

## Chinese Nationalism in the Global Era

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### Introductory remarks

Thanks to Aichi

The topic of the conference is a timely one. The world faces 'drastic changes': War on Terror, non-traditional security threats, US predominance, Asian Financial Crisis, WTO regime, technological revolution.

Playing a key role in all of these is the rise of Chinese power, especially as an engine of world economic growth. China also has an important political role to play at the UN, and at the regional level (Six Party Talks, ASEAN-China Free Trade Agreement).

I want to discuss the nature of China's place in the world by looking at the relationship of two concepts in Chinese politics: nationalism and globalisation.

### The discourse of nationalism and globalisation in China

As can be seen from the statistics of citations in Chinese journals, there has been an increasing amount of discussion of these two concepts in China since the 1990s  
◆*Power Point: statistics of journal citations.*

Note that the use of 'globalisation' has now come to far exceed the use of 'nationalism'.

As the chart shows, it is possible to correlate these trends with major political events, such as the Taiwan Strait Crisis, the 15<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> National Congresses of the Chinese Communist Party, and China's accession to the WTO.

It is particularly interesting that the use of globalisation grew very fast when it was used by Jiang Zemin at the 15<sup>th</sup> Party Congress in October 1997.

This discourse on globalisation raises several interesting questions:

Is politics, policy making and political culture increasingly determined by a more pluralistic society in China?

Is globalisation making nationalism less important?

Are liberal theories right when they say that globalisation is weakening states and homogenising/Westernising cultures?

I will argue that none of these propositions is true, because the bounds of political discourse are still determined by the elite, but more importantly because nationalism has always been a product of globalising forces in China.

Globalisation is thus more likely to increase the strength of Chinese nationalism and the state, rather than weaken it.

In order to explain this, it is necessary to look at some methodological questions first.

### **Definitions**

‘Nationalism’ and ‘globalisation’ are both terms derived from Western political discourse.

#### **‘Nationalism’ 民族主義**

◆*Power Point: nationalism*

Ernest Gellner claims that the ‘nationalist principle’ asserts that, ‘the political and the national unit should be congruent.’ (*Nations and Nationalism* p 1).

Gellner, Anderson: ‘imagined community’ of the nation made possible by technology (printing press) and industrialisation/regimentation.

Nationalism starts with the French Revolution of 1789, due to domestic dynamics of decline of the French political system.

Mayall – nationalism expands from Europe to become legitimating principle of modern states system.

#### **‘Globalization’ 全球化**

◆*Power Point: ‘globalization’*

David Held et al. definition:

[...] a process (or set of processes) which embodies a transformation in the spatial organization of social relations and transactions – assessed in terms of their extensity, intensity, velocity and impact – generating transcontinental or interregional flows and networks of activity, interaction and the exercise of power.

(*Global Transformations: Politics, Economics and Culture*, p 16).

Note that Held, like most writers on globalisation, is not clear about when it began. But ‘globalization’ only began to be used after the Cold War, and it tends to be seen as a late 20<sup>th</sup> Century phenomenon accelerated by technological revolution.

Much discussion of the relationship between nationalism and globalisation also implies or assumes that there is a tension between them. That nations and states exist first, and are being eroded by globalisation.

But it will be argued below that in China, nationalism has actually been created by globalising processes. The two concepts are thus mutually supportive.

### **Historical Perspective**

The ability of the Chinese elite to think in global terms in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century is shown clearly by a quote from the reformer Kang Youwei's (康有為) petition to the emperor in 1895

◆*Power Point: Kang Youwei 康有為*

By 1895 the Chinese elite had been exposed to processes such as global military campaigns and alliances, communications, trade, culture and industrialisation.

This was on a small scale, but quite intense in areas like the Treaty Ports.

The discussion of politics in terms of the 'globe' 地球 was enough to create the ability to think about local issues in terms of global issues.

This is characteristic of what the sociologist Roland Robertson has called 'glocalization', a term that originates from Japanese marketing jargon.

◆*Power Point: glocalization*

It is also important to note that this precedes the use of 'nationalism'.

The term 'nation' 民族 was only introduced to China from Japan by Liang Qichao 梁啟超 in 1899, and he first used 'nationalism' (minzu zhuyi 民族主義) in 1901.

The first nationalist party was established in 1895, in the shape of Sun Yatsen's Revive China Association 興中會.

But this was a product of globalizing forces because it was established in Honolulu by a transnational Chinese business class.

### **National identity and foreign learning: 'ti yong' (體用)**

◆*Power Point: ti-yong I*

Because nationalism developed as a response to globalising processes, it is not surprising that we saw a strengthening of Chinese nationalism in the 1990s.

It is important to establish the political dynamics at work here, and in particular how elite discourse deploys these concepts to legitimate the state in a time of global change.

The basic dynamic that was established at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century has been called the ti-yong dichotomy (體用) which proposes taking Western learning as 'functional' 用 and Chinese as 'essence' or identity 體.

The formula is thus 以中學爲體以西學爲用 and it has lasted down to the present.

Its proponent is supposed to be the Confucian bureaucrat Zhang Zhidong, especially in his *Quan xue pian* 勸學篇 of 1898.

◆*Power Point: ti-yong 2*

It can still be seen running through Mao Zedong's 毛澤東 'sinification of Marxism', and Deng Xiaoping's 鄧小平 'socialism with Chinese characteristics' and combatting bourgeois liberalisation and spiritual pollution from abroad.

◆*Power Point: Jiang Zemin 1*

Most recently it can be seen in Jiang Zemin's 江澤民 report to the 16<sup>th</sup> Party Congress.

The following themes can be seen here:  
economic globalization and political multipolarity  
science and technology as key to national power

◆*Power Point: Jiang Zemin 2*

3 major tasks of Party leadership

- a) Modernization
- b) National unification and world peace
- c) great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation on its road to socialism with Chinese characteristics.

This survival of the 'ti-yong' dichotomy needs to be explained because, as Levenson pointed out in *Confucian China and Its Modern Fate*, it is philosophically meaningless.

◆ *Power Point: Levenson*

ie you cannot separate the function of an object from its essence; you cannot import western science and technology without importing the essence of western culture too.

Levenson may have been philosophically right, but politically and sociologically he was wrong because the ti-yong dichotomy has survived down to the present.

This is because it is less important for an element of political discourse to make logical sense than it is for it to be able to mobilise the masses.

The really revolutionary elements of Zhang Zhidong's formula have thus been overlooked. Central to these are the elements of nationalist-globalist discourse that still survive.

- a) the ability to make cultural and ideological orthodoxy an object for loyalty, rather than a guide to life: the content of Confucianism, Marxism, or Socialism with Chinese Characteristics is not as important as its presentation as the symbol of Chinese uniqueness.
- b) The mobilisation of popular resentment by presenting the symbol of Chinese uniqueness as under threat.

◆*Power Point: national humiliation*

From this perspective, what has been most overlooked in Zhang Zhidong's *Qian Xue Pian* is what he says about the need to encourage a feeling of 'national humiliation' 國恥.

Confucius replies to a question about the art of government posed by the Duke of Wei by stating: 'To know shame is to achieve strength'. 知恥近乎勇 (中庸 ch 20)

Zhang had made the crucial step of seeing the threat to identity as a way to mobilise the masses.

◆*Power Point slide: Sun Yatsen*

This dynamic is what Sun Yatsen was talking about in 1924, when he asked about nationalist ideology: 'What is ideology? Ideology is a kind of thought, a kind of faith, and a kind of power'.

The encouragement and use of national humiliation as a political resource can be seen down to the present, especially in the patriotic education campaign launched in 1989 after Tiananmen.

Whereas Chinese writers on the nationalist revival of the 1990s say it was caused mainly by US policy and the Taiwan Strait crisis, they do not say anything about the way that this was originally encouraged by the Party-state.

To understand the relationship between elite policy and public opinion, though, it is important to realise how the nationalism that has been encouraged for over a century as a political resource can still be used by the elite to strengthen its legitimacy.

The elite it thus left in a paradoxical situation, having to appeal to a popular nationalism that it has encouraged, while presenting China as a peaceful rising power.

Events of the 1990s have shown how difficult this is, including publication of books like *China Can Say No* 中國可以說不, and the demonstrations after the destruction of the Belgrade embassy.

This has important implications for China's regional role, especially given its difficult historical relationship with Japan, but now also recently Korea (Koguryo).

And of course the most dangerous implication is for Taiwan.

**Conclusion**

The world is certainly going through a time of drastic change.

However, this is no more drastic than the upheavals of the late 19<sup>th</sup> to mid 20<sup>th</sup> century.

Many of the ways that China responds politically to change have been determined by this period.

A central dynamic of Chinese politics has been that globalising processes generate nationalistic activity.

Globalising processes are not new, and gave rise to Chinese nationalism in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century.

The 1990s saw an acceleration of these processes, as in financial deregulation, trade liberalisation, and the technological revolution.

This accelerated globalisation saw an increase in Chinese nationalism in the 1990s.

Evidence of nationalist activity on the Internet shows how a process like informatization does not necessarily bring about liberalisation or democratisation, but tends to reflect and consolidate the existing political culture.

Much of the Chinese discussion of nationalism since the end of the Cold War, such as *China Can Say No*, has been misunderstood as a reaction against the United States and Japan.

This is partly true, but a deeper dynamic concerns the way that political elites use the insecurity of the common people caused by change to mobilise popular opinion.

This has been an effective way to boost the legitimacy of the elite, or sometimes to discredit their opponents (be they dissidents or different political factions in the Party)

The present leadership appears to be less willing to resort to nationalism as a political resource, and is appealing instead to more egalitarianism and balanced national development.

But if this fails, then the long-established dynamics of Chinese political culture indicate that the leadership will have few resources to boost its legitimacy other than the appeal to nationalism.

Global processes, such as communications, economic integration and global security threats tend to strengthen the dynamics of nationalist politics in China, rather than weaken them.

This is because the birth of nationalism in China was a response to globalising processes in the first place.

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Citation of Key Terms in Chinese Journals

	Globalization 全球化	Nationalism 民族主义	Events
1994	34	35	
1995	73	35	Taiwan
1996	63	69	crisis
1997	132	42	15 <sup>th</sup> Congress
1998	415	50	
1999	927	83	Belgrade
2000	2329	98	
2001	2868	99	WTO/ Sept 11
2002	5131	101	16 <sup>th</sup> Congress

### 民族主義 ‘nationalism’

- Gelner’s ‘nationalist principle’: ‘the political and the national unit should be congruent.’
- Political origins: French Revolution 1789.
- Made possible by industrialisation.
- Anderson’s ‘imagined community’ made possible by technology (printing press).
- Mayall: spreads out from Europe to world under expansion of ‘international society’.

### ‘globalization’ 全球化

[...] a process (or set of processes) which embodies a transformation in the spatial organization of social relations and transactions – assessed in terms of their extensity, intensity, velocity and impact – generating transcontinental or interregional flows and networks of activity, interaction and the exercise of power.

D.Held et al, *Global Transformations: Politics, Economics and Culture*, p 16.

### 早期の全球化?

大地八千萬里,中國有其一;列國五十餘,中國居其一.地球之通自明末,輪路之盛自嘉道,皆百年前後新事,四千年未有之變局也.

康有為 “上清帝第五書” 1895

### ‘glocalization’

Roland Robertson:

the ability to think about local issues in terms of global issues. Eg:

- preservation of religious tradition through relativisation;
- thinking of local political-military issues in terms of ‘world order’;
- economic issues in terms of ‘world recession’;
- citizenship in terms of ‘human rights’

### Ti-yong 體用 : essence and function

- ‘Take Chinese learning as essence, take Western learning as function’ 以中學爲體以西學爲用
- Zhang Zhidong 張之洞, ‘Exhortation to Study’ 勸學篇 (1898)

### 體用

- Mao Zedong 毛澤東 ‘Sinification of Marxism’
- Deng Xiaoping 鄧小平 ‘Socialism with Chinese Characteristics’
- Jiang Zemin 江澤民: Patriotic Education Campaign

### Jiang Zemin 江澤民 (2002)

The trends toward political multipolarization and economic globalization are developing amidst twists and turns. Science and technology are advancing rapidly, competition in overall national strength is becoming increasingly fierce. Given this pressing situation, we must move forwards or will fall behind.

### Jiang Zemin 江澤民 (2002)

Our Party must stand firm in the forefront of the times and unite and lead the Chinese people of all ethnic groups in accomplishing the three major historical tasks: to propel the modernization drive, to achieve national reunification to safeguard world peace and promote common development, and in bringing about a great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation on its road to socialism with Chinese characteristics.

### Joseph Levenson, *Confucian China and Its Modern Fate*, (Univ. of California, 1958)

### ‘national humiliation’ 國恥

‘To know humiliation is to achieve strength.’  
(Confucius, *Doctrine of the Mean*, chapter 20)

‘知恥近乎勇’ (孔子, *中庸* ch. 20)

**Chinese Nationalism**  
中國の民族主義

“什麼是主義呢？主義就是一種  
思想，一種信仰，和一種力量。”

(孫文 [孫中山], 三民主義 1924)