of economic liberalisation. "Build socialism with Chinese characteristics" was the new mantra, and the definition of "Chinese" could be whatever the party decided. The new ideology was ultimate for gaining legitimacy, or as Zhao describes it: "By identifying the party with the Chinese nation, the regime would make criticism of the party an unpatriotic act." (2004, p. 212)

3.3.2 CCP-led Propaganda

The state-led campaign to launch pragmatic nationalism in China was immense and in June 1994 a document called "Guidelines for Patriotic Education" was circulated to every educational institution from kindergarten to universities. The old compulsory examination in Marxist thinking was abolished, but in addition patriotic courses were added as compulsory courses for all university-students. In September 1994 *Peoples Daily*² published an outline for conducting patriotic education and the text emphasized the importance of:

"[...] boosting the nations spirit, enhancing its cohesion, fostering its self-esteem and sense of pride, consolidating and developing a patriotic united front to the broadest extent possible, and directing and rallying the masses' patriotic passions to the great cause of building socialism with Chinese characteristics [and] helping the motherland become unified, prosperous, and strong" (Zhao 2004, p. 219).

The goal of the patriotic education was to build up bonds between the government and the Chinese individuals, and create a so-called pan-identity regardless of ethnic or political beliefs (Zhao 2004, p.225). The official nationalism in China confirms David Browns theory that civic nationalism can be illiberal (Brown 2000, p. 50), in this case as a civic-nationalism to strengthen an authoritarian state.

² 人民日报, Rénmín Ribào. Chinas largest daily newspaper owned by the CCP.

3.4 Popular Nationalist Movement

Western scholars in the field of Chinese nationalism has for long neglected the Chinese populist movement a creation by the Chinese government, and by western media as a reaction towards distorted information by the CCP censorship (Gries 2006, p. 496f). The state-led nationalist campaign from the CCP has certainly had an impact on popular nationalist discourse, and many of the active cyber-nationalists were schooled in nationalist propaganda from childhood (Zhao 2004, p.224f).

But nationalist propaganda from the CCP cannot explain why Chinese people outside China have been very active in cyber-nationalist discourse and also in physical demonstrations all around the globe (Gries, 2006, p. 496f).

Popular nationalist discourse has also taken its own turn; popular nationalists are not propagating a message that CCP wishes to spread. The communist regime wants to strengthen the bond between the Chinese nation and the CCP-led government, making these two inseparable. But popular nationalists do not refer to the CCP that frequently, instead they commonly demote their actions to “China- the motherland” or “the Chinese race” (Gries 2006, p. 496). We therefore have to understand popular nationalism as a phenomena that partly spurns from official nationalism but that has developed into something new and independent.

The popular nationalists in China today were born in the end of the Mao regime or later, and are also called the fourth generation of Chinese. They distinguish themselves as different from the elder nationalists and from the liberal and more pro-western nationalism in the 80’s (Gries 2004, p. 5). This generation is the first that has not experienced the hardship from the century of humiliation or the many sufferings during the Maoist regime and the Cultural Revolution. The fourth generation has only heard stories but not been hurt personally and they might for that reason be the first generation with the confidence to “fight back” (2004, p. 5).

3.4.1 Grass-root Movement

According to Xu Wu, we have to consider popular-nationalism as a grass-root movement. The special character of Chinese grass-root nationalism is that it is a blend of “humiliated victim” and “jubilant victor” (Wu 2007, p. 128). Wu means that China was temporarily geo-politically isolated during Mao’s regime from 1949 to 1976, and when Deng Xiaoping opened up China to the world in the Early 80’s the un-healed wounds of western humiliation were exposed again (2007, p. 127f).

Grass-root nationalism is passive and reactive at the same time. It is a massive movement without a steady base that under certain circumstances can be overheated and behave aggressively and irrationally (Wu 2007, p. 128). Glass root-nationalism is also strongly united. The shared memory of the glory of common ancestry and the agony from the humiliation from the west, ties popular

nationalists together, and when faced with external pressure this collectivism and unity can be used to form solidarity movements (2007, p.128)

The genuine passion for China among popular nationalists has by many scholars as well as western-media, been considered a fabrication of the CCP. (Gries 2004, p. 14). Gries argues that the 1990:s witnessed a genuinely popular nationalism emerge, a nationalism that should not be conflated with state or official nationalism.

Howsoever the 90's won headlines; they still did not reach out to the broad Chinese public like the popular nationalists in the 21:st century. Internet was one strong factor contributing to widening popular nationalists audience (2004, p. 10, 20).

3.4.2 The Cybernationalists

Internet and new media opened up possibilities to express popular opinion, and to truly grasp the phenomena of popular nationalism in China; it must be understood also as a cyber-nationalist movement (Lam 2006, p. 213). Wu describes the importance of Internet for the popular nationalists in the 21:th century like this:

“[...] the advent of Internet and the online sphere provided Chinese grass-root nationalists an unprecedented channel to vent their anger, form their opinions, and most importantly, impose their impact. This change is enormously significant in China's overall policy decision making process.” (Wu 2007, p. 128)

Wu, a former Chinese journalist and assistant professor at Arizona University has written the book *Chinese cyber nationalism Evolution, Characteristics and Implications*. He calls the cyber nationalists in China powerful and unpredictable and not as passive as former popular movements in China (Wu 2007, p. 128). The participants are diverse and scattered, its objectives are volatile and emotional, and its operation is multi-faceted and decentralized. Wu defines Chinese cyber-nationalism as:

“Chinese cyber nationalism is a non-government sponsored ideology and movement that has originated, existed, and developed in China's online sphere over the past decade (1994-present). It is a natural extension from China's century-long nationalism movement, but it is different from the Communist Party's (CCP) official version of patriotism, and the traditional Chinese nationalism movement.” (Wu 2007, p. 129)

The move of popular nationalism into the cyber sphere has had a large impact on the spread of the movement, as it makes it possible for Chinese abroad to participate and keep in contact with nationalists at home. Internet also offers a channel were more information reach the Chinese people, and an obviously

meaningless or stupid comment by a western- celebrity can become content enough for extensive cyber-discussion or action (Wu 2007, p. 134).

3.5 Chinas International Role

3.5.1 Economic Development – The Return of Power

Many scholars mean that industrialisation and nationalism develop alongside (Wu 2007, p. 11) (Pye 1996, p. 86 et al). This was the case when Europe was divided into nation-states and industrialized. Industrialisation and economic success has previously in history given way to expanding forms of nationalism, as Germany and Japan in the 30's. Even if industrialisation does not necessarily lead to such extremes, economic power may still have the effect of shaping a more confident national identity (Zheng, 1999, p. 113).

It is of general importance to the Chinese people that foreign nations do not to comprehend China as a rising power, but a returning power. Chinas economic up rise is by the popular mass seen as a return of power that was taken away from the great empires by imperialists in the 19:th century. Popular nationalists are therefore very easily upset when western media interpret China as the pupil and the west as the teacher (Gries 2004, p. 34).

The success of making China rich and strong (which has been the mantra of the CCP in the past 20 years), is feeding national pride in a wider sense, and westerners criticism of everything from Chinese stands on Human rights to environmental politics are considered as attempts to slow down economic growth or inability to understand the Chinese way (Zheng 1999, p. 56f).

Peter Hays Gries mean that economic and military modernization is a helping factor to the growth of popular nationalism. China does not have to fear Japan anymore, and can therefore shout out expressions of revenge that has been conserved in national sentiment since the Japanese invasion of Manchuria and the rape of Nanking in the late 30's (Gries 2004, p. 52f).

3.5.2 Anti-west Sentiment

Chinese populist movements are extremely sensitive about the things that westerners say about China (Gries 2004, p. 19). In the book “Our Generations America Complex”, written by Chinese nationalist Li Fang, America is described as a “Teacher to rebel against” (2004, p. 34). The anti western-sentiment is central in Popular nationalism, as Chinese national identity is partly constructed through the ways that Chinese think and write about the west (2004, p. 35).

Just as personal identity emerges through interpersonal connections, national identity emerges through international relations. (Gries 2004, p. 19) Anti-west

sentiment has been a leading character for popular nationalism in China and the relationship with west is helping the Chinese people to identify themselves. Many popular nationalist actions have therefore been a repercussion to foreign countries behaviour towards China. (Gries 2004, p. 33)

Anti west sentiment can be understood as a late reaction to the century of humiliation but also according to the thesis from-culturalism-to-nationalism. There is a widely spread picture that the west owns China for previous humiliation, and this thinking is demanding better treatment from the west (Barmé 1996, p. 187). Townsend argues that the development from culturalism to nationalism was slower than other pre-modern systems', and that Chinas entry to the world of sovereign nation states was extra long and traumatic as it was a forced process. He means that this prolonged identity crisis- makes contemporary nationalism extra intense (Townsend 1996 , p. 3f).

Anti-west sentiment can also been seen as a reaction to what Lucian Pye calls the "nationless state". China is still in the process of indentifying the Chinese nation, and this identification is to a large extent being done in comparison to western-ideals. Pye also argues that the Chinese society lacks competing ideologies within the society, and this has made popular nationalism itself "the religion" of the Chinese. The lack of other ways to ventilate anger and humiliation, leads to intense feelings of hatred towards the west (Pye 1996, p. 105).

4 Outbursts of Popular Nationalism

4.1 The first Outbursts

One of the first outbursts of popular nationalism after Tiananmen was in 1993 when China lost the competition to host the Olympics in 2000 (Barné 1996, p. 187). This was later followed by the “say no books”, which were published in 1996 and 1997 respectively. With the books *The China that can say no* and *The China can still say no*, popular anti-west discourse was put in to writing. The books were written by a group of young journalists and nationalists, and exemplified nationalist critique of Chinas post-Mao foreign policy, especially concerning the relations with China and Japan. It attacked what by the authors was called US-containment policy, and argued that the CCP:s foreign policy was being too excusing (Goldman 2005, p. 117f).

The books were largely the basis of anti-west discourse among Chinese popular nationalists in the 90’s. (Gries 2004, p. 5). The hype with the *China can say was no* books contributed to more nationalist campaigns as popular nationalist discourse with this book was widely spread among ordinary citizens and intellectuals in China (Gries 2004, p.5-6). In December 1996, the propaganda department and press and publication administration banned the book *The China that can say No* and criticised it for being irresponsible as the spokesman of the CCP expressed it: ”causing ideological confusion among readers, resulting in negative effects such as interference and impact on the implementation of the foreign policy of the state”. (Goldman 2005, p.117)

4.2 The Belgrade Bombing

One of the major outbursts of popular nationalism, and what came to be the kick-off to the intensive nature of popular nationalist actions in the 21:st century, was the bombing of the Chinese Embassy in Belgrade. In 1999 an American plane on NATO mission mistakenly bombed the Chinese Embassy in Belgrade and three Chinese news-reporters were killed in the blast. President Clinton immediately apologized to China and the Chinese people, but Chinese popular nationalists did

not take the apology seriously. In over 20 Chinese cities popular nationalist movements as well as ordinary Chinese people were protesting. Outside Mac Donald's in Canton protestors shouted phrases like: "Kick American Hamburgers out of China", in Chengdu the consulate was firebombed and parts of the U.S embassy in Beijing were destroyed by nationalistic student-movements. (Gries 2004, p. 14)

Western media reported the Anti-U.S protests as work of the CCP, criticizing the Chinese government for not forwarding the American apology to the Chinese people. USA Today reported that: "Chinas state-controlled media aren't reporting to their public the U.S apology officials say they want" (Gries 2004, p. 18) This interpretation fitted well in with the picture of Chinese politics, were the government played the nationalistic trick to seize legitimacy from the people. In an influential article scholar Tomas Christensen also expressed this view by stating that "There is broad consensus in the West on the fundamental nature of Chinese Nationalism today: it is "party propaganda," generated by the Communist elite for its own purposes. " (Christensen 1996, p.37f).

Gries argues that this interpretation of Chinese politics is not wrong, but incomplete. To understand Chinese nationalism in the 21:st century, you must realise that ordinary Chinese play a central role shaping it (Gries 2004, p. 19). Narrating the past largely constitutes Chinese identity, and the way that the Chinese people today narrate the image of the century of humiliation, has influence on popular nationalist discourse (Gries 2006, p. 497). Popular nationalism can therefore not only be understood as a tool; the Chinese have a genuine emotional attachment towards their national identity.

4.3 Popular Nationalism in the 21:st Century

Wu means that nationalism in the 90's was an elite-form of nationalism. The authors of the *China can say no books* were for example an elite group of nationalists who's voice were being heard, was it significant in the 21:st century is that nationalism has developed into a true grass-root phenomena. And the general citizen is given a larger space in the movement (Wu 2007, p. 69).

From 2003 until April 16 2005, Anti-Japanese sentiment was the focus of popular nationalists. Willy Wo-Lap Lam, writer of the book *Chinese Politics in the Hu Jintao Era: New Leaders, New Challenges*, even states that the full force of the internet revolution for popular nationalism was firstly seen in 2003 and 2004 when popular nationalists were able to mobilize national support for compensation for war damages by the Japanese and also by spreading boycott of Japanese products (Lam 2009, p. 230).

In 2003 popular movements by internet-based petition boycotted the contract of the Beijing-Shanghai railway to go to a Japanese firm. In 2004 chemical weapons left in China by Japan during World War II, exploded, and one Chinese

was killed and dozen injured. Later the same year the exposure of an orgy of hundreds of Japanese businessmen and Chinese prostitutes spread further disgust among the popular nationalists. In April 2005, the anger culminated. Since 2003 an over the Internet organised national movement had sprung up and on April 16 2005, anti-Japanese actions took place in cities all over China. Japanese consulates, shops and restaurants were targets. The demonstrations were most violent in the city of Shanghai. (Hughes 2006, p. 150-151)

4.3.1 Popular Nationalism in 2008

2008 was probably the most stressful year for popular nationalists in China. The riots in Tibet, the Sichuan-earthquake, the protests against China hosting the 2008 Olympics along the Olympic-torch ride, Jack Caffertys remarks on the Chinese People on CNN, the Olympics itself and the domestic milk-scandal in September. Never before have one year stirred up so much nationalistic turmoil, both in physical demonstrations by Chinese people in China and all around the world.

In CNN:s program “Situation Room” on April 9:th 2008, reporter Jack Cafferty made the following statement:

“[...] we continue to import their junk with the lead paint on them and the poisoned pet food and export jobs to places where you can pay workers a dollar a month to turn out the stuff that we're buying in Wal-Mart ... *I think they're basically the same bunch of goons and thugs they've been for the last 50 years* (my italics).”(youtube.com 16 April 2008)

This comment started a new wave of nationalist actions and in protest to what nationalists called distorted media-coverage on China in western-media the Chinese nationalist and Chinese student Rao Jin started the forum Anti-CNN (anti-cnn.com 2010-01-05). During the weeks after the comment had been broadcasted Chinese nationalists had heated discussions and in many cities all over the world, Chinese demonstrated against the comments made by reporter Jack Cafferty. On April 26 2008, 3000 Chinese demonstrated outside the CNN office in San Fransisco, this and many of the other of demonstrations against CNN are documented and available on YouTube (youtube.com, 2008-04-26).

But the CNN-conflict also stirred up emotions that lasted long after the demonstrations in 2008. In July 2009, more then a year after the CNN-conflict, the signature shimo1989 (小资) wrote the text “The Chinese –Besieged by Propaganda, Will We Remain Standing Strong and Proud?” on the popular nationalist website Anti-CNN. This is a part of the text, translated to English by the author himself:

“If Anti-CNN, the donations for the Sichuan Earthquake and the Olympics are of any indication, I can trust my fellow Chinese that we’ll for sure be able to hold on

until the end. When I think of our ancestors, I sometimes can't help but weep for them. When they signed allsorts of humiliating Unequal Treaties with foreign powers, how much must they have longed to watch as our fleet leave the port; I think that Premier Zhou Enlai, who had given his entire life for China, would undoubtedly weep with joy were he to see our increasing economic powers, our Chairman standing next to the American president as an equal, and the vast improvements in the living conditions of the Chinese people." (Anti-CNN, 2009-17-10)

The text by shimo1989 is an example of the more moderate branch of the cyber-nationalists, who prefer more stabilizing and patriotic expressions of nationalism (Wu 2007, p. 156). It also exposes the deep feelings connected with the century of humiliation and the new strengths that Chinese nationalists have obtained with the up rise of the Chinese economy.

4.3.2 "Angry-Youth" Nationalists

The more radical front of popular nationalists call for aggressive politics and wants a more confrontational approach towards Japan, Taiwan, the United States and domestic minorities (Wu 2007, p. 156). This radical front is often referred to as fenqing or "Angry Youth". They are part of the fourth generation of Chinese and born between 1980 and 1989 (Rosen 2009, p. 360). According to the information of the TV-program "World discuss angry Chinese youths" published on the state controlled CCTV's website, the amount of Chinese youths in this age are 300 million and many of them are connected to the internet³. (CCTV, 2009-05-11)

One of the most extreme forms of Chinese Nationalism is the damnatory nationalism spread through the website. "The human flesh engine". Many of the active members on "The human flesh engine" are fenqing nationalists. In the article "Human flesh search engines: Chinese vigilantes that hunt victims on the web", Hanna Flechter lists the witch-hunts that the actions of nationalists on the forum has led to (Flechter 2008-06-25).

One example is Grace Wang, a Chinese student at Duke University in the U.S. Before a protest during the Olympic-torch ride, Wang was photographed writing "Free Tibet" on a friend's T-shirt. This photograph was spread to nationalists who were furious and called Wang a "Traitor to her country". In no time, the network of the human flesh search engine had gathered all of her personal information. Wang received e-mails saying that if she returned to China she would be "chopped into 10.000 pieces", and when her parents address in China was published, they had to go into hiding (Flechter 2008-06-25).

³ It should be clarified that all of the 300 million youths are not members of "Angry-youths"-movements, but the online youths are likely to know of the fenqing. (CCTV, 2009-05-11)

The judging mob of the fenqing can be a threat to national security and even though many of the accusations and heated discussions on the Internet rarely are carried out, Yang Kuisong, a professor at Peking University consider fenqing as a movement with ultra-nationalistic emotion, that could be a problem to the safety of national and foreign citizens. Kuisong states there is a true worry about the “Angry-Youth” movement among Chinese citizens as well as the government. (China.org.cn 2005-11-17)

5 Understanding the Identity Shaping Role of Popular Nationalism

5.1 Populist Movements puts Pressure on Chinese Foreign Policy

After the Belgrade crisis in 1999, and the massive nationalistic demonstrations, Chinese leaders decided that the propaganda department should moderate foreign media messages published to the general public, with the order to keep the people opinion calm and restore the relationship with Washington (Shirk 2007, p. 85).

The Chinese government was later obliged to pay restoration costs of the American embassy in Beijing and the consulate in Chengdu, and as ordered the propaganda department tried to provide this news from reaching the general public. But it eventually did, and popular demonstrations broke loose once again. But this time the demonstrations were focused on the CCP-led government instead of the U.S, and Chinese nationalists required the Chinese government to take back the money paid to the U.S (Gries 2006, p. 496f). This is an example of the claims that nationalistic movements have come to put on the CCP-led government.

Nationalistic critique aiming at the weakness of the Chinese government concerning foreign issues has been seen previously in history. After the Chinese loss of the Shandong Peninsula to Japan in the Versailles treaty in 1919, the may forth movement, consisting of mainly university students, demonstrated on the streets of Beijing and other Chinese cities (Shirk 2007, p. 65). The May fourth movement was criticising the newly established Republic of China for being weak, corrupt and not manageable to look to the best interests of the Chinese nation. (Lam 2006, p. 113) The belief that the people have the right to criticize a weak and corrupt government is a continuing belief of popular nationalists (Shirk 2007, p. 65).

Nationalism is a doubled edged sword, and the force that has strengthen the legitimacy of the CCP, has also created a strong public opinion, that wants the Chinese government to act more confident on the international arena. Popular nationalists have started to put claims that the government cannot refuse (Gries 2004, p. 117). Or as Gries describes it:

”Popular nationalists now command a large following and exert tremendous pressure on those who decide the PRC’s foreign policy. In fact, the legitimacy of the current regime depends upon its ability to stay on top of popular nationalist demands.” (Gries 2006, p.496)

The relationship between the popular nationalists and the CCP is multifaceted. The popular nationalists are both challenging and strengthening the legitimacy of the CCP, and the government both suppresses and responds to the populism of the masses (Gries 2004, 117). By using the two-edged sword of nationalism, the CCP has put them in a position where suppression of nationalism is not possible; CCP then loses legitimacy. If they fully give in to the claims of the popular nationalists on the other hand, they lose legitimacy on the international arena (2004, p.117f).

In spite refusing to accept western concepts like democracy the CCP is, in contradiction to popular nationalist movements, tied to keep good relations with foreign countries and cannot display anti-western or anti-foreign expressions without loosing international creditability. The strong Anti-west sentiment of the popular nationalist movements is therefore one of the factors that separate official nationalism from popular nationalism. One example of the decreasing flexibility in foreign politics is the Chinese governments' relations to Japan. The nationalistic feelings of animosity towards the Japanese and the importance of strong trade-relations for the growth of the economy has led to the policy of "cold-politics, warm-economy" relationship (Hughes 2006, p.147)

Willy Wo-Lap Lam means that the Beijing government is facing a serious challenge in enforcing a balanced and fair view of foreigners. (Lam 2006, p. 119) Gries argued in the same line as Lam: "Indeed, China's Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA), is well aware that popular nationalists now command a large following, and is actively seeking to appease them" (Gries 2006, p. 497)

The monopoly that the CCP might have had on nationalist ideology in the beginning of the 90's are no longer in their hands. The Chinese governments failure in controlling nationalist discourse, by moral and practical reasons, gives way for popular nationalists to more freely shape the identity of the Chinese nation state in the 21:st century.

5.2 Are They Truly Nationalists?

Parts of popular nationalist movement are more of an Anti-establishment movement, pretending to act as nationalist, while their agenda is a different one (Guo-He 2000, p. 32). This somewhat radical interpretation of how Chinese popular nationalism should be understood is also shared with the scholar Simon Shen. Shen argues that the passive/reactive quality of popular nationalists is intriguing. Sometimes unpatriotic acts by foreigners or nationals are not even noticed, and at other times the cyber-world is boiling and Chinese nationalists mobilize and demonstrate all over the world (Shen 2007, p. 4). Shen means that this signals that nationalists overreact and that their feelings are not always true nationalistic ones. Shen does not, like Tomas Christensen (Christensen, 1996, p. 37) claim the popular nationalists to be puppets in the hands of the CCP. He

means that nationalist propaganda is disguised critique aimed at the CCP (Shen 2007, p.21f). Barmé has a similar view of popular nationalism and states that:

“With the failure of that movement (the democracy movement in the 80’s) and the continued stability (and transformation) of Party rule, it is not surprising that an entrenched pattern of political activism in 20th century China has reappeared once more, one in which political activism and extremism once frustrated are transformed into egregious nationalism” (Barmé 1996, p. 199).

5.3 The Beginning of a Chinese Civil Society

The scholar Merle Goldman states that nationalists have expanded the ideological pluralism in China as well as challenging the politics of the CCP (Goldman 2005, p. 117). The public opinion carried out by neo-nationalists is however only one of many factors contributing to the creation of a Chinese society. Willy Wo-Lap Lam argues that a new Chinese civil society is built up by ”new classes”, middle class managers and professionals, NGO’s, returnees from abroad, and popular nationalists. (Lam 2006, p. 214)

Professionals and intellectuals are according to Lam the backbone in the fast-growing civil-society (Lam 2006, p. 118). Businessmen and academics are gaining influence in Chinese politics, and they are often propagating liberal reforms, that can come to challenge the CCP. This elite-form is putting pressure on the CCP, but Hughes argues that the only way for Chinese intellectuals to connect with the masses is either through nationalism or democracy. (Hughes, 2006, p. 99). What popular nationalists do is to create an illusion of a civil-society, and even if opinions are expressed purely as nationalist propaganda, the Chinese people can in this context start behaving like citizens (Goldman 2006, p.7).

The Internet is opening up for a new form of popular nationalism. Popular nationalism in China is no longer a nationalist movement stirred by a nationalist elite like in the 90’s, it is a movement for the entire people and any individual with opinions can log in to a nationalistic internet-portal and express their feelings (Wu 2007, p. 129). It is indeed easier for the post-1989-generation of Chinese people to communicate, and even though the government is controlling as much as they can, there are limp holes in the “Great fire-wall”, and any activist who can use a proxy server can escape the CCP:s censorship (Goldman 2006, p. 19).

Popular nationalist movement and nationalistic forums are enabling a space for common Chinese people to negotiate and discuss what Chinese identity in the 21:st century should be. And the young generation of Chinese is eager to express their opinions. In one section of *The China that can say no*-book the authors ask: ”How much longer must we be silent? We are in our thirties without a shadow or a sound, it seems that we will perish in silence” (Gries 2004, p, 5) This generation

have a strong desire to make their mark. (2004, p. 5) This bottom-up movement of citizenry can together with pressure from academics and liberal businessmen have influence on a more open civil-society.

Yu Keping means that a gradual democratisation will lead to democratic breakthrough. One step on the way to democracy is to create a civil society where the people are free to participate in the creation of their own nation (Keping 2008, p. 48). “The elements of Civil Society are civil organisation and civic associations that act in the public sphere independently of the state” (Keping 2008, p. 48) Popular nationalist movements today already act independently of the state, and they are propagating messages that the state not always agree on but, on moral-grounds and the legitimacy of the Party, cannot suppress.

5.4 Democratic Development

Many popular nationalists denounce democracy, as it will give ethnic-minorities more rights (Zhao 2004, p. 247). The popular nationalists convey han-identity, in comparison to the pan-identity that official-nationalism is propagating. A democratic China would risk the fall-out of ethnic minorities like the Uyghur and Tibetans to break from the central government and create their own nations (Ibid). Some scholars have expressed the potential threat of Chinese nationalism (Gries 2004, p. 85 et al), and that a democratic China could be even more hostile than the current regime.

If a xenophobic party of “Angry Youths” gained power in a democratic society, that could be the end of a minorities. But to speculate in the future like this, is of no scientific value. Besides, scholars like Edward Friedman states that han-identity is a content less identity and that there can be more similarities between a Chinese from an ethnic-minority and a han-chinese than between a han-chinese from the north and the south of China⁴ (Friedman 1996, p. 175). He like Lucian Pye states, that Chinese nationalism lacks content and that it exists purely for practical-reasons (Pye 1996, p.). Edward Friedman means that the details of nationalistic outbursts will soon be forgotten, and argues that the importance lies in:

“ [...] the mind-set that let the Chinese people interpret things, new and old, real or imagined. The process or interpretation and action is opening for a more plural and tolerant Chinese identity, and that this identity is a cultural basis for a democratic nationalism” (Friedman 1996, p. 182).

⁴ In fact the han-chinese has been made up. Originally the Chinese people were supposed to be called qin, named after the last empire. But as the qin-empire only lasted for 15 years, and the name was taken from the dynasty before that, the 400-year long and powerful empire of the han. (Zhao 2004, p. 22)

As Shen also argues, the xenophobic uttering's cannot always be interpreted as "real", what is more important is that the Chinese have a public opinion, not what they actually are saying. Democratic development is awakening the awareness of the citizens; it pluralises the society and gives way for political opposition (Shen 2007, p 22).

Popular nationalism in China today is not an organised movement like the democracy wall movement in the 80's. Due to the Internet revolution, nationalists can act individually, and participate when they wish to (Wu 1007, p. 157). Many of the Internet-nationalists are not aggressive (2007, p. 156). They are common Chinese people who express their nationalistic-feelings, and this is what is important for an identity shaping democratic development. Since the 20:th century until today's leadership, the Chinese people have not been able to shape an own identity. Different identities, but all from suppressive governments, have been layed upon the people (Fitzgerald 1996, p. 84). The lack of an open public opinion to debate over identity-issues has gathered a pile of identity-sentiments, that are in need to be expressed, and the Chinese people search to do so through nationalism (Shen 2007, p. 23f).

Keping means that you need to have a strong identity for democracy to work, without civic bonds to your fellow nationals, social capital and democratic institutions are doomed to fail (Keping 2008, p. 45). The nationalist identity can come to be an identity that is recipient of democracy. Or as Friedman states: "democracy may not be exportable. It may be an inherent predisposition in certain nations...yet entirely open to others, and the ability to adopt and develop it in the latter may require a change of identity" (Friedman 1996, p 182)

The Chinese identity in the 21:st century is more then ever depending on the Chinese peoples' struggle for the right to name themselves, and within the nationalistic discourse they have found a sphere were ventilation of political issues is possible (Fitzgerald 1996, p. 84).

6 Conclusion

The history of the Chinese nation shows that this is the first time for the Chinese people to define the Chinese nation-state by themselves. During most of the 20:th century Chinese identity has been layed upon the people by static-regimes. The death of Communism, the development of Chinese economy and the freedom to express nationalistic messages has given the Chinese people the means and the courage to start shaping their own identity.

The populist movement must be understood as a phenomena separated from official nationalism. The popular nationalists want to define the Chinese Nation without interference from the CCP. Through discussions on blogs, internet portals, social forums and by physical demonstrations the people of China are more concerned then ever about what should and should not be said about the Chinese-Nation.

The populist movement has both aggressive and more moderate branches, and many scholars (Gries et al.) have expressed their worries for the anti-west sentiment of more radical forms of Chinese popular nationalism. But the aggressive form of Chinese Nationalism can also be seen as an act. Lucian Pye states the Chinese nationalism is the religion of the Chinese in absence of other competing domestic ideologies. The aggressive forms of anti-west sentiment should therefore not be interpreted as a threat. It is in need for a competing ideology that Chinese popular nationalists seek opposition in western-behaviour.

Internet put across openness and flow of information that the Chinese government cannot control. The combination of a movement based on a sentiment that the government cannot morally condemn, and the anonymity and communication-revolution of the internet has created a safety-bubble in a nation that suppress any political opposition. For the first time in history the multi-cultured Chinese people have a platform where they can discuss what Chinese identity should be.

If you understand Chinese popular nationalism as a safety- valve, it can be considered a stabilizing ideology. The importance might not be the content of popular national sentiment or the actions that the popular movement mobilizes. The simple fact that a populist movement exist, is giving Chinese people ability to shape Chinese identity. It has also established a link of interaction between the Party and the citizens. As CCPs legitimacy is to a large extent dependent on nationalism, they have to listen to what popular nationalists have to say. The party's recognition of the popular nationalists is giving them more strength, and courage to behave like citizens in a democratic civil society.

A democratic party-ruled China could give way to a more anti-west led government. But it could also be the opposite. In a Chinese society where any

public opinion was free to be expressed, a strong nationalist movement would perhaps not be needed. In such a society the true opinions could be shed light.

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