DISCOVERING CHINESE NATIONALISM IN CHINA
Modernization, Identity, and International Relations

The revival of Chinese nationalism in the 1990s requires a reassessment of China’s place in world politics. Yongnian Zheng explores the complicated nature of this revived nationalism in China and presents the reader with a very different picture to that portrayed in Western readings on Chinese nationalism. He argues that China’s new nationalism is a reaction to changes in the country’s international circumstances and can be regarded as a “voice” over the existing unjustified international order. Zheng shows that the present Chinese leadership is pursuing strategies not to isolate China, but to integrate it into the international community. Based on the author’s extensive research in China, the book provides a set of provocative arguments against prevailing Western attitudes to and perceptions of China’s nationalism.

YONGNIAN ZHENG is a Research Fellow in the East Asian Institute of the National University of Singapore. He is the author of The Revival of China’s Nationalism and Central–Local Relations in China. Yongnian Zheng has published widely in Political Science Quarterly, Asian Survey and Asian Affairs, and is currently a columnist on China’s political affairs for Hong Kong Economic Journal.
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To my mother, Chu Fengxiang,
and to the memory of my father,
Zheng Tangtu (1911–1997)
DISCOVERING CHINESE NATIONALISM IN CHINA

Modernization, Identity, and International Relations

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Contents

Preface ix
Acknowledgments xiv
Abbreviations of Cited Chinese Newspapers and Journals xvi

1 Discovering Chinese Nationalism in China 1
   Realism, Liberalism, and Chinese Nationalism 4
   A Chinese Understanding of China’s New Nationalism 9
   National Identity and International Behavior 10
   Chinese Problems and Nationalism 14
   Conclusion 19

2 Nationalism and Statism: Chinese Perceptions of the 21
   Crisis of State Power
   Nationalism and Statism in Modern China 22
   Decentralization and Development 29
   The Rise of Ethnic Nationalism 35
   The Perceptions of the Crisis of State Power and the Rise of 38
   Statism
   Conclusion 44

3 Identity Crisis, the “New Left” and Anti-Westernization 46
   Search for New National Identities: Modernization vs 48
   “Westernization”
   The Rise of the New Left 52
   Against Institutional Fetishism 53
   “Localizing” Chinese Discourse of Economic Reforms 56
   “Catch-up” vs “Comparative Advantage” 57
   New Collectivism or Neo-Maoism 62
   Political and Economic Democracy 64
   Conclusion 65
## CONTENTS

4 The Clash of Civilizations? Confucian vs Christian Civilizations 67
   Ethnicity and Nationalism in Modern China 67
   Confucian Nationalism? 70
   The Clash of Civilizations? 76
   The Confucian Civilization and World Peace 80
   A Transformation of Nationalism? 82
   Conclusion 85

5 The Official Discourse of Nationalism: Patriotism and the Constraints of Nationalism 87
   Patriotism as Official Nationalism 89
   Civilian–Military Coalition and Official Campaign 102
   Conclusion 109

6 New Identity, National Interest, and International Behavior 111
   “Comprehensive National Power” 114
   National Interest in the Post-Cold War Era 122
   New Identity and Foreign Behavior: Three Cases 126
   Conclusion 137

7 Identity Transition and Chinese Power: To What End China’s New Nationalism? 139
   “Voice”: China’s Strategic Choice in the Post-Cold War Era 139
   Realists: Perception and National Choice 142
   Liberalism, Globalism, and Nationalism 147
   “Voice”, Discontent, and Cooperation 153

Notes 160
Bibliography 164
Index 185
Preface

I first thought of writing a book about China’s new nationalism when I was pursuing a doctoral degree at Princeton University. In 1992, during a visit to south China, senior leader Deng Xiaoping made an important speech on how the country would continue to achieve high economic growth if it learned from capitalism. Deng did not expect this speech to trigger a long wave of rapid economic development. It did and China became stronger economically. Many Chinese citizens felt a strong sense of national pride, and many social and political groups became nationalistic over various issues. Outside analysts began to consider the implications of the rise of China on the world system. Historically, the rise of a great power has been disruptive to the existing international system. As a result, the international community had sound reasons to worry about China’s rise and its intention. Nevertheless, many Chinese did not understand why outsiders were so obsessive about China’s rise since it was still poor compared to the advanced West.

In understanding the impact of China’s rise on the world system, it is important to take domestic factors into account. After discussing my initial idea with Atul Kohli, Professor of Politics at Princeton University, I realized how important the rise and fall of the State is for developing countries like China. I gained enough courage to write a book on this topic.

Defining Nationalism

During my reviewing of literature on nationalism, I found that a serious problem for the student of the subject is the ambiguity in the meaning of the term “nationalism”. The literature dealing with the concept of nationalism is enormous, but no single definition can cover all aspects of
nationalism. This is typical of the study of Chinese nationalism, which, as Wang Gungwu (1996b) pointed out, is a many-layered and multi-faceted phenomenon. Without doubt, it is difficult, if not impossible, to highlight all aspects of Chinese nationalism in a single study like this one. For the sake of making it manageable, I will focus on nationalism as a nation–state identity and its impact on Chinese perceptions of China’s position in the nation–state system.

Nationalism is about the “nation”, a term which is not easy to define or explain. In interpreting nationalism, many scholars have attempted to avoid using the word. According to Charles Tilly (1975: 6), nation is “one of the most puzzling and tendentious items in the political lexicon”. He prefers the term “state”. Yet, nation and state are apparently not identical. As Arthur Waldron (1985: 417) argued, the “‘nation’ captures something that ‘state’ misses: a feeling, a passion, a legitimating power that the word ‘nationalism’ possesses to an unequalled degree”. This is because, as James Kellas (1991: 2) pointed out, nations have objective characteristics such as language, a religion, or common descent on the one hand, and subjective characteristics, essentially a people’s awareness of its nationality and affection for it on the other.

While the definitions of nationalism around the concept of nation–state vary, its main content is not clear. Nationalism contains two important elements of the nation–state; that is, as an institution and as an identity. First, nationalism is eventually expressed by institutions. It becomes important only after it is organized. Individuals may have nationalistic ideas or feelings, but these ideas and feelings do not matter, especially in the context of international relations. In modern society, especially in the nation–state system, the most important institution is the State. As Crawford Young pointed out (1976: 72), “nationalism can be successfully expressed only through the modern state”. Second, nationalism is about loyalty or identity. Different types of identities exist such as race, ethnicity, culture, language, religion and so forth. But national identity should not be confused with these identities. National identity is associated with the uniqueness of the particular nation–state. C. Young (1976: 71) asserted that “nationalism is an ideological formulation of identity. By stipulating the nation as a terminal community, to whom ultimate loyalty is owned, it invests the nation with transcendental moral sanction and authority. It is a profoundly political theory; implicit within it is active obligation to the national community and not merely passive acceptance of subject status”. In its extreme form, national identity is “the supreme loyalty for people who are prepared to die for their nation” (Kellas 1991: 3).

Nation–state and national identity are two related aspects of nationalism. F. H. Hinsley argued that nationalism can be understood as:
The state of mind in which the political loyalty is felt to be owed to the nation. It does not assume that, when nationalism comes to exist where it has not existed before, it does so because men have discovered a political loyalty which they previously lacked. On the contrary, it implies that men have then transferred to the nation the political loyalty which they previously gave to some other structure – that what has changed is not the quality of this loyalty but the object on which it is shown or the vehicle through which it is expressed (1973: 19).

Indeed, the formation of national identity can be attributed to the rise and growth of modern states. The modern state in effect often becomes a creator of national identity. According to Hinsley:

The rise of the state is the key to the movement of the political loyalty into the national stage. The clan, the tribe, the collection of tribes, even the city state, are political communities in which the composition of society has not yet become so mixed as to produce the administrative principle of rule that goes with the state, and in which this principle has not been imposed by a state from outside (1973: 28).

Further, there is an international dimension of nationalism. Nationalism here is about people’s perceptions of China’s position in the nation–state system. In other words, it is about China’s sovereignty, independence and its proper relations with other nation–states. The importance of nationalism for the nation–state system or international society is without doubt, because, as James Mayall (1991: 2) pointed out, nationalism means that “the world is (or should be) divided into nations and that the nation is the only proper basis for a sovereign state and the ultimate source of government authority”. According to Mayall, the principle of sovereignty has significant meaning for the nation–state. First, sovereign authorities must recognize one another as sovereign in order to secure a legal settlement of the inter-state problems. Second, sovereign authorities must recognize each other as a monopoly of jurisdiction within the State. Any agreement between them will have to be either self-policing, or it will have to rely on policing by the separate parties themselves. Third, the principle of sovereignty is the transcending of territory from being just somewhere people hunt, farm or go to the factory to the ultimate object of political life. Finally, the principle of sovereignty is the requirement of non-interference in the domestic affairs of other states. Otherwise, sovereign authorities would be most unlikely to enter into agreements (Mayall 1991: 19–20). The State, as the representative of the nation, links nation and society to the international system. In the modern world, various domestic blocks of nationalism such as culture, race, and language play an important part in the international system only through the nation–state.
About This Book

The book is organized into seven chapters. After reviewing the realist and liberal approaches to Chinese nationalism, Chapter 1 attempts to develop what I call “a Chinese understanding of Chinese nationalism”. This chapter focuses on discussing why the “strong state complex” came to become the major theme of Chinese nationalism throughout modern China.

Chapter 2 discusses the most important aspect of “China’s problems”; that is, the crisis of state power and its impact on China’s new nationalism. Deng’s reform promoted economic growth, but the impact of economic reform went far beyond economic arenas. Statism became the major theme of the new nationalism. This chapter examines different aspects of the crisis of state power, and discusses the responses of the new nationalists to the crisis in the context of statism.

Chapter 3 discusses the anti-westernization movement by the “New Left”. The new nationalism is a response to the decline of national identity. The proponents of the “New Left” attributed the crisis of national identity to westernization-oriented modernization in post-Mao China, and argued that in order to establish a new national identity, a local theory of Chinese modernization has to be developed. The “New Left” made great efforts to criticize various themes of so-called westernization while attempting to develop a theory that emphasizes the “Chineseness” or local experience of China’s post-Mao development.

Chapter 4 discusses the civilizational facet of the new nationalism. A major theme of the new nationalism was to revive China’s traditional values. While in the 1980s Chinese tradition became a target for criticism, the 1990s saw a movement towards anti-West sentiment. This chapter examines how Chinese intellectuals used the differences between the West and China to construct a Chinese tradition-centered nationalism.

Chapters 5 and 6 discuss how Chinese officials have responded to changes in China’s internal and external environments. Many in the West argued that the Chinese leadership has appealed to nationalism to strengthen its political legitimacy; that this new nationalism could become a threat to international peace and security. The two chapters attempt to provide a different picture based on a detailed examination of China’s perceptions of its national interests and the way the Chinese leadership handles the rise of nationalism. Chapter 5 discusses how the Chinese leadership constructs patriotism as official nationalism and how the contradiction between official nationalism and popular nationalism led the government to organize a campaign against various “anti-China” theories in order to constrain popular nationalism. Chapter 6 examines the impact of changing Chinese perceptions of national interest on
PREFACE

China's international relations, as exemplified by recent changes in China's policies towards the United States, the way that the government handled the Diaoyutai dispute (see page 131) with Japan in 1996, and the rise of multilateralism towards South-east Asian countries. The two chapters show the complicated nature of the new nationalism for international relations.

The concluding chapter summarizes major findings of the study and sheds light on why "voice" rather than "exit" and "loyalty", using Albert Hirschman's analogy, tends to be China's international strategy. A "voice strategy" means that the leadership is willing to integrate China into the international system, which needs to be modified in order to accord with China's national interests. It shows how the Chinese perceive such a strategy to be in accordance with China's national interests and regard it as the way for China to be a strong nation-state. Chapter 7 also examines how the rise of liberalism and globalism in China constrains the new nationalism and discusses the implications of Chinese globalism for world politics.
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Abbreviations of Cited Chinese Newspapers and Journals

Newspapers

BJQNB	Beijing Qingnian Bao (Beijing Youth Newspaper)

CD	Zhongguo Ribao (China Daily)

JJSB	Jingji Shibao (Economic Times)

LHB	Lianhe Bao (United Daily News, Taiwan)

LHZB	Lianhe Zaobao (Singapore)

MP	Ming Pao (Hong Kong)

RMRB	Renmin Ribao (People’s Daily)

WHB	Wenhui Bao (Hong Kong)

XB	Xin Bao (Hong Kong Economic Journal, Hong Kong)

ZGGFB	Zhongguo Guofang Bao (China National Defence)

Journals

BR	Beijing Review

CM	Cheng Ming (Forum, Hong Kong)

DDYK	Dangdai Yuekan (Current Affairs Monthly)

DDZGYJ	Dangdai Zhongguo Yanjiu (Modern China Studies)

DF	Dong Fang (The Orient)

DS	Dushu (Reading Monthly)

DWJMYJ	Duiwai Jingmao Yanjiu (Studies of Foreign Trade and Economy)

ESYSJ	Ershiyi shiji (The Twenty First Century, Hong Kong)

GJWTLT	Guoji Wenti Luntan (International Review)

GJWTYJ	Guoji Wenti Yanjiu (Studies of International Affairs)
# ABBREVIATIONS

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<tr>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Journal/Book Title</th>
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<tr>
<td>JFYJ</td>
<td>Jingji Yanjiu (Economic Research)</td>
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<td>JSND</td>
<td>Jiushi Niandai (The 1990s)</td>
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<td>LW</td>
<td>Lianwang (Outlook)</td>
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<td>QS</td>
<td>Qiushi (Seeking Truth)</td>
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<tr>
<td>SJJZZ</td>
<td>Shijie Jingji Yu Zhengshi (World Economy and Politics)</td>
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<tr>
<td>TPYXB</td>
<td>Taipingyang Xuebao (The Pacific Journal)</td>
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<tr>
<td>XDGJGX</td>
<td>Xiandai Guoji Guanxi (Contemporary International Relations)</td>
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<tr>
<td>XGSHKXXB</td>
<td>Xiangang Shehui Kexue Xuebao (Hong Kong Journal of Social Sciences, Hong Kong)</td>
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<tr>
<td>XHYB</td>
<td>Xinhua Xuebao (China News Agency Monthly)</td>
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<tr>
<td>XSYJDJT</td>
<td>Xueshu Yanjiu Dongtai (Trends in Academic Research)</td>
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<tr>
<td>YZZK</td>
<td>Yazhou Zhoukan (Asia Weekly)</td>
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<tr>
<td>ZGDLYJ</td>
<td>Zhongguo Dalu Yanjiu (Mainland China Studies)</td>
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<td>ZGGQGL</td>
<td>Zhongguo Guoqing Guoli (China National Condition and National Power)</td>
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<td>ZGSBZK</td>
<td>Zhongguo Shibao Zhoukan (China Times Weekly)</td>
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<td>ZGSHKXJK</td>
<td>Zhongguo Shehui Kexue Jikan (Chinese Social Sciences Quarterly, Hong Kong)</td>
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<td>ZGSP</td>
<td>Zhongguo Shuping (China Book Review, Hong Kong)</td>
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<td>ZLGL</td>
<td>Zhuanlue Yu Guandi (Strategy and Management)</td>
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